

**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
54th MEETING**

17-18 September 2003

**UNFPA Headquarters, New York
Meeting Room: Rafael Salas (19th Floor)**

IDP: Background Note on Uganda

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1. Mission of the Representative to Uganda

At the invitation of the Government of Uganda, the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis M. Deng, undertook an official visit to the country from 11 to 15 August 2003.

The purpose of the visit was to assess and reach a better understanding of the situation of internal displacement in Uganda, which now affects approximately one million persons throughout the country. An additional purpose was to hold consultations with the Government on the draft national policy on internal displacement.

During his visit Dr. Deng had a number of meetings with Government officials, international donors, United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). He also undertook a visit to the districts of Kitgum and Gulu, where he met with a number of local officials, religious dignitaries, NGOs and representatives of the internally displaced. In Gulu he visited a camp for the internally displaced, where he witnessed their living conditions and also observed food distribution by the World Food Programme. He also witnessed the situation of the children “night-commuters” in Gulu. John Rogge, Senior IDP Advisor of the OCHA IDP Unit joined the mission during the visits to Gulu and Kitgum.

2. Internal Displacement in Uganda

The displacement crisis in Uganda essentially falls into three situations. By far the largest displacement situation (approximately 800,000) is in the northern districts of the country, mainly in Kitgum, Pader and Gulu, and is due to the armed conflict between the Ugandan People’s Defence Forces and the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). In the East of the country, displacement has been caused by drought and cattle rustling by armed Karamojong tribal warriors. In the Rwenzori mountains, in the West of the country at the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), displacement was previously caused by attacks of the rebel Allied Democratic Front (ADF). However, this situation is now largely resolved.

3. Findings

With regard to the draft national policy, the Representative found it to be comprehensive and rich in substance. It addresses all phases of displacement, including prevention, protection and assistance during displacement as well as durable solutions. The Representative was impressed by the very broad and inclusive consultative process in drafting the policy, which included inputs from the United Nations, the international donor community, non-governmental organizations and the displaced themselves. The Representative was informed by the Government that the policy was expected to be adopted by Cabinet before the end of the year, and that the text itself would also be issued in a simplified version and translated into local languages.

In the North of the country, the Representative was struck by the level of devastation due to the conflict and the precarious security situation the internally displaced were facing. While efforts by the UPDF to protect the displaced were recognized and appreciated, the level of insecurity still remained high. In the camps, the displaced were struggling to survive and were in dire need of basic access to education, health, water and sanitation. The spread of HIV/AIDS also seemed to be a matter of serious concern in the camps. The World Food Programme, which was performing an admirable task in providing food relief to the displaced, was faced, along with its humanitarian partners, with insufficient resources and serious problems of accessing the camps due to the insecurity situation. The Representative was also saddened to witness the desperate plight of the children “night-commuters”, who came to the town centres at night to sleep in fear of being abducted and recruited as child soldiers.

Furthermore, the Representative recognised the need to address the root causes of the conflict as well as its regional interconnectedness. There was a possible need for mediation by a third party.

Proposed Action Points/Decisions for the IASC WG:

- Commit to support the Government in the implementation of the national policy on internal displacement once adopted.
- Collectively and individually seek to enhance the international humanitarian response to the IDP crisis in Uganda, inter alia, through identifying mechanisms for enhanced coordination, assistance and protection.
- Develop a strategy to assist IDPs in Uganda to become self-sufficient in food production.
- Develop and implement targeted child protection activities for IDP children as well as the children “night-commuters.”