

**The Protection of Older People in Northern Uganda:
Needs, Contributions, and Barriers to Return**

**Susan Erb
June 2008**

*In the past, no one has tried to be sure that we as older people are protected, even our own children have disappeared – Omony Vincensio
Palabek Camp, Kitgum District, Uganda*

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Susan Erb
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ACRONYMS

AGDM	Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming
ARC	American Refugee Committee
ASB	Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund
AVSI	Associazione Volontari per Servizio Internazionale
DPC	District Protection Cluster
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
HAI	HelpAge International
IASC	Inter Agency Standing Committee
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OPA/OPC	Older People's Associations/Older People's Committees
PCWG	Protection Cluster Working Group
PSN	People with Special Needs ¹
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United National High Commission for Refugees
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office for the High Commission on Human Rights
VHT	Village Health Teams
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

¹ PSN is the term which UNHCR uses to replace EVI (extremely vulnerable individuals). The term EVI emphasises needs rather than capacity, and efforts were made throughout the mission to encourage both UNHCR staff and partners to use the term PSN rather than the more commonly used EVI.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background

2. Purpose

3. Problem

4. Methodology

- 4.1. Focus Group Discussions
- 4.2. Semi Structured Interviews
- 4.3. Stakeholder Meetings

5. Training and Stakeholder knowledge, attitudes and skills

- 5.1. Training workshop
- 5.2. Stakeholder knowledge, attitude, and skill

6. Findings

- 6.1. Priority needs
- 6.2. Older people's contributions

7. Cluster Efficacy

- 7.1. Cluster Challenges
- 7.2. Durable Solutions
- 7.3. Provider of Last Resort

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. Visibility, Inclusion and Participation of Older People
- 8.2. Integrated and Intergenerational response
- 8.3. Appropriate practical and financial resources
- 8.4. Knowledge Gaps

9. Appendices

- Appendix One – Terms of Reference
- Appendix Two – Resources and Bibliography
- Appendix Three – Older Person Inclusion Checklist

1. Background

For 21 years, Northern Uganda has been affected by an internal conflict caused by activities led by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army. As a result of the conflict and the Government of Uganda's counter insurgency response, over 1.8 million Northern Ugandans have been internally displaced and forced to live in internally displaced person's (IDPs) camps. Long term displacement has led to social deterioration and a heavy dependency on food rations and non-governmental organisation (NGO)/United Nations (UN) support resulting from a lack of access to traditional agricultural land and agrarian self sufficiency. The majority of those displaced are from Gulu², Kitgum and Pader Districts. In 2006, a ceasefire agreement was signed and many displaced Acholis have begun the process of return to villages of origin.

As of January 2008, though, data indicates that the return process for the majority of the three districts is still only at its start. Estimates vary according to accuracy of data collection and definitions of full return. Many displaced Acholis continue to commute between camps and transit sites and between transit sites and villages of return due to both security fears and in order to access World Food Programme (WFP) food rations. This trend makes it difficult to critically understand the exact numbers of returns and to fully understand what groups of people have chosen to remain in the camp locations, for how long, and why.

January 2008 UNHCR data indicates that 21% of the Acholi IDP population has relocated to transit sites and another 32% has returned to villages of origins. Nearly half of the remaining displaced population or 47% (855,650 IDPs) remain resident in camp locations³. The Inter Agency Standing Committee in Uganda data presents a slightly different view, estimating that 31% of Acholi IDPs have moved to transit sites, but only 6% have fully moved back to villages of origins leaving a population of 63% still officially resident in camps⁴. Either way, the process of return is far from complete.

UNHCR currently acts as the lead agency for both the Protection and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters and is strategically committed to promoting effective and efficient cluster leadership. UNHCR's programmatic strategy further acts *to ensure protection for all IDPs and seek durable solutions to their displacement*⁵. Thus, both UNHCR and Protection Cluster partners have a unique and timely opportunity to positively influence the creation of durable solutions for displaced Acholis whether they choose to return to villages of origin, remain in camps, or relocate elsewhere within Uganda.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Uganda mission was in part to fulfil the general terms of reference for the HelpAge International/UNHCR secondment to provide support to the global Protection Cluster Working Group (PCWG) by advancing the mainstreaming of the rights

² On 1 July, 2006, Amuru became its own district. For this report, since locations visited were in Gulu, I refer only to the three regions of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader in Acholiland.

³ UNHCR, *Uganda Briefing Sheet*, February 2008.

⁴ IASC in Uganda, *IASC Working Group Update on IDP Movement*, January 2008.

⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR Uganda IDPs Strategy 2008*, p2.

and specific needs of older persons into the work of the PCWG and providing recommendations and guidance to that end.

Global support with integrating ageing issues for UNHCR is through Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming activities which seek to ensure that all UNHCR staff base their protection and programme planning, design, implementation, monitoring and follow up action on participatory assessment with people of all ages using a rights and community based approach.

In Uganda, the mission was aimed at providing practical, targeted support to the Protection Cluster members, and UNHCR, in Acholi District by establishing and/or refining protection for older persons. The mission had three primary objectives as detailed in the TOR in Appendix One:

- Raise staff awareness and development on older person's protection issues
- Identify and help develop plans to address older person's protection issues
- Identify replicable good practice with regard to older person's protection.

Finally in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principle 28, point 2 specifically outlines that *special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of IDPs in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration*⁶. It is intended that the recommendations from this mission will help UNHCR and Protection Cluster partners to ensure that all older people are active participants in their own process of achieving durable solutions by helping stakeholders, including older people themselves, to build their capacity to protect, claim and exercise their human rights.

A complete copy of the terms of reference is available in Appendix One.

3. Problem

Research by HelpAge International (HAI) has shown that older people tend to be overlooked in emergencies and are often rendered virtually invisible during both the response and rehabilitation phases⁷. International humanitarian agencies often incorrectly assume that older people will be covered by a specialised agency focusing on older people or will be supported by traditional mechanisms within the context of extended family and community. However, few NGOs include older people in their responses, there is not UN agency dedicated to older peoples issues, and a fundamental aspect of conflict related displacement is the erosion of community social support systems leaving older people unprotected by traditional cultural mechanisms.

Evidence shows that planners and humanitarian agencies overlook older people's basic requirements resulting in older people having difficulty accessing basic services as well as having limited if any participation in planning response and rehabilitation activities that directly affect them. This is illustrated even by UNHCR's own August 2007 *Real Time Evaluation* of IDPs in Northern Uganda which failed to include any reference to older

⁶ OHCA, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, September 2004, p14.

⁷ Bramucci, Gina and Susan Erb, International Federation of Ageing, *Global Ageing: Issues and Action*, Ageing Africa vol. 4, No 3, An Invisible Population: Displaced Older People in Darfur, 2007.

people's issues within its otherwise comprehensive evaluation⁸. Instead, agencies need to include older people into response in a holistic fashion and *ensure that the needs of older people are built into the initial analysis, planning and implementation of relief responses rather than have them ignored at that stage, and responded to retrospectively as part of an ever broadening 'vulnerable' group*⁹.

In Northern Uganda, the situation for older people is characterised by social uncertainty and a lack of active participation in determining and implementing their own durable solutions. A brief assessment of return trends illustrates a positive indication that between 3.5% and 5% of older IDPs are being included in the process of return (Table 1). Field visits have show that virtually all of these older returnees have strong family and community/clan support which has enabled their return, although it was not possible during the mission to fully assess the extent and quality of this family and community care.

Table 1¹⁰ - Population of Returns

	# return sites	Total population	Population of older people	Percentage of older people
Amuru	85	43,748	1,979	4.52%
Gulu	75	30,291	1,485	4.90%
Kitgum	99	59,047	2,743	4.65%
Pader	239	186,263	6,481	3.48%
Total	498	319,349	12,688	3.97%

However, as more able-bodied people return to villages of origin, the numbers of those being left in the camp is showing a dramatic increase in terms of percentage representation. Many of those who do not return are experiencing multiple disadvantages through isolation, abandonment, mental and physical disability, psychosocial trauma, malnutrition, and poverty.

Data from UNHCR's own research¹¹ into understanding reasons for non-return by IDPs in Lira, Oyam and Apac illustrates that most of those remaining in camps are people with special needs (PSNs), in particular older people and people with disabilities. Although UNHCR did not fully disaggregate the category of PSN, the data indicates that of 6,265 people remaining in the camps (including children who are estimated to comprise roughly half of residual camp populations), 668 or 9.4% are people with special needs, including older people. Indeed, in Ogwete camp, 31 of 31 people remaining are older people who were identified as being too weak and old to construct. In eight other locations, the situation is the same: in Okwang, 22 of 22 people remaining in the camps are older persons; in Aloii 27 of 33 are older people; in Abako, 30 of 30 are older; in Alanyi 13 of 13; in Omoro 10 of 10; in Ayami 5 of 5; in Orit 5 of 5; and in Barlonyo 15 of 15 are older persons who are too weak and/or old to construct. This trend warns of the potential of decommissioned IDPs camps turning not into functional viable communities, but into unsupported holding areas for older people with special needs, the children for

⁸ UNHCR (Claire Bourgeois and Neill Wright), IDP Advisory Team, and Jeff Crisp (PDES), *Real-time evaluation of UNHCR's IDP operation in Uganda*, August 2007.

⁹ IASC and HelpAge International, *Strong and Fragile: Learning from older people in emergencies*, November 2007, p2.

¹⁰ CartONG office Gulu; note that the data is not complete for all sites in the region, but is representative only of villages of return where those implementing partners who have provided information operate.

¹¹ UNHCR, *Report on the Reminat [sic] IDPs within Lango sub-Region*, March 2008.

whom they care, and other vulnerable people with special needs all of whom lack the family and clan support necessary for meeting the basic requirements for human survival.

This pattern of leaving older people in camps has been corroborated by field visits which have shown that many camps undergoing substantial levels of return, over 50% moving to transit sites or villages of return, have populations of older people comprising well over a third of the total population. In Awach camp in Gulu District, for example, 38% of adults remaining in the camp are estimated to be aged 60 and above.

4. Methodology

The mission involved a desk review of AGDM, IASC, PCWG and UNHCR Uganda protection documents along with in person and telephone meetings with relevant stakeholders. This was followed by a two month field week trip to Uganda which included a two week visit each to Gulu and Kitgum, and a ten day visit to Pader in the Acholi region. In each location, visits were made to a range of camps and villages, including: camps which have not yet begun substantial return, camps which have begun return at rates up to 75%, transit sites, and villages of return. A brief assessment of available services in locations was made through observation, discussions with camp leaders, camp monitors, return monitors, and local service providers.

4.1. Focus Group Discussions

Field visit methodology was participatory in nature and included use of focus group discussions (FGD) with community members and separate and combined groups of older male and female PSNs. The primary purpose of the FGDs was to gain an understanding of what those barriers are, from the perspective of both older persons themselves as well as members of the extended community, that are keeping older people from returning to their villages – this focus is further explained in section 6. The FGDs were also used to gain a more complete understanding of what older people, and their families and communities, felt were their individual/household priority needs, areas where the community could be called upon to provide care and support, as well as identifying older men's and women's unique contributions to both the household and community. Each focus group discussion concluded with a chance for participants to ask both UNHCR and its implementing partner questions. Finally, the implementing partners and UNHCR were able to give feedback as to what the practical programmatic impact of these discussions would/might be. During the visit, 27 FGDs were held. Over 1,400 adult community members were consulted through FGDs; more than 90% of those consulted were estimated to be over the age of 60¹².

FGDs followed a consistent format and sought to explore older people's needs, barriers to return, reasons for returning, and contributions to the family and the community. Most FGDs were between one and two hours in duration. One challenge of the FGDs was to communicate that the discussions were simply an initial opportunity to start to understand older people's needs and contributions. However, participants – especially those in camp locations – often expressed expectations that we were there either to register them for services/NFI distributions or were going to hand out items after the

¹² UNHCR Implementing Partners mobilised community FGDs by inviting all members of the community over 60 to join the meetings. Because ID cards were not checked to ensure that all participants were over 60, it is possible that some of the participants could have been chronologically under 60 years, but socially and culturally considered *older*.

discussion. It was challenging to overcome these expectations and ensure that people were clear about the purpose (and eventual follow up) of the meeting. Support and cooperation of implementing partners during the FGDs was crucial to addressing these mis-perceptions and ensuring productive and successful discussions.

4.2. Semi Structured Interviews

Field visits also included interviews with housebound older people. Semi structured interviews were jointly selected by partner's knowledge of housebound older people in each location along with community recommendations of who we should visit. The SSIs were short discussions with the identified older person, and their carers if available. Each interview sought to explore reasons why the older person had or had not returned to his/her village, what kind of support was currently available, and what his/her feelings were about either having returned or having not yet returned. It was also an opportunity to explore the conditions that the older person was living in, observe their shelter and access to basic services, and especially understand what systems of social support by family and neighbours was in evidence. During the field visits, 17 SSIs were carried out.

Field visits were also used to gather examples of good practice by implementing partners. However, only one example of good practice specifically related to addressing the protection needs of older people was immediately evident, that being AVSI's work with the local market stall owners and the community members of Corner Agula in Gulu, by supporting increased access to markets for older, vulnerable people. The lack of good practice examples was primarily due to implementing partners not focusing on and not carrying out programme interventions for older people with special needs as opposed to unsuccessful age focused programming.

4.3. Stakeholder Meetings

Meetings were also held with a range of humanitarian stakeholders (INGOs, UN agencies, and local government officials) and Protection Cluster and sub-cluster members both in Geneva and in Uganda.

In order to better understand the dynamics of the regional District Protection Clusters, the consultant attended the Gulu DPC meeting on 9th April and briefed attendees on the mission objectives regarding protection of older people. As part of understanding the process of camp closure and criteria for determining its successful attainment, the consultant also attended the Gulu meeting of the Framework for Durable Solutions taskforce which focused on preparing a presentation of the multi-agency assessment results from Lalogi as well debating the future of the taskforce. Due to the timing of the visit, and the need to ensure sufficient time in camps and villages of return, no external meetings were participated in Kitgum; however, the consultant did participate in both of the weekly Kitgum UNHCR meetings. In Pader, the consultant presented initial findings to the OCHA Humanitarian Coordination meeting on 5th May.

Additional stakeholder meetings were held with implementing partners – ARC, ASB, AVSI, DRC, GOAL, Medair, and NRC as well as with UNOHCHR, WFP, WHO, UNDP, OCHA, and UNFPA and members of District Local Governments in all three district locations. Debriefings with UNHCR staff were also held in both Kitgum and Pader. The debrief in Gulu was bypassed due to logistical considerations.

Further understanding of stakeholders' attitudes to and awareness of older person's issues was gleaned through three multi-agency trainings (discussed in section 5).

Debriefings with UNHCR and cluster partners were held in Kampala following the field visits including presentation of mission results at the Kampala OCHA Humanitarian Coordination meeting on 12th May. A week was spent analysing data, preparing final presentations, and putting conclusions into report form. A debriefing and update with HelpAge International staff in London was held on May 20th, 2008. Additional debriefings with Geneva based UNHCR staff and Protection Cluster members are planned for June 2008.

5. Training and stakeholder knowledge, attitudes and skills

5.1. Training workshops

One day trainings were held in each location with the intention of encouraging participants to start to think about older people as a specific group and consider what their particular protection needs and vulnerabilities might be as well as exploring what makes older people unique among people with special needs. The workshops were further intended to help participants consider what contributions older people bring to their households and communities.

The three workshops took the same form and included an introduction to ageing during which basic statistics on global ageing and ageing in Uganda were shared. This was followed by an opportunity for participants to brainstorm on and compare their positive and negative perceptions of ageing. A brief introduction to older people's rights through an overview of current UN and international policy and international humanitarian law was then covered.

Afternoon sessions focused on exploring those concrete contributions older people bring to the process of return as well as those vulnerabilities which may challenge their ability to return. Once participants had a sense of older people's contributions, concerns, and roles, they were asked to brainstorm about the specific contributions of UN agencies, NGOs, local government, local communities and the clan and their roles in facilitating a durable solution whether it is an integrated return for older people and/or support for those older people remaining in the camp location. The workshop included an introduction to and sharing of good practice with regard to older person focused interventions and inclusion. Finally, the workshop concluded with participants identifying and sharing one specific action that they will take back and encourage their agency to do to ensure that the needs of returning and/or non-returning older people are not ignored, forgotten and/or discriminated against.

Each training workshop involved between 22 and 30 participants from UN agencies, implementing partner NGOs, and local district government. A total of 74 participants took part in the workshops. Workshop reports for each of the three locations have been written up and shared with all participants. Additional copies have gone to managerial staff at implementing partner agencies and UN agencies.

In Kitgum, participation in the training workshop was compromised by the District Disaster Management Coordination meeting which coincided with the training after having been repeatedly postponed since 24 January. The training also had a delayed start due to participants not arriving on time. As a result, the training had to be somewhat curtailed, and it was not possible to include the session summarising

elements of good practice. However, if a return visit to Kitgum is possible, the good practice session will be included in the next training programme.

5.2. Stakeholder knowledge, attitude, and skill

For all participants, the workshops offered their first formal opportunity to focus on older people's issues within the return setting. General **knowledge of older people's needs** within the context of displacement was clearly displayed by participants. However, people demonstrated measurable confusion in recognising why some older people are more vulnerable than others as well as a lack of overt recognition of older people's contributions to the household and the community. It often took a bit of encouragement for participants to consider and delineate the contributions and capacities that older people have. Thus, there was still a sense that *all* older people are *extremely vulnerable people* as opposed to comprising a heterogeneous population with a mixed set of capacities varying according to age, mobility, ability to access services, family support and other social, physical and economic factors.

Participants' **attitudes** towards (including) older people were generally positive and realistic as was discovered during the first session during the training. The main perceptions that participants reported of older people were that they were wise and caring. Older people were seen to act as transmitters of culture, educators and advice to younger generations as well as providers of childcare and domestic assistance. However, many participants needed some prodding and encouragement before they were able to recognise that older people have an active role in: economic activities, including income generation and savings; in land demarcation and dispute resolution; and instituting positive community health practices. Concerns for older people reflected general vulnerability due to increasing physical incapacity and that older people were a burden to households due to reduced productivity. It was interesting to note, however, that participants emphasized for both older and younger people their positive aspects.

It was evident from the training, and field visits with implementing partners, that participants would benefit from additional specialised training and support to enable them to be more **skilled** at working with and interacting positively with older people. Field based staff tended to display relatively good levels of skill when mobilising and managing community meetings. However, there was a gap in sensitivity evident during visits to housebound older people. Staff did not always greet the older person, nor did they always bend down to shake hands with the older person and ensure that the older interviewee could both see and hear the person asking questions. More often than not, staff did not direct their queries to the older person him/herself, but to the more able bodied caring relative. There is further a tendency by staff to stand over the housebound older person instead of ensuring that they are at the same physical level of the older person so that s/he can see and hear the staff member well. These sensitivity concerns could be easily addressed through a training programme for implementing partner's field staff.

Finally, many positive promises emerged during the final session of the workshops when participants were asked to identify one specific action that they can take back and encourage their agency to do to ensure that the needs of returning and/or non-returning older people are not ignored, forgotten and/or discriminated against. Responses were varied and all positive, but due to competing work priorities, lack of motivation, and lack of focused support to keep older people at the top of their radars, the concern is that many of the assertions will end up as rhetoric. Further work with the participants to help

them articulate and carry out effective advocacy and lobbying would empower participants to be able to create and implement effective sustainable solutions.

6. Findings

Overwhelmingly, older people expressed a desire to return to their villages of origin. Indeed the only older people who did *not* state the wish to return to their village of origin were those whose land was adjoining camps in which they had been displaced. Thus, in terms of achieving durable solutions for older displaced people, the preferred solution as articulated by older people themselves is return. In light of this collective expressed desire to return, findings are presented so as to identify those perceived and actual barriers to return.

It is important to note as a caveat that even in light of the above noted desire to return, there remains some confusion for older people regarding the element of choice in terms of freedom of movement. Many older respondents said that they were returning because they understand that the government is telling them to leave the camp locations and return to their villages. Full comprehension of freedom of movement did not appear to be totally understood by older people. Older people were choosing to return, they said, because the village life was first and foremost preferential to camp life and not necessarily because there was a sense that other settlement options exist.

Evidence from both the FGDs and SSIs indicated that there are two primary reasons that older people are not returning to villages. There are an additional four concerns that are presented in order of priority which are further seen to limit the return process. While these concerns are presented semi-hierarchically, there is very little difference in weighting between them. Three final issues were raised as *not* acting as barriers to return – land, food, and transportation – and are further expanded upon below.

In virtually all locations, respondents cited that people retain a fear of insecurity which further impacts on their perceptions of freedom of movement and desire to return to villages of origin, although levels of concern over security varied from site to site and between respondents at the same locations. The primary reason for this anxiety was fear that the Juba peace agreements will fail and violent insurgency return. Kony's unwillingness to sign the agreement has further raised people's level of concern. In areas in the east of Kitgum and Pader Districts, people also expressed fear of murder, theft, rape and attack by Karamojong cattle rustlers. Fear of Karamojong attacks increases exponentially as populations are located further east in Kitgum and Pader Districts. Whether people cited Karamojong attacks from 25 years before or only four days prior, fear of the Karamojong was expressed as a measurable anxiety for older people. As one older man in Palabek Kal, Kitgum District noted, *if we go back and there is a problem, the able bodied will be able to flee, but we will not be able to*. He indicated to the FGD group present saying, *if a snake suddenly fell from a tree, only a few people gathered here would be able to run and be safe*.

People also expressed concern throughout the region over the *Boo-kec*, opportunistic bandits/thugs, who roam unchecked throughout northern Uganda. Issues of UXO and landmine threats were mentioned from time to time as a security concern but were given much less priority than either fears of resurgence of conflict or of the Karamojong. Only

one tangible example was given (in Omot, Pader) of a disfiguring accident resulting from an UXO explosion.

These prevailing anxieties over security were often given as an overarching and crossing cutting background concern when describing the challenge of returning older persons (especially those with special needs) to their natal villages. For many older people, the perception of barriers was just as influential in determining their decisions to return as the actual reality of the challenges to return.

6.1 Priority Needs

Priority needs which had to be met before older people could return on a mass level were cited by older people themselves as falling into the following categories:

- i. Shelter
- ii. Assistance
- iii. Water
- iv. Access to social services – health care, schools, and markets
- v. Caring responsibilities
- vi. Psychosocial well being.

6.1.1. Shelter – Older people cited the lack of shelter as the main reason for not returning. Access to building materials, especially grass thatch for roofing, was the primary concern, and complaints about the lack of grass were common. Respondents blamed its absence on the grass having been burned by a *bad man* (this was stated throughout all three districts) or by people seeking to hunt more efficiently for bush rats for food. Inability to access building materials is further complicated by older people's lack of physical strength to collect available materials and construct shelter themselves. One older woman in Corner Agula in Gulu said, *I want to return to the village, but I cannot build a hut and I have no family to help.* In Lapul in Pader, one older man said, *we are too old, and in order to return, we need bricks, grass and bamboo.* A younger man in Bongotiko return site in Pader agreed, *older people who are still in the camps complain that there are no huts or latrines, and that they will only return when huts and latrines are available.* Another Bongotiko respondent noted that *most people have not returned because of the lack of grass. They will return, he continued, but not until August or September when grass is ready; until then, they will continue to commute.*

In Kironbe, Madi Opei in Kitgum, a group of vulnerable mobility challenged older women (widows, single grandmothers caring for orphans, and isolated older women without families) said that they want to return home, but they have no one to help them. *We sleep under the trees, they said; without shelter, it is difficult to return permanently.*

An associated problem with the lack of shelter is the physical difficulty the women have in trying to build their own shelter, and even when all the materials are readily available (except grass which will not be ready before the end of the year), the women feel disempowered to ask for assistance in hut construction. When they ask youth for assistance, the youth demand cash payment (which they then spend on alcohol). These women further asserted that they receive no assistance from other members of the community. One woman said that she has come back to the village alone, because she has no children and now *only God looks after me.*

In certain locations, however, there is evidence of households working to prepare for the return of older relations. In Gulu return sites, some younger family members

commented that they were in the process of making bricks in order to house older relatives once the grass is ready. Throughout the region, people did emphasise that the return of older relatives is important, even while acknowledging that the process would take time and resources. *Our grandparents are not forgotten, they asserted, we think of them all the time, they are our people* (Tekulu, Gulu).

That shelter is the primary concern for older people is reinforced by data from WFP research¹³ and by UNHCR's own assessment of former IDP camps in Lango sub region¹⁴. In a March 2008 rapid food security assessment carried out in 11 camps in Pader, respondents cited shelter as the primary barrier to return. Fully 56.4% of households interviewed stated that shelter was the biggest challenge (insecurity was a barrier for 34.5% and waiting for peace talks to be signed was stated as being a barrier for another 44.5%). UNHCR data from Lango confirms that lack of accommodation and/or shelter is the major barrier preventing IDPs from Lira, Oyam, and Apac from returning to villages of origin.

An issue which remains not fully addressed by both implementing partners and Protection Cluster members, however, is the process that needs to be taken to ensure that those staying in the camp locations have decent shelter and are able to maintain that shelter. This gap in provision for older people who cannot or choose not to return is a recurrent challenge throughout Acholiland.

6.1.2. Assistance – Most older people expressed concern over their physical incapacity, lack of strength and reduced physical robustness which manifest as general feelings of uselessness. In Wol camp Pader District, one older man lamented, *we are too old to return because we are of no assistance*. In Ogong in Pader, the feeling was the same - *there is no one to build for me; no one to help collect firewood, no grandchildren to help*. These feelings of uselessness were echoed throughout the visits. In Omiya Anyima, Kitgum District, one woman said, *I am alone and weak with no one to help me*; and another older woman in Lapul, Pader noted, *I have no children and am stuck here in the camp, there is no one to help me*. The situation was the same in Gulu where an older woman from Awach camp said, *I want to return to the village but I cannot build a hut and I have no family to help*.

Lack of physical strength and associated feelings of uselessness appears to lead to communities de-prioritising the return of older relatives. In Bobi Camp in Gulu, older physically compromised widows were especially noted as not having the strength and/or resources to build. In Omot camp in Pader, FGD participants noted that younger more able bodied family members are building huts for themselves, and the demands of preparing, clearing, and digging land along with building their own shelter has meant that older people have not accompanied their younger family members in return. The tacit expectation and explanation is that older people will eventually be assisted with return, but not immediately and only when other immediate basic needs of returnees have been met. Thus, the practical consideration of caring for, housing and feeding an older and perceived *less productive* relative was a reason to delay older people's return for returnees who had not yet been in villages of origin for a full harvest cycle and whose households remain far from food secure. In addition, respondents throughout Pader

¹³ WFP, key highlights from the Rapid EFSA presented at the May 6 OCHA Humanitarian Coordinator Meeting.

¹⁴ UNHCR, *Report on the Reminat [sic] IDPs within Lango sub-Region*, March 2008.

noted that clan structures have not returned sufficiently for the community to support the needs of those older people without families in the process of return.

We further asked FGD participants to expand on who might be able to care for those older people remaining in the camp without families to care for them. The response from able bodied younger people was clear. While asserting that anyone from the village who wanted to return would be welcome, younger respondents also asserted that *we cannot do everything*. This was especially clear with regard to older people who were not immediate relatives and who might be physically or mentally unwell. These people were not seen to be their responsibility as members of the clan. *We cannot look after strangers*, respondents from Gulu said. Had an unrelated older person been their neighbour in the camp, returnees would be willing to bring that person to the village rather than desert them in the camp. But for those older people without whom there had been a specific connection, returnees were not able to offer tangible support in the process of return. This was a near universal perspective in both transit sites and camps.

For those in return sites, variation in levels of community support were reported, and there was positive evidence that in some communities older people's needs (specifically for food and water) are starting to be catered for by both family members and through the traditional clan systems of support. UNDP data supports this with evidence that people aged 60 and above feel that half of people in villages of return can be *trusted* as opposed to the sense in IDP camps that fewer than a quarter are trustworthy¹⁵.

This sense of trust in others is becoming manifest in villages of return as actual assistance. In Kupino return site in Pader, the group observed that clan does help older people more than when they lived in the camp. *Now, people said, it is easier to assist older people with farming, carrying jerry cans of water, and cutting trees; it is still a problem, though, with people who live far away since the distances between homesteads can be much greater than those in the camps and thereby upset patterns of neighbour support.* One younger man expressed sadness that often older people who were neighbours in the camp are now far away in the villages and so it is difficult for him to continue regular support to them on top of his own family responsibilities.

We also enquired as to who would help them maintain their shelters. In Bongotiko return site in Pader, one woman noted that her granddaughter helps with the smearing (of mud on floors and walls). The group agreed that in general children and grandchildren will help with the maintenance labour and with other domestic jobs and, unlike in the camps, the children will not demand financial reimbursement for labour. The participants further agreed that children help them fetch water and assist with the cooking. When we inquired as to what happens if there is no one to help, the groups responded that neighbours will help. However, the general feeling expressed by most older people was that they would simply muddle through on their own; *if you have no one, you must try by yourself*.

6.1.3. Water –The availability of clean, accessible water sources is a pervasive concern for those of all ages trying to achieve durable solutions throughout Northern Uganda. In the camps, people note, there is generally sufficient water which is readily available. In

¹⁵ UNDP, Republic of Uganda Office of the Prime Minister, Fafo AIS, Ugandan Bureau of Statistics, *Returning to uncertainty: Addressing vulnerabilities in Northern Uganda*, 2007, p46.

villages of return, boreholes are often not functional, and many people stated that the only available water was either from unprotected springs which they feared would lead to sickness or had to be accessed from transit sites and camps and carried back to the villages. Data from partners confirms this concern. NRC's March 2008 Camp Management and Return Monitoring report for Kitgum operations, for example, indicates that 51 villages of return within their area of operation lack any functional water source.

In Ogong in Pader, one older man mentioned that there is no water in the village of return. In Kupino return site also in Pader, the situation was much the same, and people had to return to Wol camp to collect water. For older people in Kupino, the community concurred, having to fetch water from a site two kilometres away was too physically difficult and so meant that most of them reluctantly remained resident in Wol camp.

6.1.4. Services – Access to decent and appropriate health care was prioritised by older people throughout Gulu, Kitgum and Pader - in all locations, older people complained failing eyesight, general body pain and weakness. In Pader, respondents also prioritised proximity to trading centres. The March 2008 rapid food security assessment carried out in Pader by WFP further reinforces that access to services is important to people returning home, with 25.5% of respondents citing lack of health facilities as a barrier to return and 28.2% citing lack of schools¹⁶. Access to decent and appropriate health care was prioritised by older people in Kitgum District. It was specifically highlighted as a need in both Madi Opei and in Palabek Kal partly in response to the Hepatitis E outbreaks within these camps and was manifest for older people as a fear of inability to solicit urgent health care treatment should they return to villages of origin.

For most older respondents, maintenance of physical health was crucial to their ability to contribute to and/or head households. Thus, access to appropriate care combined with the ability to remain physically active impacts directly on how they are treated by family members and how they perceive their own wellbeing and role as active participants versus *useless* dependents within the family.

In both Kitgum and Gulu, older people commented on being treated poorly by health care providers. Respondents in Omiya Anyima in Kitgum said that physical access to services is limited, and there is often a scramble for space in order to get into the right line for service. *It is difficult to fight the crowds when you are older and less strong*, one man noted. In addition, older people felt that health staff were often insensitive to their needs. They reported frequently told by staff that they are wasting the doctor's time, since *they are not sick, they are just old*. In Gweng Pamon in Kitgum older people cited more positive experiences of health care, but did complain that often there is no doctor available and that many older people are too weak to physically walk the distances to access care from health centres. Returnees from Kinene Kalamaji in Gulu District noted that older people have to go to the L3 Health Centre in Cwero which is six kilometres from the village. When asked about their experiences in Cwero, over half of the older persons in the FGD said that they had been turned away from the health post after having made the difficult journey with the comment from health service providers that *they are too old and are wasting medicine; medicine is for children not old people*.

Unlike the respondents in Gulu and Kitgum, older people in Pader did not report being treated poorly by health care providers; nor did people report having been denied health

¹⁶ WFP, key highlights from the Rapid EFSA presented at the May 6 OCHA Humanitarian Coordinator Meeting.

care as a result of their age. In Wol, everyone agreed that they were treated well; *there is no discrimination, we just follow the queue*. They did complain, though, that they must wait long periods of time to access health care. In Acoro return site in Pader Town Council, people noted that while the quality health service is good, older people must walk for two hours into Pader town and two hours back in order to get care. One man felt that they as older people should be attended to first so they can make the long walk home before dark. People further shared frustration that appropriate medication for the treatment of chronic geriatric illnesses is not available, and that in many locations, there was little awareness by health staff of geriatric issues.

In locations where older people reported being actively involved in livelihoods activities, such as Omot and Kupino in Pader District, access to markets was a factor encouraging older people's decisions to remain permanently in camp or transit sites. Specifically for older person headed households where heavy agricultural labour was not possible due to physical disability and where income was supplanted by economic trading, people expressed a relative disinterest in returning.

Unfortunately, it was tricky to extract extensive information on this topic as people were reticent to be honest when self reporting economic activity. Older people with whom we spoke were almost universally disinclined to speak about economic activities for fear that they might not receive some anticipated good or service.

6.1.5. Caring responsibilities – Well over half of older people we spoke with said that they cared for grandchildren, data which is reinforced by HAI research carried out in Northern Uganda in 2007¹⁷. Grandparents shared that they felt stymied by a lack of family support to take care of grandchildren. As one man in Palabek Kal in Kitgum District said, *my wife is dead and my children are scattered, I have two orphans to take care of*. Another woman noted that she finds it difficult to be back in the village and is overwhelmed by the pressure of having to care for seven grandchildren without access to schools and other resources which were readily available in the camps. This situation is complicated by the fact that many older grandchildren themselves do not wish to return to the village and will run away back to the camps. This is particularly evident for children who were born in the IDP camps and have had no experience of the village. As noted by UNDP, many youth *have grown up in the camps and know little about traditional rural life... it cannot be overstated that the population emerging out of the IDP camps is significantly different from the one that went into them*¹⁸.

Many grandparents further shared that it was difficult to care for grandchildren. In Awach in Gulu, some older people put the blame on child focused agencies and expressed frustration that children in their care were now aware of their rights and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. While they felt that overall this was a positive thing for children, they also felt undermined in their authority as discipliners in that any attempts to have their grandchildren behave respectfully and to listen to them had been eroded. In Awach, specifically, the older people stated that any attempts to discipline children and ensure respectful behaviour towards elders were being reported as child protection violations to NGOs.

¹⁷ IASC and HelpAge International, *Strong and Fragile: Learning from older people in emergencies*, November 2007, p13.

¹⁸ UNDP, Republic of Uganda Office of the Prime Minister, Fafo AIS, Ugandan Bureau of Statistics, *Returning to uncertainty: Addressing vulnerabilities in Northern Uganda*, 2007, p42.

Older men in Awach also shared reasons behind their perceptions of loss of family and community respect. Older men are unable to support their households economically because they have no money or assets to support household expenditure. The men continued by saying that children and youth no longer show them respect. This is especially a problem in camps because they don't have fireside chats anymore. The fireside is culturally the physical and spiritual space for grandparents to teach children and is traditionally known as the *Wang-oo*. *Children's lives have changed*, the men noted with sadness. These frustrations were echoed by grandmothers. In Corner Agula in Gulu, it was stated that *the role of the grandmother is to raise daughter in laws according to Acholi etiquette*; however, the women concurred that children no longer respect the traditional culture of authority and propriety and are uninterested in learning traditional etiquette.

Many older people also felt impotent by their inability to pay for secondary school fees for grandchildren in their care. Two women in Omot camp in Pader said they must brew beer in order to pay for school fees. Other grandparents in Omot shared that they felt they were in a no win situation – if they remained in camps, their children could attend school. However, in the camps, the grandparent carers noted, it was much hard to ensure that children attend school. The children often leave the grandparent's hut and instead of attending school play truant and spend their days running in gangs throughout the camp. This was a consistent frustration throughout the three districts.

A related issue noted by grandparent carers was the lack of schools in return areas. Many people said that their grandchildren have to commute back to the camp in order to attend secondary school. While structures exist in villages of return, many are incomplete, in need of rehabilitation, and often teachers are insufficient in number to teach all the children.

The role of the village based school for communities returning was of great importance. In Kinene Kalamaji in Gulu, all members participating in the community FGD explained why they had decided to return to their village together. Even though food and water remain scarce, they noted, *we wanted to return together, we wanted to start to rebuild the school*. And in fact, the school itself has been lovingly maintained by the community. A ditch for latrines for the children has been dug, four tukuls have been constructed to house teaching staff, and the grass area in front of the school has been cleared to allow the children to play. Teachers are in resident and the school is a source of great pride for the community.

6.1.6. Psychosocial health – The UN *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* state in point 4 of principle 16 that *grave sites of IDPs should be protected and respected in all circumstance*¹⁹. For many older IDPs with whom we spoke, care of the dead was a concern both in terms of the challenge of moving the bones of relatives who have died in the camps to villages of return as well as anxiety that some return sites are affected by roaming spirits (spirits of the dead who were not properly buried). This is especially frightening for older people who have come across bones which had been only shallowly buried and were now evident on their traditional land. This perceived threat to their wellbeing makes older people unwilling to return to certain locations. In addition, many communities are busy cleansing young men who had spent time with the LRA, and older

¹⁹ OHCA, *ibid*, p9.

people are active in this activity to restore the psychosocial health of the communities and clans. This was noted particularly in Pajule sub-county.

In terms of psychosocial wellbeing many older people are eager to return to their land before they pass away. In Padibe in Kitgum one older woman said, *I want to die on my land, and I don't want to disturb people to have to carry home my remains*. Being able to return to villages of origins was especially important for older people to enable them to die at home.

The biggest factor, though, affecting older people's mental wellbeing is their feelings of social and economic uselessness. Both older men and women said that with life in the camps, they have lost the traditional opportunities of teaching by the fireside, referring to *Wang-oo*, and noted that *the way to restore the health of the families is by returning home to be at the fireside* (Wol camp, Pader). Perceptions of older people's roles and contributions are further explored in section 6.2. While people of all ages throughout the region expressed hope that return combined with reunification of families will result in the resurgence of traditional systems of teaching respect, discipline and culture, the wellbeing of older people remaining in camps reflected great deterioration.

6.1.7. Non-Issues

Land – In all three districts, land was *not* reported by older people as a concern delaying their return to the villages. People asserted that there is plenty of land available and that local leaders (and older people within the clan) are adept at settling boundary dispute issues. Furthermore, because older people are the holders of traditional knowledge regarding land ownership and distribution, they expressed measurable confidence that any disputes were easily settled through traditional mediation practices. Problems over land were only seen to emerge when *outsiders* (private business, military detachments, and the government) made bids for lands owned within clan groups.

It had been anticipated – following pre-mission reading - that widows would express concern over ability to access land, due to the patrilineal nature of Acholi society. However, this was not reported to be an overwhelming concern by older women. Rather, as with UNDP's research results, we found in return locations the expectation that the *widows' right to their husbands' land would be protected by the husbands' family, due to social pressure from the community not to treat the widow badly*²⁰.

The March 2008 rapid food security assessment carried out by WFP further confirms that IDPs do not perceive land as a barrier to return. In the survey of 110 households, only 0.9% of respondents noted that fear of land wrangles in the place of return is keeping them from going home²¹.

Meetings with UNOHCHR in both Kitgum and Pader further substantiated this observation with observations by OHCHR staff that over the past 18 months only three land issues by older people had been brought to the OHCHR office's attention. In Kitgum, there had only been one complaint by an older person regarding land, but this was simply an inquiry regarding the time and date of a court hearing. In Pader, neither

²⁰ UNDP, Republic of Uganda Office of the Prime Minister, Fafo AIS, Ugandan Bureau of Statistics, *Returning to uncertainty: Addressing vulnerabilities in Northern Uganda*, 2007, p43.

²¹ WFP, key highlights from the Rapid EFSA presented at the May 6 OCHA Humanitarian Coordinator Meeting.

reported complaint was directly related to older people experiencing age based discrimination barring their access to family land. Neither OHCHR representative with whom we spoke could cite an experience of older people coming to the office to seek assistance with the settlement of boundary disputes and/or land grabbing.

In both locations, it was acknowledged that issues regarding land may indeed affect older people. However, staff attributed the lack of older people not reporting violations due to a lack of knowledge about OHCHR. In addition, many older people will not have considered that there might be a specific organisation to help address land based violations. This highlights the value in increasing public awareness of older people's rights as well as publicising available public services.

Although they were very limited in number, we did encounter more instances of land ownership confusion and fear over land grabbing in Pader than in Gulu or Kitgum. In Kitgum, it was only in Omiya Anyima that one gentleman noted conflict over land boundaries. He had started to construct a hut, he shared, only to return to the camp for a few days and then back to the village to find that the poles had been removed on his hut. In Gulu, no major land issues were cited by older people. In Pader, we encountered two situations where land concerns was affecting people, in the return site of Pader Town Council where a land dispute was being heard in court the day after our visit and in Patongo camp. In Patongo where we held a small FGD with eight older men (just over 1% of the total 700+ people with whom we spoke in Pader District), land was raised as a primary factor affecting their ability to return. One man said that soldiers are resident on his plot, and therefore he cannot return to farm there. Six others said that the land they are returning to is actually a transit site and other people are now living on their land. Only one of the grandfathers said that he was in the process of constructing his hut, the others were not constructing due to lack of access to their land. This, however, was the largest and indeed only group of older people citing land access issues as a barrier to return.

In Gulu, UNHCR's IP AVSI had heard of some instances of widows being stigmatised when seeking legal advice in sub county centres, but staff with whom we spoke were not able to cite specific examples. In addition, older people did sometimes express fear over *potential* land wrangles as in Omot, Pader where one older woman said that she was eager to return to her village since she was afraid that her land might be taken away by opportunistic neighbours if she delayed the process of return too long.

As well as land, the provision and availability of **food** was not reported to be a barrier to return. However, this was in part due to the expectation of people that WFP will continue to supply food. As long as rations are provided, older people will either remain in the camps and/or retain a hut in the camps in order to access food. And even when speaking with people who had returned to villages of origin, whose crops have not yet matured, and were no longer receiving WFP rations, they did not note food as a barrier to return. In Oguta in Pader, one older man summarised this perception: *food is not a major reason for not returning, the major reason is shelter.*

Interviews with WFP indicated that food will continue to be distributed for the next 12 months²². In Pader, WFP intends to phase out general food provision and is looking into providing food only for the most vulnerable. In Kitgum, WFP further noted that they

²² WFP, *Food Assistance Phase-Off Strategy for the North, February 2008.*

intend to move the majority of food distributions to return sites. When asked how they would avoid double food accessing (by people who are at return sites but who still commute back to the camps for food distributions), WFP in Kitgum acquiesced that there would be a period of overlap. In Pader, the situation was a bit clearer and WFP clarified that there will not be a re-registration and so receipt of food will be based solely on evidence of recipient's ration cards. This lack of re-registration while administratively more efficient may also lead to the omission of certain older people, who did not fit into the category of EVI during registration two years prior but who may have fallen into that category now due to age related physical deterioration, being overlooked for receipt of life saving food rations.

For both land and food, what will arise as a concern is what happens six months to a year on when WFP rations cease and when land owners who have offered and/or negotiated use of their land for transit sites demand it back. An additional concern regarding WFP distribution is the substantial increase in world food prices. The WFP representative in Pader noted that they are currently facing cost increases of 40% in terms of food ration costs.

A final issue which is not cited as affecting older people's decisions to return is the lack of **transportation** to villages of return. Throughout the three districts, older people were clear that if they wanted to return that transport via foot, bicycles and/or *boda-boda* (the motorbike taxis) would be accessed to facilitate the process.

6.2 Contributions of Older People

In order to better understand both how older people, their households and communities perceive them, we inquired what FGD participants felt older people's contributions to the household and the community were. Older people, especially those in the camp, tended to emphasise their lack of capacity rather than their potential contributions. We repeatedly heard older people lament that *we have no strength, we are useless*. In most locations, the older people themselves were one of the biggest challenges in encouraging community and household support; older people do not define their contributions tangibly and as a result do not tend to recognise their own capacities and skills as valuable. By de-valuing their own contributions, they reinforce the message to family and community (and indeed NGO service providers, UN agencies, and local government) that older people are useless.

Respondents thus often needed extensive prodding before they were able to articulate older people's roles in terms of contribution. When the groups were ultimately able to note contributions, they fell squarely into seven categories:

1. *mediators* during domestic disputes – grandmothers, in particular, were noted as being the holders of family history and so are able to refer to that knowledge in order to mediate fairly over disagreements
2. *educators/ advisors* of grandchildren
 - a. discipliners of children
 - b. in traditional roles, duties and expectations
 - c. rules of right and wrong and behaviour norms
 - d. rules of marriage
 - e. with regard to land boundaries and animal care – grandfathers are also responsible for ensuring that the children and grandchildren are aware of traditional land boundaries and how to tether, graze and care for animals
3. *carers and domestic assistance*

- a. caring for children and grandchildren, including orphans
 - b. caring for widows
 - c. cleaning the compound
 - d. cooking (including preparation of traditional foods)
4. *land education*
- i. teaching children and grandchildren about traditional land boundaries
 - ii. teaching children and grandchildren how to tether, graze and care for animals
 - iii. dividers of land and assets
5. *cleansers* –responsible for carrying out cleansing activities following the transgression of a taboo
6. *healers* – grandmothers were cited as being responsible for administering local medicine, acting as TBAs and providing ritual birth support
7. *income generation* - teachers of livelihoods skills as well as providers of income from these crafts.

In all three areas, and especially in camp locations, the older FGD participants said that many of these traditional roles are no longer possible for older people. Children who have grown up in the camps, they asserted, are unmanageable, disrespectful of older people, and neither know Acholi tradition nor are interested in learning. One older woman in Oguta transit site in Pader noted that in the camps, the children are like goats or wild dogs, *they are completely out of control and don't listen to their elders*. In the camps, there is extensive evidence of social erosion of both traditional family and community support systems making it challenging for older people to know who they can turn to for support and assistance. However, as was noted in two locations in Pader, *a home without a grandparent is not a home*.

For most older people being able to act as educators of children and grandchildren through the sharing of stories by the fireside was a source of great happiness and pride. In the camps, they rued, there were no places to carry out teaching at the fireside. Firewood was scarce, and the extreme congestion made the risk of fire-related accidents too high. Those who had returned felt that, now they can sit by the fire and teach the children the traditional stories. One older gentleman in Kinene Kalamaji in Gulu said, *we can teach our children and grandchildren at the fireside to respect older people, and we can do it happily and calmly*. In Tekulu in Gulu return site, a grandmother commenting on the interest and willingness of children to learn from their grandparents noted that *now my granddaughter can even identify wild fruits*.

In Pader, and this had not been evident in either Gulu or Kitgum, was the presentation by older people of their traditional role in livelihoods activities. Older people noted specifically that not only do grandparents have a special role in teaching children skills such as weaving, basket making, and pottery, but that they also hold a specific role in carrying out livelihoods activities and so contributing to the household through income provision.

7. Cluster Efficacy

The impact of the cluster system appears to be primarily positive throughout the Acholi region. Cluster cooperation leading to more focused and a better organised set of programme interventions was evident in all three districts. This is particularly impressive

given that UNHCR undertook leadership of the Protection Cluster in Northern Uganda less than three years ago without having had a historical programming presence.

7.1. Cluster Challenges

However, three aspects of the Protection Cluster in Acholi region could be strengthened to improve the impact of its overall efficacy: leadership, partner relations, and systems of referral.

The professional experience and skills necessary to be a successful protection officer in the field are not always congruent with those required to actively and effectively organise and coordinate a large number of overworked, relatively senior, and often independent NGO and UN agency managers. Future selection of cluster focal points for field offices in other countries would benefit from recognising this continuum of skills and experience and work to identify both skill sets in potential candidates. Continued training for cluster focal points at field level on partner management, organisational leadership, and cooperative strategic planning will also contribute to expanding and developing cluster focal point's leadership capacity. In addition, cluster focal points at field level will benefit from the support of a unified UNHCR front which publicly espouses and endorses the added value of the cluster system.

In general, the relationship between UNHCR and implementing partners was seen to be characterised by mutual respect and support. As noted in the 2006 Uganda self assessment, the cluster system has resulted in *a greater spirit of collaboration in terms of partnership building*²³. However, in Acholi region, there was some evidence that additional improvement in communication and partnership understanding would increase the effectiveness of protection interventions in the region. It was observed in one district that certain IPs saw UNHCR as a donor and that the two groups often struggled to embrace the opportunities of programmatic partnership. This was observed to result in time consuming negotiations with regard to standardising programme interventions and was particularly noticeable with regard to using shared criteria for determining and defining categories of vulnerability. Improved communication on a regional level between UNHCR and implementing partners would contribute to smoother and more focused interactions at the cluster level. Continued targeted support from the Kampala level would also further enable the success of this process. However, this would require additional human resources in the capital.

There is also no effective referral system within the Protection Cluster for responding to violations of older people. Current protection incident forms have no place to note whether people have been denied access to or participation in activities and/or services due to either age or ability²⁴. This lack of physical space on the forms in which to note age related protection violations results in staff not actively tracking violations against older people. In addition, many agencies are focusing efforts on tracking protection violations primarily in areas of return. Limitations in staff numbers, this shift of programmatic focus, in conjunction with the above noted reporting gap increase older people's invisibility. Added to which, even if violations were raised at District Protection Cluster meetings, there is no specific agency, organisation, or set of individuals tasked with responding to these issues, nor is there a system by which different organisations are empowered to respond on a geographic or sectoral basis.

²³ UNHCR, *Uganda – In country self assessment, 25-26 October, 2006, Annex 5, p3.*

²⁴ UNHCR, *Protection Incident Form (Gulu), 2008.*

A first step is to amend the protection incident forms to include a space to note violations against older people; a second step is for the Protection Cluster at both the national and local levels to identify a system by which relevant stakeholders can follow through on reported violations. This is a gap which the Protection Cluster will also need to address with local government so as to ensure that older people's needs are met once the cluster system phases out. Furthermore, it will be necessary for the Protection Cluster at both the Kampala and field levels to incorporate a system of including and responding to older people's issues into their strategic plans.

Finally, within the DPC meeting, it was observed that there was no specific agenda item for sharing of good practice on older people's protection due to a heavy and understandable focus on housekeeping issues. To this end, the consultant is concerned that older people's protection concerns will not receive the full attention they merit. A long term response that could prove effective, but would entail additional human and financial resources would be to bring in an ageing focal point²⁵.

7.2. Durable Solutions

Based on information gathered from FGDs, SSIs, stakeholder interviews, and the training workshops, the process of camp phase out and the achievement of durable solutions is anticipated to result in three categories of older IDPs:

- older people who have returned to their villages of origin (or will do so by August when grass for thatching becomes available);
- older people who have families in villages of return, but who remain in camps themselves because they are not yet able to return due to lack of shelter, services and support;
- older people who have been abandoned by family (or who are completely alone) and neighbours and who remain in camp settings with limited or no support.

With regard to achievement of durable solutions, each category of older people will benefit from specific support. (There is an additional category of older people who will remain in the camp locations voluntarily, either because their land is nearby or because of access to services. This group consisted of only a handful of people with whom we spoke and so are presumed to have their needs covered within categories one and three.)

For older people who have returned to their villages of origin or are in the process of returning, community participation and active engagement of clan and parish leaders will be vital to ensure that older people are integrated and involved in the rebuilding of communities. Participation of older people in community level decision making will also be key to ensuring their inclusion in the community revitalisation. For those older people who want to return but are without the support to do so, stakeholders (including older people, the community and local government) will need to identify families and/or households in the villages of return to find a solution to enable the older person to return. If nuclear or extended families are unable to support older people to return, it will be up to the community to identify if there is someone else who can take community responsibility for transport, shelter, and support and take steps to commence the process of return, rebuilding and basic needs provision.

²⁵ A focal point could be responsible for Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and potentially Lira as well, depending on resources and country level priorities.

For those older people who have been abandoned and do not have family to facilitate the process of return, the challenges are much greater. Furthermore, integrated planning does not currently appear to include older people. The *Durable Solutions Task Force* in Gulu - whose pilot exercise included an inter-agency assessment of five parishes in Lalogi sub-county in Gulu District to identify gaps in basic services required for sustainable return - failed to address the issue of those who will remain in the camps.

The challenges to ensuring that those vulnerable IDPs remaining in former camps have sufficient community integration and support are enormous. Evidence from UNHCR's own assessment of former IDP camps in Lango sub region²⁶ and from FGDs and SSIs indicates that this residual camp population is likely to consist of persons with special needs who are alone without family support. They may care for children, have multiple physical and mental vulnerabilities and be in need of specialised care of support. Many of those left in the camps will exhibit limited ability to earn a consistent livelihood. Access to food and services such as clean drinking water and accessible, maintained latrines need to be made available to those especially vulnerable people remaining. The sustainability of durable solutions will depend on *national and international development actors [being] engaged in filling existing gaps including rehabilitation and reconstruction* (p.56)

7.3. Provider of Last Resort

The role of provider of last resort remains somewhat unclear within the context of Northern Uganda and the limited financial resources UNHCR has in terms of programming. Where gaps exist in humanitarian response, it is understood that it is the responsibility of the provider of last resort, which in Northern Uganda is UNCHR, to address these²⁷. However, it is not clear to what extent UNHCR is expected by other agencies to pick up slack left by non-active clusters. For example, the GIL Cluster is not operational in Pader and has only just started to function in Kitgum. What are UNHCR's responsibilities to address gaps in livelihoods response resulting from the lack of a GIL Cluster? What is UNHCR's role in supporting UNDP to develop a livelihoods cluster? These questions and the ensuing role of the Humanitarian Coordinator to advocate for addressing unmet protection gaps for older people remain unresolved and from a protection perspective have real implications for older people (see section 7.3.3.).

Further clarification of the role of provider of last resort could be determined at the national District Protection Cluster level and communicated to the field partners. This would help regional clusters better understand their specific responsibilities in terms of mobilising resources, working to fill the gaps left by non or poor functioning clusters, advocacy, and communicating constraints to relevant stakeholders²⁸.

8. Recommendations

As noted in the 2006 UNHCR evaluation of AGDM in 2004 and 2005, *there are often a number of actions which can be taken by UNHCR staff and partners which don't require additional budgets but that can show a visible response*²⁹. Likewise, older people

²⁶ UNHCR, *Report on the Reminat [sic] IDPs within Lango sub-Region*, March 2008.

²⁷ IASC, *Guidance Note on Using the Cluster Approach to Strengthen Humanitarian Response*, 24 November, 2006.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ UNHCR, *Initial impact of age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in 2004 and 2005*, draft February 22, 2006, p6.

themselves *have numerous resources at their own disposal and that [sic] they play a critical role in solving their own problems*³⁰. Recommendations given seek to offer low cost, high impact responses, directly include older people in the solution, reinforce *traditional values and practices, and ... play a significant role in ensuring better access to services for older people*³¹.

There are three areas where UNHCR and its Protection Cluster partners could improve their ability to address and respond to older people's protection needs:

- visibility, inclusion and participation of older people
- integrated and intergenerational response
- appropriate practical and financial resources.

For each theme, wherever possible, specific avenues of action are outlined. All areas of intervention should include elements of advocacy, awareness raising/information sharing, and direct programming (through implementing partners). It is worth noting that while these recommendations are specifically focused on older people, most recommendations if not all are also applicable to adults with physical disabilities and could be adopted and adapted to improve the quality of their lives. Appendix Three³² contains a brief checklist that Protection Cluster members may wish to refer to in order to ensure that they are including older people both in initial and on going needs assessments as well as in regular programming.

8.1 Visibility, Inclusion and Participation of Older People

8.1.1. Participation

Firstly, participation of older people in decisions which affect the quality of their lives must be an over arching and cross cutting element of programme interventions, advocacy activities and policy recommendations. Older people, including those who are housebound and/or socially isolated, need to be consulted and their priorities and solution to problems be included in responses. They also must be encouraged to be active participants in determining solutions – especially in camp locations such as Bobi in Gulu District, Omiya Anyima and Padibe in Kitgum District and Lapul and Patongo in Pader District where levels of dependence are high. One way to achieve this is for stakeholders to ensure that community meetings include a wide representation of older people, and that older male and female participants are given the opportunity to formally voice their concerns and ideas.

One concrete method to ensure that old people's voices are heard is to encourage the development of Older Persons Committees (OPCs) or Older Person Associations (OPAs). In Corner Agula and Bobi in Gulu District and Palabek Kal and Padibe in Kitgum District, older people responded positively to this concept. In Corner Agula, Gulu, older female FGD participants themselves initiated the idea of forming a woman's OPC to engage in home visits to provide social and practical support for neighbouring housebound older women. In Bobi and Kinene Kalamaji in Gulu District, the groups expressed interest in developing OPCs to influence LC1 and LC2 political processes and raise the needs and concerns of both older people in the community and the community itself. In Padibe in Kitgum, older people considered the idea of using OPCs/OPAs to

³⁰ Ibid, p6.

³¹ IASC and HelpAge International, *Strong and Fragile: Learning from older people in emergencies*, November 2007, p7.

³² The PCWG's *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced People* and UNHCR's *Heightened Risk Identification Tool* provide additional tools for ensuring inclusion of older people in humanitarian response.

lobby for better care by health staff providers. In Palabek Kal in Kitgum, the idea of creating OPCs/OPAs was discussed as a way to both pressure local government for appropriate service provision as well as engage in joint livelihoods activities. In Omot in Pader, creation of OPCs/OPAs was discussed as a way to engage more effectively with the parish older person's representative to raise the issues of older people.

All Protection Cluster members and UNHCR Implementing Partners are recommended to actively encourage communities to form OPCs/OPAs so as to empower groups of older people to engage in mutual social (and economic in the case of livelihoods activities) support and direct political advocacy. This could be done with little additional input as part of regular camp monitoring and community meeting activities. However, in all locations, there may be a need for support materials and direction to assist with the development of the OPCs/OPAs³³.

8.1.2. Raising Public Awareness

A second recommendation is that protection stakeholders actively engage in raising public awareness of older people's rights and contributions. An information campaign directed at older people themselves, community members, implementing partners, and local government can help fill this information gap. This should be easily integrated into UNHCR programming since, in its IDP Strategy for 2008, it has already outlined plans to engage in a mass information campaign which includes rights and services information for older people³⁴.

UNHCR (and/or partners) might consider hosting regional radio broadcasts, or series of broadcasts, where older people's rights (referring specifically to the 1991 UN Policy on Older People and the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing) and needs, are highlighted, debated, and discussed. UNHCR staff in Gulu has already secured the participation of Perry Jawoko Head of Unit for people with disabilities and older people, Gulu District Local Government and Arthur Loum of UNHCR. Additional participants would include Deborah Oyella from UNOHCHR and Patrick Wokorach of WHO, both of whom participated in the one day training. It is recommended Kitgum and Pader UNHCR staff and Protection Working Group members liaise with colleagues in Gulu to share lessons learned from their radio programme exercise and explore the impact that radio has in terms of public awareness of and sensitivity to older people's issues.

8.1.3. Inclusion

In both Kitgum and Gulu, one specific area where public awareness needs are acute regards health services for older people (as noted above this was less of a concern in Pader). Meetings with WHO in both Gulu and Kitgum confirmed the impression that medical staff are not sensitised to respond to older people's health issues. WHO further expressed concern that the national health service is not currently at a point where a programme of mass sensitisation to older people's health requirements would be a productive investment of time, money and/or human resource. Indeed, WHO staff cited a critical gap in provision of basic drugs, massive understaffing (estimated at between 26-32% in Kitgum and Gulu), and poor attendance by medical staff. WHO notes that they too have overlooked the health needs of older people in their programming. Currently, WHO priorities focus on: Village Health Team (VHT) strengthening, malaria

³³ Information to assist with development of OPAs can be accessed through HAI's website www.helpage.org as well as through, HAI, *Establishing and working with older people's associations in Cambodia: a practical guideline*, 2006.

³⁴ UNHCR, *UNHCR Uganda IDPs Strategy 2008*.

and HIV management and treatment, addressing mental health concerns, and strengthening health services. As a result, there is an urgent unmet gap in addressing older people's health concerns throughout the northern region.

To address this gap, WHO recommended that UNHCR and implementing partners consider sensitising and working with VHTs. Partnership with VHTs could involve older people directly as team members, therein reinforcing older people's traditional roles as healers. In addition, participation on the VHTs could support older carers of grandchildren as active participants in health education campaigns focused at child wellbeing. Working through the VHT system would also support the regular monitoring of and visits to older people which could encourage community care of older people as well as feed information on the incidence and types of older people's health issues from the community level upwards through the health service system. In Gulu, WHO mentioned that TPO has been training VHTs on basic concepts; this connection is one that UNHCR could explore further to see what opportunities might exist to support TPO to integrate geriatric health care concerns into the current training curriculum.

One obstacle to any health interventions for older people is the availability of appropriate geriatric drugs. Liaison with WHO and the Ministry of Health at Kampala level will be an important element of advocating for the distribution and availability of appropriate geriatric drugs. Involvement of the health cluster should be encouraged so as to commence engagement and sensitisation of local health providers to the chronic needs of older people. This could be enhanced where health cluster members are already engaged in health staff capacity building by including a unit on the care of older people into their training. Another action IPs and health cluster members could take is to work with individual selected health posts to set aside a specific time period each week to receive and treat older people; AVSI is already considering this in Corner Agula in Gulu. This would both reduce waiting time for older people as well as allow health staff to focus specific attention on older people. HAI's experience in Darfur has found this to be helpful for improving older people's access to and quality of care³⁵.

8.1.4. Disaggregated Data

Another area where both implementing agencies and local government can assist in making older people visible is through the accurate collection and dissemination of disaggregated data, distinguishing wherever possible between active over 60s and the oldest of the old. HAI recommends collecting data on both the 60-79 age bracket as well as on those over 80. For all three locations, it is recommended that both implementing agencies and local government continue to record data on those 60+, but wherever possible break that down into those who are active and over 60 and who will benefit from support to return to villages of origin and those with multiple vulnerabilities who need specific assistance to meet basic living needs. Accurate and timely data collection will further assist decision makers to understand who is remaining in camp locations, why they are unable to return home, and what their assistance needs are.

While evidence from some UNHCR implementing partners indicates that local monitors do collect comprehensive data on over 60s, one continuing challenge is to ensure that that information is made accessible to local governments so that they are aware of the extent of older people's needs and contributions while simultaneously having accurate data on the numbers and percentage representation of older people (and the

³⁵ HAI, Bramucci, Gina, *Rebuilding lives in longer-term emergencies: older people's experience in Darfur*, 2006.

grandchildren in their care) who are returning to villages of origin or are remaining in camp locations. This will improve local government's ability to plan, budget for, and provide appropriate services. This will be especially important as camps close and humanitarian partners reduce service provision.

8.2 Integrated and Intergenerational response

8.2.1. Cooperation

It is vital that agencies share good practice and work together to avoid duplication, or introduce new structures which undermine traditional clan support mechanisms or compete with the local parish approach to service provision. With regard to older person's protection needs, the District Protection Cluster (DPC) should initially provide the forum through which this can happen while simultaneously empowering local government to take on protection response in order to ensure a smooth transition once durable solutions have been achieved and the Protection Cluster is phased out.

Cooperation with communities of return needs to be encouraged and traditional clan structures of community support for those less able fostered. Where communities engage in cooperative farming at return sites, practical support should focus on promoting internal systems of cooperation rather than importing new and potentially duplicating systems. Even where programming may not intimately involve older persons, wherever possible it is important to consult them and engage their participation as advisors such as in income generating activities and demonstration agricultural farming. One opportunity to ensure older people's involvement is by involving them in the mobilisation and selection of Project Management Committees as part of UNHCR's rehabilitation cash for work road clearing programmes³⁶.

Work with local government Elders' councils could have the result of increased income generation opportunities for those older people who cannot engage in agricultural labour themselves. As families prepare bricks for housing their older relatives, implementing organisations should work with community members to make concrete plans to ensure the continued support of older relatives upon return. Where huts are being construction for people with special needs, the community must be consulted to determine priority beneficiaries. While, it is understood that these considerations are in place with UNHCR IPs for 2008, there was evidence that some older people who had received assistance with shelter in 2007 were not the neediest, as was the case in Kironde return site in Gulu.

Even where programming may not intimately involve older persons, it is important to consult them and engage their participation as advisors. One older man in Awach complained that *NGOs have programmes tailored to agriculture, but that we old people are excluded*. This is an oversight which can be easily addressed with no additional and financial inputs by simply inviting older people to participate in these interventions as mentors, advisors and/or organisers. Another opportunity for this is noted in the Pader Camp Phase Out and Camp Closure guidelines³⁷ which recommend that tools are distributed to communities to facilitate the process of return. This is another easy avenue by which to involve older people and have them (or at least a representative number) involved the tool distribution process: it reinforces older people as active participants, recognises their knowledge and experience, engages them productively

³⁶ UNHCR, *UNHCR Uganda IDPs Strategy 2008*.

³⁷ UNHCR, *Camp Phase Out and Camp Closure: Process in Pader* (draft), April 2008, section C, page 2, point 15.

with a socially and economically important duty, and places them within the economic (livelihoods) sphere of family and community.

As camp monitors and return monitors do population counts, they should be supported to visit older people and check to see that they are eating, getting water, and being looked after by relatives. Monitors should not simply assume that the older person is in good physical and mental health simply because they are home. The use of monitors by implementing partners will be a vital element both in villages of return and in camps in order to ensure that older people, and other people with special needs, are not overlooked in terms of protection and to ensure their active participation in developing and being part of durable solutions.

Finally, community members could be actively involved in family and community tracing support for older abandoned adults and other people with special needs left in camp locations in order to reunify them with families and enable them to return to villages of origin, if that is their choice.

8.2.2. Training

Continued stakeholder training, including for members of Protection Cluster and sub-clusters on working effectively with older people would be useful, as would be a longer general training on older people's rights, needs and contributions. It would ideal to be able to have a follow up training with the participants who attended the first training within 6-9 months in addition to carrying out additional trainings with community return and camp leaders and monitors. This would be especially relevant to camp based staff as return activities will almost certainly result in the representative increase of vulnerable older people remaining in camp locations.

Specific training recommendations include:

1. Develop guidelines for the inclusion of older people in field recommendations (refer IDP handbook), share with cluster partners through field based training
2. Provide cluster members with training of trainers programme to develop and carry out advocacy and lobbying strategies with government and service providers
3. Provide cluster members with training of trainers programme on working effectively with older people, including a longer general training on older people's rights, needs and contributions
4. Increase cluster members' sensitivity in interacting with older people – particularly field staff - community return and camp leaders and monitors.

8.2.3. Intergenerational programming

Intergenerational programming is key to ensuring that older people do not live in isolation. It can further help reaffirm older people's traditional roles and (re)build their respect by and support from youth and children. Implementing partners all cited programmatic plans to provide shelter for select older people using, in some cases, youth labour. This provides an excellent opportunity to integrated older people with youth, however, it is crucial that the youth don't simply provide labour and walk away, but that implementing partners ensure that older people and youth work together to build shelter and while building the shelter (re)develop intergenerational links. These activities can be linked to additional cross generational support and other activities such as income generation.

Intergenerational links can further be developed through the inclusion of older people in child friendly spaces where they can act as story tellers and animators. More discussions and joint planning could be undertaken between UNHCR and UNICEF to support intergenerational programming as well between cluster members and other child-focused agencies. Likewise, any restocking programmes or cooperative gardening efforts focusing on older people could include participation by a grandchild with the outcome being that old and young share the work, older people are enabled to share their own life experiences, and a multigenerational households increase their economic capacity.

8.3 Appropriate practical and financial resources

8.3.1. Appropriate Assistance

As with issues of general participation, older people should be consulted as to what their specific needs are and in what form they are best provided for. For example, if an older man is too weak to engage in heavy farming, axes and hoes may not be the most suitable NFI to provide. By the same token, older people may find that certain NFIs are more useful in a different form – five litre jerry cans may be the largest that an older person can carry, and one thick blanket instead of two thinner ones may be preferred by older people who feel the hardness of the ground more intensely.

UNHCR partners throughout the region are all engaged (or about to engage) in provision of shelter for extremely vulnerable older people and PSNs seeking to return to villages of origin. Criteria for inclusion as a PSN falls within five non-hierarchical categories: older people without family; older people with chronic illness with limited support; older people caring for children; women at risk; and single parents without support³⁸. The process of selection, verification, and hut construction will be carried out through a community hut construction committee and seeks to address the needs of those able to return home but who are lacking shelter. A further requirement of selection is that the older person and their family can ensure continued support of the older person upon return.

Housing assistance needs to take a form which is appropriate and easy to maintain for an older recipient. It is also important that any housing provision interventions do not further alienate the community from the older person. Thus, while iron sheet roofs would alleviate an older person's need to regularly collect water (since the iron sheeting could be adapted as a water catchment system), they may also lead the community to mistakenly believing that superior housing equates with no support needs. This was a particular concern in Kitgum where one IP is planning on building larger, iron roofed houses for vulnerable older people.

In addition UNHCR's IDP strategy³⁹ indicates that they intend to provide NFIs to PSNs through implementing partners. These complimentary NFIs are an important aspect of shelter provision, since shelter on its own without practical assistance would simply result in older people moving from a camp sited situation of vulnerability to one in the village of return. And indeed, huts without any NFIs/blankets only partially reduce the protection risk that older vulnerable people face; shelter without provision of basic NFIs may even increase older returnees levels of vulnerability. Thus, any shelter intervention needs to be carried out with the participation of the older person, their family, the

³⁸ UNHCR, Kitgum, *PSN/EVI Adapted Criteria*, March 2008.

³⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Uganda IDPs Strategy 2008*.

community and with a view to meeting general, holistic basic subsistence needs and not solely shelter.

Finally, if IPs are committed to enabling the process of return, it will be vital to work with households and communities in villages of return to ensure that they are fully prepared to complete housing once grass is ready. Working in partnership with communities to be fully prepared for August and September grass availability entails making bricks and building hut structures beginning now and continuing over the next two to three months. If communities are properly encouraged and supported to prepare building materials for a full range of older people wanting to return, in addition to working with IPs to provide housing for specific vulnerable older people, a measurable proportion of older people should be able to successfully return to villages of origin within the next six months.

8.3.2. WFP Food Distribution

One big concern evident from observing WFP food distributions was that older people (and other PSNs) often have to wait over hours to receive their distributions. This can be particularly difficult for those who are mobility challenged and/or in compromised health. During a meeting with WFP in Kitgum, the recommendation was put forward that WFP considers moving distributions times (at least for PSNs) to the morning. While they were more than sympathetic (and indeed stated that this is their priority as well), WFP acknowledged that distribution delays are one of their biggest operational challenges. One contributing factor is that people are reluctant to engage in loading activities during the rains and so it takes much longer to load the trucks. At distributions sites, IPs further need to verify both the sub country and the parish names as well as the name of the beneficiary and the household size, which takes time. In Pader, WFP further asserted that they plan for morning distributions, and take steps such as loading vehicles the night before in order to minimise wait times, but that poor road access to distribution sites continues to delay distributions. Continued lobbying with WFP should be pursued to help them work to avoid long delays for distributions.

An additional concern regarding food distribution revolves around what will happen once the camp based rationing ceases. Following on from an assessment carried out in 2007 in Kitgum, WHO research showed that returnees estimated a full recovery in terms of food security taking between three and five years. This finding indicates that full re-integration into villages could take a substantial period of time, leaving many older people socially and physically isolated in camps for some years to come. A recommendation for protection consideration is for UNHCR in conjunction with WFP to develop a plan to support food insecure older people who remain in camp locations. WFP in both Pader and Kitgum were amenable to the idea of contributing to food to supplemental feeding centres in camp locations, but were clear that they could only provide food, an implementing partner would need to provide the infrastructure and human resources support. This may also be an area where UNCHR and HAI might be able to work together in select camp locations.

8.3.3. Livelihoods

Livelihood interventions are vital to countering older people's protection vulnerability. Income generation activities provide older people with the opportunity to contribute economically to their households, build their own self esteem and increasing feelings of positive wellbeing. There was evidence from camp locations (especially in Palabek Kal and Padibe in Kitgum District and Omot and Kupino in Pader District) of older people being engaged in livelihoods activities. Activities included market sales, pottery

production, furniture carving, making hoe handles, tablecloth making, beekeeping, basket making, and weaving. Participants used these activities to bring income to the households thereby both supporting family members as well as contributing to their own upkeep. In the majority of cases where older people were economically productive, they stated that they intend to continue these activities in the village where, and provided that, materials are available.

Requests for assistance with livelihoods activities were not complex in nature. Most older people expressed a desire for the provision of weaving materials for winnowers and baskets and clay for pottery making. Provision of these materials by neighbours and clan members could be done easily and with little extra effort and no additional financial investment. At the village and camp levels, this could be encouraged by return monitors, village heads and through community meetings. As IPs meet with communities to address various other transition and development issues, they could remind clan members and/or neighbours to collect handicraft materials from the field for distribution to specific older people.

Meetings with UNDP in Kitgum indicated that UNDP as leader of the GIL Cluster is more than willing to ensure that older people are integrated into livelihoods activities, but it will be up to UNHCR through continued advocacy and liaison to ensure that this commitment is followed through. And even while UNHCR does not itself focus on livelihoods interventions, the recommendation remains that economic security counters protection vulnerability and to that end, any attempt at ensuring the protection wellbeing of older people will need to include livelihoods activities.

8.4 Knowledge Gaps

One area of intervention which might benefit from further exploration is the relation between HIV/AIDS, older people, the process of return, and impact on achievement of durable solutions. Time limitations, and a different focus on information gathering, did not allow for full enquiry into this topic.

Appendix One

Terms of Reference
Secondment of Specialist on Older Persons – Susan Erb
HelpAge/UNHCR Geneva, Switzerland
25 March – 14 May, 2008

Main duties and responsibilities:

Under the overall supervision of DIPS/CDEGECS, the Specialist will provide support to the global Protection Cluster Working Group (PCWG). He/she will advance the mainstreaming of the rights and specific needs of older persons into the work of the PCWG and provide recommendations and guidance to that end. Moreover, he/she will provide hands on support to three selected IDP operations, by establishing or refining protection system for older persons. The secondment will last for one year.

During the mission to **Uganda**, the incumbent will work for the Protection Cluster. Under the overall supervision of the Senior Protection Officer, she will carry out the following tasks.

Raise **staff awareness and development on older person's protection issues** (focus first on HCR staff and secondly with cluster partners:

- Determine essential and desirable skills needed by staff to work on the protection of older people
- Provide training to field colleagues on identifying the specific protection needs and gaps of older persons in a participatory manner, ensuring effective gender and diversity analysis.

Identify and help develop plans to address **older person's protection issues:**

- Identify jointly with interagency field teams and the community the main protection gaps as well as capacities and skills of older persons
- Identify and suggest with the field team and the community **innovative, concrete, realistic and achievable actions** (e.g. building of housing/shelter for older persons who want to return) to respond to these gaps and to build on the capacities of older persons to ensure their active integration into the community
- Provide the technical support required for the design and implementation of projects aimed at addressing the identified gaps.

Identify replicable best practice with regard to **older person's protection issues:**

- Collect and document good practices.

Provide **additional support** as requested:

- Carry out any other task related to the protection of older persons assigned by UNHCR as Protection Cluster lead.

Appendix Two

Resources / Bibliography

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Appendix Three Older Person Inclusion Checklist – Assessments

Name	Age	Sex	Location

Carer	Relationship to OP	Location

Household

Lives alone (no children/no grandchildren)	
Cares for children: - # grandchildren under 18 - # children under 18	
Lives with spouse: - aged 60-80 - aged 80+	
Lives with other:	Who

Social

Family provides assistance	Yes What	No	
Neighbour provides assistance	Yes What	No	
Water collection	Self	helper (who)	no one
Food preparation/cooking	self	helper (who)	no one
Fuel/firewood collection	self	helper (who)	no one

Explanations: _____

Health Problems

Vision	Yes	What	No
Hearing	Yes	What	No
Walking	Yes	What	No
Joint pain	Yes	What	No
Diabetes	Yes	What	No
High Blood Pressure	Yes	What	No
Digestion	Yes	What	No

Mobility

Can wash and dress self	Yes	No
Uses stick/crutch for walking	Yes	No
Can walk to water source and carry a filled 5 litre jerry can	Yes	No
Can walk to neighbours	Yes	No
Can walk to market	Yes	No
Can walk to health post	Yes	No
Can walk to latrine	Yes	No
Needs help to use latrine	Yes	No

Basic Needs (according to SPHERE standards)

Adequate shelter	Yes	No
Adequate water supply and container	Yes	No
Adequate and regular food supply	Yes	No
Cooking fuel and/or firewood	Yes	No
Blankets	Yes	No
Clothes	Yes	No
Shoes	Yes	No

Older Person Inclusion Checklist – Programming

Do you provide any specific interventions for older people?	Yes	No
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If yes, what? _____

Have your field staff encountered and/or identified any specific problems for older people?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

If yes, what? _____

Have your field staff encountered specific protection violations with regard to older people?	Yes	No
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If yes, what? _____

Visibility, Inclusion and Participation of Older People

Visibility - does your organisation collect disaggregated data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on people aged 60-80 - on people aged 80+ Is this information regularly shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local government - other INGOs, NGOs and UN partners 	Yes	No
---	-----	----

Inclusion - are you working with leaders and community members to identify ways to disseminate information to everyone in the community Are older people, including housebound older people, able to access information?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

Participation - Are both housebound and non-housebound male and female older people active participants in community planning?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Explanation _____

Integrated and Intergenerational Response

Cooperation - does your organisation share information on older people with other organisations, agencies and government?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

Do you engage in cooperative sectoral programming? If yes, what?

Health	
Shelter	
Food	
WatSan	
Children	
Training - are staff exposed to and engaged in learning opportunities on older people's needs and contributions?	
Intergenerational programming - does programming allow for older people to work with, learn from and provide mutual support to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - youth - children 	

Appropriate practical and financial resources

Is programming assistance appropriate for the articulated needs of older people and accessible them?

NFIs	
Shelter	
Food	
Basic needs for 'left behinds' (those who cannot return to villages of origin)	
Livelihoods - are older people engaged in livelihoods activities? What? How?	