Good Enough Context Analysis for Rapid Response (GECARR) for West Nile, Uganda – July 2017

Context
Recent and recurring conflict in South Sudan has pushed more than 977,746 refugees[1] into Northern Uganda, including over 600,000 since July 6, 2016 alone[2]. 86% of those fleeing South Sudan are women and children, with children making up more than 60% of all refugees[3]. The majority of these newarrivals have been settled in the West Nile area of Northern Uganda, an area which has suffered from high levels of pre-existing vulnerability and under-development.

The rapid and sustained influx of high numbers of refugees has largely been welcomed by hosting communities. Host communities cite numerous community benefits received due to refugee settlement, including the development of roads, increases in water points, building of health centers and schools and, in some areas, improved security. Local markets have developed and informal trading between host and refugees has increased. As host communities lease land to refugees, refugees support hosts with additional labor. This has been particularly beneficial for female headed Ugandan households. Refugees and hosts also cite increased interaction leading to positive behavior change, such as the host community increasing its value of education as they acknowledge South Sudanese often come in more well qualified and better positioned to gain employment.

However, the influx has also strained existing infrastructure and resources and led to rising tensions. Tensions can be categorised as *intra-communal, inter-communal, duty bearer -*

affected population, and duty bearer-duty bearer.

Intra-communal tensions within the hosting community are largely seen as tribal in nature and driven by disagreement on land rights. Tensions within the refugee community largely mirror dynamics in South Sudan. This carry over of tensions has resulted in members of the Dinka community being settled separately from other refugee groups.

Inter-communal tensions between refugee and host communities are fueled by competition over limited resources and general misunderstandings due to cultural differences. Conflict often arises over collection of firewood or materials for construction, concern over land degradation and animal grazing rights. Uganda's porous border with South Sudan and unconfirmed rumors regarding what refugees may be bringing in with them creates suspicion amongst the host community while refugees are quick to accuse host communities of profiting over their presence. An overall rise in opportunistic crime also breeds mutual mistrust between communities.

Tensions between duty bearers and affected populations largely stem from limited resources despite rising need and feelings of inequitable treatment, both in quantity and quality of support received, despite similar vulnerabilities. Unclear and often contradictory messages regarding 'entitlements' for refugees and host communities vis a vis the 70/30 split suggested in the Government of Uganda's ReHoPE strategy and particularly how this is rolled out in relation to agency hiring practices further fuels animosity towards duty bearers.

Tensions amongst duty bearers is inherent within the set-up of the refugee management system; while the Office of the Prime Minister is mandated to manage refugee affairs in Uganda, district local governments--including district resources and budgets--are most affected by refugee settlements. Disagreement and

---

[1] UNHCR Weekly South Sudan Refugee Response Infograph, 10 July 2017
[2] ACAPS Uganda Crisis Analysis, accessed 12 July 2017
[3] UNHCR Weekly South Sudan Refugee Response Infograph, 10 July 2017

different interests/priorities between Central and district authorities often cascades to impact relationship with and between other humanitarian actors. Furthermore, community leaders are increasingly weary of being intermediaries as their acceptance and status is challenged when decisions beyond their control are made.

Actors and Perceptions
Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)/Local Council (LC)/Refugee Welfare Council (RWC). OPM, LC and RWC are part of the refugee management and governance structure. The main role of OPM is to lead Government business in parliament; to coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of government policies and programmes; to coordinate the implementation of government policies, programmes and projects under a National Institutional Framework; to coordinate the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP); to coordinate and provide public relations to ensure good government image, effective coverage of national events, communication of policies/practices and defining the ideal National Character and Values for Development; to coordinate development of capacities for prevention, preparedness, and response to natural and human induced Disasters and Refugees; to coordinate and monitor the implementation of Special Government Policies and programmes. OPM is seen as influential as certain central issues that cannot be resolved by LC or RWC are brought to them to be resolved. OPM is described as strong and responsive to resolving disputes, but often inflexible and closed in decision-making.

Local Councils represent the host community while the **Refugee Welfare Councils** represent refugees. Both are responsible to deliver services, protection and ensure a functioning society. RWC and LC are based at district level and are elected. RWC and LC are perceived as influential by both host community and refugees as they are usually the first point of

contact for advice and dispute resolution for their communities on societal issues, and are expected to represent the needs of the community to the UN, other agencies, and OPM. Some RWC chairmen and LCs are perceived as weaker than their counterparts and host community and refugees have laid blame on these leaders for the quality and quantity of service they receive. It has been noted that LC and RWC would benefit from being better informed on laws of Uganda and having faster communication systems in place to be able to better carry out their representation, resolution, and communication roles.

Faith leaders are well respected by both host communities and refugees. They are seen as spiritual guides with good understanding about spiritual and social issues, but not enough on secular issues such as SGBV, legal frameworks, etc. Their primary role is to guide, promote peace encourage co-existence, counsel, connect and educate their communities on religious matters.

Elders are highly respected by both refugees and host communities. They are seen as wise counselors who carry critical institutional knowledge of their tribe. There is concern that if elder care and targeted support to manage chronic illness among elderly populations is not further prioritised, not only will this result in a loss of life, but in loss of community wisdom and practical knowledge -- such as traditional land boundaries back in South Sudan.

UNHCR and Agencies Most of the main INGOs and UN relief agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNICEF, etc.) operate across Northern Uganda and are recognized by local communities and refugees as useful, responsive and necessary because of the basic services they provide. While communities express frustration with agencies when programmes are delayed or cut, communities remain welcoming and willing to work with them. Apart from UNHCR who communities perceive as nearly

synonymous with OPM, UN and NGOs are not seen as key decision makers.

Community outreach workers[4] who are often frontline to receive community complaints, are perceived as advisers who promote better ways of living and are well respected by Host community and Refugees as well as LC and RWCs. **Women** in both refugee and host communities often head households and are able to play a strong influencing role within the broader community. The high number of **youth**, their lack of engagement in productive activities, and capacity for either uniting or dividing communities determines them as passive influencers.

What unites and divides
Physical proximity, informal trade and common markets, public goods[5] and services, cultural exchange were all mentioned as key connectors within and among communities. Activities which bring children together, such as schools, football matches, drama, music and dance performances were highlighted as connectors for entire communities. Similarly, faith, religious observances and religious spaces were also cited as factors that bring communities together -- even in spite of different languages.

Non-tangible elements, such as common experience of displacement or common vulnerabilities due to poverty were also cited as connecting factors.

While both communities insisted that there is more that connects than divides, language, and physical segregation were seen as the obvious dividing elements between refugees and hosts. The ongoing conflict in South Sudan remains the central dividing factor amongst refugees.

Perceptions regarding inequitable or preferential treatment of certain communities by the Ugandan government and agencies and the economic status of the refugees and hosts has also been a divider. Land rights, land usage and soil quality has also been cited as a primary source of contention.

Current and imminent humanitarian needs
All communities anticipated that inter-communal tensions will decrease in the next few months as communities increase familiarity with one another. Refugees also feel confident that the security situation in Uganda will remain peaceful -- there is high confidence amongst all communities regarding the Ugandan military's ability to secure the region and prevent spillover from South Sudan. However, communities also anticipate that if the situation does not change, food insecurity will increase, youth will engage in more 'risky'[6] behaviors, and unconfirmed rumors will continue to breed mistrust and/or competition.

In terms of current and imminent needs, all communities identified education opportunities as one of the most pressing needs. Refugees and host communities prioritise the need for more nurseries, primary and secondary schools as well as for vocational training and scholarships for further education. Adults also cite the need for adult education and certification programmes.

All communities also cite need for agencies to continue and scale up services to meet basic needs. They reiterated the need for more boreholes and quality water points, soap, functioning and equipped health facilities, and food with more diversified food items to provide for a better diet. Anticipating a poor harvest and eventual cuts in food assistance, both refugees and host communities identified

---

[4] Including Help Desk staff, child protection monitors, child protection committee members, food monitors, etc.
[5] Water distribution points, schools, hospitals and medical centers.

[6] These include engagement in gang activity, crime, drug use, sexual promiscuity leading to increased STDs and even potential return to South Sudan to engage in the conflict.

a need to strengthen livelihoods. This should be done by both providing more agricultural inputs and placing stronger focus on non-agricultural activities for income generation.

In order to prevent rapid escalation of situations, communities press the need for mental health care, trauma counseling, and psychosocial support, not just for people showing signs of distress or after new incidents of trauma but for all refugees as all have endured traumatic events. Communities also specified that peacebuilding interventions for both host communities and refugees should be rolled out, including for primary school aged children.

Supporting all these interventions, refugees also asked more be done to improve communication between duty bearers, host communities and refugees around entitlements, delivery dates, and hiring practices.

Scenarios
Participants identified three scenarios likely to take place over the next six to twelve months: (1) poor or failed harvest and a reduction of food rations (2) youth are incited to violence due to ongoing unemployment and/or layoff of staff from host community (3) land conflicts manifest.

Scenario 1 Poor/failed harvest and reduction of food rations
In this scenario, a possible reduction of food rations for refugees coupled with the reduced harvest due to poor rainfall and an armyworm outbreak will lead to increased food insecurity for both the host communities and refugees. This will result with an increase in food prices in local markets, leading to a reduction of number of meals per day, increased domestic violence due to stress, child neglect, reduced school attendance and an increase in rates of malnutrition.

Food insecurity will trigger incidents of conflict between the host communities and refugees,

and violent protest against duty bearers by refugees and host communities. This will result with service delivery being disrupted, access to refugees reduced, assets destroyed or lost, and agency staff potentially held, injured or killed. The police and military will intervene to calm and suppress the violence and support aid delivery, which in turn will lead to an increased security presence during aid delivery.
Due to limited food stocks, an inability to secure food, and increased suffering there will be a potential return of refugees to South Sudan.

Scenario 2: Youth agitated to violence due to unemployment
The general employment situation within the West Nile region and in particular within the refugee settlement areas has been one of the main sources of tension between refugees and hosts and is a cause for feelings of resentment towards NGOs. Unfulfilled "promises[7]" made to host communities around youth employment[8] in exchange for land for refugee settlements results in rising frustration with NGOs for bringing in staff from other parts of the country whilst denying the host community youth jobs.

In this scenario, ongoing unemployability of youth coupled with the lay-off of host community members due to programme cuts results in local political actors agitating youth to 'claim their entitlements'. Similar to Scenario 1, this will manifest in more violent strikes against organizations, roadblocks, and attacks on NGO staff and assets. Service delivery will be disrupted due to hibernation or temporary withdrawal of staff, and the police and military will intervene to calm and suppress further violence. Armed presence will be utilised by the

---

[7] While unconfirmed, it is widely assumed that host communities were provided assurances that they would be provided with enhanced benefits if they were to cede communal land to the government for refugee settlements.
[8] Although host communities recognise that many host community members lack the requisite skills for NGO vacancies, communities still contend that they are entitled to preferential hiring.

government to facilitate a resumption of aid activities, leading to increased security presence during aid delivery, a potential decrease in community acceptance and an overall diminishing of independence and neutrality.

Furthermore, in order to resolve unrest, the OPM may work with local districts to identify qualified youth with the expectation that agencies will use these lists to hire staff.

Scenario 3: Conflict over land use and rights
Similar to Scenario 2, this scenario stems largely from expectations raised amongst host communities regarding promised or assumed benefits they would receive in return for providing land for refugee settlements.

In this scenario, the lack of legal clarity around refugee rights to land 'given' to them by the government, ownership of assets built on these allotments, and dissatisfaction with the benefits received by host communities leads to conflict between host and refugee communities. This would lead to destruction of properties and assets, physical violence, and potential death. It is unlikely that violence would overwhelm security forces or spread, but this would have consequences similar to scenarios 1 and 2 in terms of disruption to service delivery and access to schools/hospitals/markets, intervention by police and military, and increased security presence during humanitarian aid delivery.

Recommendations and needs
Programming
1. Diversify livelihood options with particular focus on youth:
    a. Improve agricultural practices to reduce shock from pipeline breaks or failed harvest (quick maturing seeds, pest management, post-harvest handling, kitchen gardening)
    b. Focus on more non-agricultural activities for income generation, further develop local markets, scale up cash based interventions

    c. Scale up Youth-focused training on IGA and youth-focused education/productive activities
2. Scale up Local Capacities for Peace/ Peacebuilding Activities:
    a. Promote dialogue between duty bearers and affected populations
    b. Facilitate proactive dialogue between landlords and refugees
    c. Sensitize host community on refugee situations and "entitlements"
3. Provide more trauma counselling and mental health care
    a. Include all refugees not only those that are already showing signs of distress.
    b. Provide psychosocial support for both refugees and Host Community.
4. Strengthen accountability mechanisms across the Response:
    a. Develop proactive Communication With Communities (CWC) SOPs and ensure closed feedback loops

Coordination and Security
1. Develop inter-agency red lines for external influence on programme design, implementation, hiring practices
2. Familiarise staff with IASC Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts and Use of Military Assets
3. Train staff on core humanitarian principles and carry out analysis to inform appropriate civil-military coordination modality

Advocacy
1. Advocate for more productive agricultural lands to be allocated to refugees to support self-sufficiency, shock-resistance, and reduce tension
2. Advocate at local and national levels for clarification of 2006 Refugee Law in regard to land rights
3. Partner with Government of Uganda to clarify entitlements under 2006 Refugee Law, Housing, Land and Property rights of landlords and refugees, and refugee/host community employment under the

ReHoPE Strategy, the Settlement Transformative Agenda, and the National Development Plan.

Human Resources:
1. Scale up of staff familiarity with Humanitarian Principles
2. Ensure all the posting of all jobs and requisite qualifications in public spaces
3. Develop clear decisions on hiring protocols and "red lines" for external influence on hiring
4. Sensitize community on NGO hiring practices
5. Where possible, prioritise host youth for casual labour jobs
6. Engage in proactive dialogue with all stakeholders (including OPM, LCs, RWCs) when employment cuts need to be made

Methodology
In July 2017, World Vision lead a context analysis (GECARR) and consulted 267 people across Northern Uganda (In Bidibidi, Imvepi and Rhino settlements). Data collection was done through 12 FGDs with men, women, boys and girls including 130 children from both refugee and host community. Key informant interviews were held with NGOs, UN agencies, Government, faith and business leaders. Key questions posed were around the: current context (with special focus on tensions), vulnerable groups, key influential actors, current needs, potential future events and suggested implications.

An inter-agency scenario planning workshop with eleven agencies representing UN, INGO, LNGO, Red Cross Society, district government, and refugee participation, was convened to identify and outline 3 key scenarios likely to unfold in Northern Uganda in the next 6-12 months. This report reflects the findings developed throughout the process and is not intended as a fully comprehensive analysis, but to provide a snapshot perspective from the communities and agencies involved. The report does not necessarily reflect the formal positions of any agencies involved in the process.

Limitations:
The facilitation team had to change data gathering location from Palorinya to Rhino due to recent increase in insecurity in Palorinya. In addition the team was not able to mobilize FGDs amongst the Dinka Community, but was still able to talk a leader within the Dinka Refugee Welfare Council.