

I. HIGHLIGHTS

- **JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST LRA LAUNCHED BY UGANDA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND SOUTH SUDAN**
- **HEPATITIS E EPIDEMIC IN NORTHERN UGANDA WANING, BUT ONCHOCERCIASIS BECOMING A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN**
- **GENERAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION RESUMES IN NORTH KARAMOJA, SAVE IN KAABONG DISTRICT**

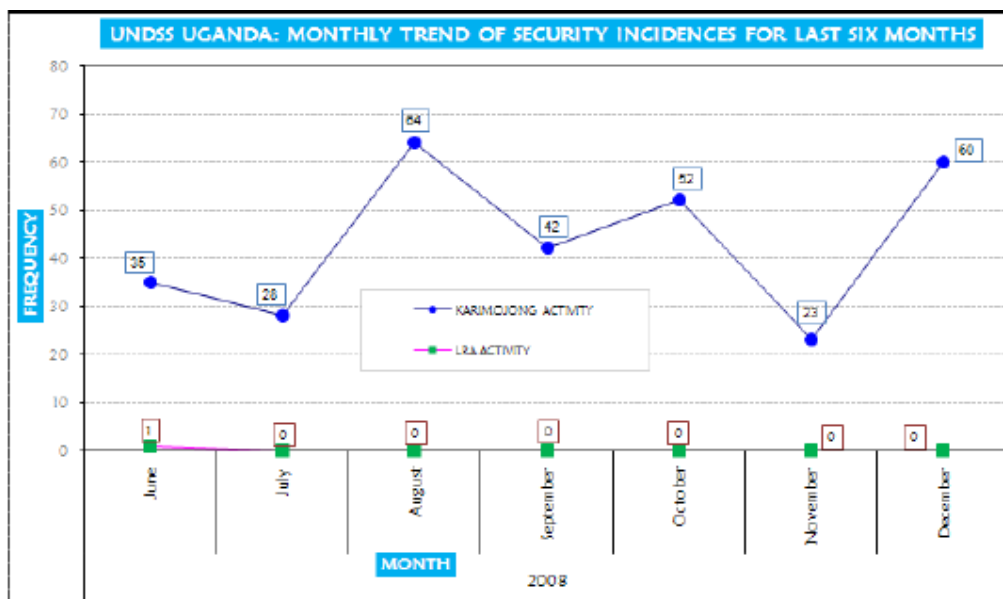
II. SECURITY AND ACCESS

SECURITY

The situation in northern Uganda remained stable and secure during the reporting period. While some fears have been expressed by the population regarding the security repercussions on northern Uganda of the joint Ugandan-Congolese-South Sudanese military operations launched on 14 December against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), no LRA presence was reported within the country. Security agencies are using regular talk shows on radio to reassure the community. Of continuing concern is crime; during the month, unidentified gunmen claimed the lives of three people and injured nine others in Gulu and Amuru districts, while the presence of armed robbers was reported in areas of Amida sub-county and along the Kitgum Lira-Lira road in Kitgum District.

A reported influx of Karimojong into the eastern borders of Kitgum and Pader districts has prompted the deployment of Anti Stock Theft Units (ASTUs) along those areas. Nomadic movements by Karimojong into neighbouring districts in search of pasture and water for animals is common during the dry season, but there are concerns within the host districts at the possibility of aggressive activities by illegally armed members of the Karimojong migrants.

Within the Karamoja sub-region, aggressive Karimojong activity rose markedly in December after the four-month low recorded in November. At least 25 incidents involving 37 deaths were reported, while 27 raids were recorded. Most of the killings and raids occurred in Moroto District. Additionally, two attempted road ambushes were reported in Nakapiripirit District. The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) continued the forceful disarmament exercise, with four cordon and search operations reported in the districts of Kaabong and Kotido. The operations drew resistance from the local population, resulting in the arrest of over 100 Karimojong.



Source: UNDSS

Access

Due to the effects of the dry season, dust along some roads in northern Uganda has become hazardous to motorists. Consequently, traffic accidents have been recorded, particularly along the Gulu-Kitgum and Lira-Kitgum highways. In Karamoja, however, the dry season has enhanced access to areas previously difficult to reach on account of swamps, broken bridges and gullies.

III. POPULATION MOVEMENT

Region	District	Original camp population (end 2005)	Estimated camp population	% of original camp population	Population in transit sites	% of original camp population	Population in villages of origin	% of original camp population
Acholi	Amuru	204,000	104,000	51%	79,000	39%	21,000	10%
	Gulu	257,000	153,000	60%	70,000	27%	141,000	55%
	Kitgum	310,000	102,000	33%	62,000	20%	154,000	50%
	Pader	339,000	78,000	23%	118,000	35%	143,000	42%
	Acholi Total	1,110,000	437,000	39%	329,000	30%	459,000	41%
Teso	Amuria	72,000	11,000	15%	3,000	4%	58,000	81%
	Katakwi	71,000	7,000	10%	-	-	58,000	82%
	Teso Total	143,000	18,000	13%	3,000	2%	116,000	81%
Grand Total		1,253,000	455,000	26%	332,000	16%	575,000	61%

Source: UNHCR, November 2008

Despite heightened concern among the population in northern Uganda following the launch of the joint operations against the LRA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, no reverse population movements within northern Uganda have been reported. Movement out of IDP camps continues steadily across the region, but the major impediments to the return process remain the lack of basic infrastructure in villages of origin, particularly relating to health and education. An additional problem in this dry period of the year is the frequent outbreak of bush fires, which affects the availability of thatching grass.

In Karamoja, 33 Congolese, including 12 women and 21 children, have been repatriated and a further 16 are on standby. A total of 66 women and children have been registered and await screening, with family tracing expected to be undertaken in 2009.

IV. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

CAMP MANAGEMENT AND CAMP COORDINATION (CCCM)

In Gulu District, 141 households that were affected by fire outbreaks at Parabongo camp were assisted with tarpaulins, sickles, pangas, hoes, buckets and saucepans. Meanwhile, 232 families in the district have received a total of 6,960 iron sheets supplied by the President's Office in support of the return process. Some 13,505 iron sheets have been earmarked for further distribution, the beneficiaries of which are selected by raffle and are required to have already constructed houses to the ring beam level. The distribution exercise for 14,883 iron sheets is yet to begin in Amuru.

An interagency assessment by the Gulu District Camp Phase Out Committee (DCPC) has recommended the decommissioning of 6 pilot camps by the beginning of January 2009 as they have been found to meet the minimum standards for phase out as outlined by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). An additional 10 camps are expected to be phased out in the first quarter of 2009.

In Teso, camp clean up exercises were conducted in Morungatuny and Orungo main camps in Amuria District during the month. Distribution of non-food items to returning population in Amuria and Katakwi were also undertaken.

EDUCATION

In response to the infrastructure challenges facing the education sector in northern Uganda, particularly in return areas, cluster partners commenced construction of classrooms and other facilities at three primary schools in Gulu District, including Lujoro, Ongai and Apowegi. More interventions to create or improve infrastructure in return sites are required if the remaining displaced schools – nine in Gulu and 13 in Amuru – are to effect return.

In Kitgum, 60 teachers were trained on the thematic curriculum, which the Ministry of Education is in the process of rolling out to the Primary Three (P3) class after a successful pilot phase in the lower classes.

FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOODS

A draft early warning systems report presented in mid-December indicates that over 90 per cent of households in Kotido District are chronically food insecure, with the worst affected households being those without animals.

General Food Distribution (GFD) continued in northern Uganda and in the Karamoja districts of Abim and Kotido. The pipeline break, which affected GFD in north Karamoja in November 2008, has now been restored. In Kaabong, however, the exercise awaits a resolution from the District Local Council following the report and recommendations of the task force established to investigate the causes of the insecurity and chaos that marred food distribution in November. In northern Uganda, some 3,194 metric tonnes of food were distributed to 76,857 households from 87

camps in Gulu and Amuru districts. In Kitgum, GFD benefitted 299,700 people during the month, although there were variations in rations owing to the inadequate amounts of pulses and cereals. Meanwhile, four Kitgum sub-counties – Amida, Layamo, Lokung and Kitgum Matidi - have been proposed to pilot GFD phase-out, following a consultative workshop.

The Pader District Agricultural has noted that the late distribution of farm inputs by some agencies was partly responsible for the poor harvests during the year. As agencies have blamed the delay on the bureaucracy surrounding the procurement of farm inputs, the district has indicated that it will intervene to ensure that the inputs are purchased and distributed prior to the start of the rainy season.

Meanwhile, the cluster in Pader has noted that while a number of food security shocks were experienced in the district in 2008, progress by partners in implementing the recommendations of assessments was poor. Some of the shocks included the recent water logging in Lunyiri Puranga and Omot, and the hailstorms in Parabongo and Wol. The cluster has urged agencies and the district to mobilise and set aside resources to adequately respond to likely shocks in 2009.

Vaccination against Foot and Mouth Disease was completed in Padibe East, Palabek Kal, Madi Opei and Mucwini sub-counties in Kitgum District. In Pader, the quarantine on animal movement in response to the outbreak remained in force in Agago County as at the end of the reporting period.

GOVERNANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND LIVELIHOODS (GIL)

Under the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), 25 houses were constructed in Wera sub-county in Amuria District as part of a project targeting 40 households. Additionally, 100 youths graduated from a training programme on the use of high technology hydraform brick laying machines.

In Karamoja, assessments by the Ministry of Works and Transport were carried out on the Kotido-Kaabong-Kapedo trunk road leading to New Kuth in South Sudan. The assessments precede the awarding of contracts in a project intended to open up the Karamoja region to South Sudan. The Ministry has also promised to include the Kotido-Kotein road under central government works in 2009. Currently, the community access road from Nakapelimoru in Kotido to Kotein in Moroto close to the border with Kenya is being cleared under a peace-building initiative.

Mine Action:

During the reporting period, 18 mortars, 18 Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), 4 grenades and 90 rounds of ammunition were reported and subsequently destroyed by the Uganda Mine Action Centre (UMAC) in Gulu and Amuru. However, concerns have been expressed by partners at the apparent lack of assistance programmes for victims of unexploded ordinances in both districts.

HEALTH, NUTRITION AND HIV/AIDS

Response measures against the Hepatitis E virus in northern Uganda are succeeding in containing the epidemic. Over the last 23 weeks the number of cases of the virus registered on a weekly basis in Kitgum – the worst affected district – reduced from 700 to 27. Health partners are warning that the downscaling of interventions, increased risk practices and behavior like the communal consumption of certain alcohol as well as communal hand washing during the festive season could potentially lead to an upsurge in the number of cases in the weeks ahead. As of 28 December 2008 a cumulative 9,204 cases of Hepatitis E with 141 deaths were registered in Kitgum. Meanwhile nine out of a cumulative 37 suspected cases from Gulu and Amuru have been confirmed. In Pader, 91 cases and seven deaths have been registered since May 2008 when the first case was notified.

Onchocerciasis (river blindness) is now emerging as a major public health concern in northern Uganda, in response to which the Ministry of Health has confirmed the procurement of drugs and announced plans to conduct a mass treatment and prevention campaign in Pader District. For the case of Kitgum district, plans are underway to conduct sensitisation and training of community based drug distributors.

During the month, the health centres of Loyoajonga (II), Dino (II), Bungatira (II), Lakwatomer (II) and Pabwo (III) in Gulu District were rehabilitated. In Teso, health staff houses at Olilim Health Centre II and Aketa Health Centre III were rehabilitated and handed over to the Katakwi District Local Government. Despite these developments, drug stock-out and inadequate staff at health facilities continue to pose challenges to effective health delivery in both Teso and northern Uganda.

In Karamoja, an acceptable level of access to health services will require a significant increase in the number of Village Health Teams (VHTs). In Kaabong, for instance, there are on average 95 households per one VHT, against the standard ratio of 25:1. A total of 284 villages, particularly in the sub-counties of Sidok, Kalapata and Loyoro, have no VHT at all.

During the accelerated Child Survival Campaign in Nakapiripirit district children were screened for malnutrition, with the findings indicating that about two per cent of the 29,217 children examined were severely malnourished and 1,678

moderately malnourished. Pian Health Sub-District had the highest number of malnourished children – 66 severe and 747 moderate.

PROTECTION

During the reporting period, 323 Karimojong women and children were returned from the streets of Kampala. The returnees spent two weeks at Lokopo sub-county headquarters in Moroto District where they were screened and registered. Most of the children subsequently returned to their villages of origin or to the resettlement site at Lomaratoit.

Human Rights and Rule of Law:

Following the November suspension of open court sessions in Patongo Prison by the Grade One Magistrate due to logistical constraints, the Pader District Human Rights Promotion and Protection (DHRPP) committee has asked the District Coordination Committee to write to the Ministry of Internal Affairs requesting that transport be availed for inmates to attend sessions at the District Magistrate's Court.

Gender Based Violence:

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence launched on 25 November culminated on 10 December 2008 culminated with symposia in various districts in northern Uganda. The symposium in Gulu involved Local Council (LC) V participants and focused on modalities of financing GBV interventions at district level, and sensitisation on the Goma Declaration on GBV as well as its implementation at the local level. In Pader, the participants agreed that a declaration on combating and preventing GBV be drafted by the sub-cluster following which it would be tabled before the council.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Although latrine coverage in Kitgum District has improved to about 33 per cent thanks to the Hepatitis E interventions and a campaign launched during sanitation week in June 2008, the figure represents just over half the national coverage.

In Gulu and Amuru, the cluster has maintained hygiene promotion activities, including through radio talk shows, to increase awareness on preventive measures against Hepatitis E.

V. SPECIAL FOCUS ISSUES

JOINT OPERATIONS AGAINST THE LRA / JUBA PEACE PROCESS

On 14 December 2008, the Government of Uganda announced that the UPDF, together with the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), had launched a joint operation targeting the LRA camps in the DRC. Following two days of aerial bombardments, UPDF ground forces moved in on the LRA camps in Garamba National Park, with SPLA and FARDC maintaining a cordon to the northeast, east and southeast of the area. As of the end of the reporting period, there was little independently verified information about the impact of the joint operation. The UPDF has acknowledged that the air strikes did not kill the LRA leadership and that bands of LRA fighters are now on the move, ostensibly toward the Central African Republic. Since the operations were launched, and particularly, between 25 and 26 December, close to 500 civilians are reported to have been killed and hundreds more injured in LRA attacks on villages in the area surrounding the group's base in Garamba. The joint operations have had no immediate impact on northern Uganda. At present the region remains calm, but there have been increased reports of anxiety amongst the population.

The objective of the joint operations, according to the Ugandan Government, is to return the LRA to the peace process, following repeated failures of LRA Commander Joseph Kony to show for signing ceremonies. The Government has declared that the military operations will continue until the LRA leadership indicates its willingness to sign the peace agreement by assembling in Ri-Kwangba, or is captured or killed in the military action.

CONGOLESE REFUGEES

As of the end of December, nearly 31,000 Congolese fleeing conflict in the North Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had sought shelter in Uganda. Approximately one third of the refugees (10,600), most of whom crossed from DRC into Kisoro District at the Bunagana or Busanza crossing points, have been transferred to Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Isingiro District, while 6,500 remain in the host community along the border. A growing number of refugees who had been living in the host community are requesting transfer, as the community's coping mechanisms are exhausted. A second major crossing point was also reported, with 13,500 of the new arrivals, mostly from the Rutshuru area, entering Uganda through Kanungu District, north of Kisoro. Over 10,000 are currently staying at the Matanda Transit Centre in Kanungu District, which was established on a temporary basis by the Government of Uganda and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The remainder are living with host communities. Agencies have been responding to the increased needs of the refugee population mostly from within existing resources, although UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have appealed for a total of US\$ 7.5 million for their care over a six-month period. A limited number of cholera cases have been recorded among the refugees.

VI. FUNDING

As of 31 December, the 2008 CAP had been funded at about 70 per cent, or US\$ 260.7 million with an additional US\$ 1.6 million in pledges against the revised total appeal of US\$ 374 million, according to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS).

VII. THE MONTH AHEAD

MONTHLY CLUSTER MEETING SCHEDULE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
First Week	HNHA Cluster (14:30 at WHO)	GBV Sub-Cluster (10:00 at UNFPA) FSAL Cluster (14:30 at FAO)	CP Sub-Cluster (10:30 at UNICEF) GIL Cluster (14:30 at UNDP)	Education Cluster (09:00 at UNICEF) WASH Cluster (14:00 at UNICEF)	
Second Week	Heads of Cluster (11:15 at OCHA)		IASC Country Team (10:00 at OCHA) Contact Group* (14:30 at OCHA)		
Third Week	Protection Cluster (14:30 at UNHCR)				
Fourth Week			Contact Group* (14:30 at OCHA)		

* Contact Group meets every second Wednesday, which usually falls during the 2nd and 4th week of the month.

VIII. CONTACTS

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