

Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 10

# DISPLACEMENT IN BUNDIBUGYO DISTRICT: A SITUATION ANALYSIS



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The Refugee Law Project (RLP) was established in November 1999 with the aim of protecting and promoting the rights of forced migrants in Uganda. The RLP operates as an autonomous project within the Faculty of Law of Makerere University, and focuses on three main areas: legal assistance, training, and research and advocacy. The Refugee Law Project works towards ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees are, as specified under national and international law, treated with the fairness and consideration due fellow human beings.

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The Refugee Law Project Working Paper Series is a forum for sharing information on issues relating to forced migration in Uganda. All comments are welcome and the RLP reserves the right to revise any Working Paper.

**REPORT SUMMARY**

**The following report presents a situation analysis of the condition of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees living in Bundibugyo district, and describes the response of the numerous actors involved. The district, which is located in western Uganda and borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), suffered a brutal rebel incursion during the second half of the 1990s that resulted in almost total displacement within the district. Although the conflict officially ended in 2000, the impact continues to be felt by those living in the district. It is into this context that thousands of refugees arrived between March and August 2003, fleeing the recent intensification of fighting in eastern DRC's Ituri province.**

**Our preliminary findings show the extent to which there is a crisis within the district on how to manage the emergencies created by conflict-induced displacement. On the one hand, IDPs are struggling to return to their homes with limited assistance and support. At the same time, nationals living in the district, while showing a willingness to host the refugees, have been disempowered in their attempt to do so due to the government's policy that states that refugees are the responsibility of central government, and that material assistance should only be available to refugees in settlements.<sup>1</sup>**

**The report draws upon material collected during field research in Bundibugyo in 2002 and 2003, as well as two workshops conducted in the district in mid-2003. It was written by Dr. Lucy Hovil, Senior Research Officer at the Refugee Law Project (RLP), with funding from the USAID-funded Community Resilience and Dialogue (CRD) activity, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The author is grateful to the National Council for Science and Technology for permission to conduct the study, and to Roger Furrer of CRS, and to Zachary Lomo and Pamela Reynell of the RLP, for their input into earlier drafts of the paper.**

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<sup>1</sup> An exception to this policy is made for those who are classified as 'vulnerable'.

**GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADF: Allied Democratic Forces  
CRD: Community Resilience and Dialogue Activity  
CRS: Catholic Relief Services  
DISO: District Internal Security Officer  
DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo  
IDP: Internally Displaced Person  
GoU: Government of Uganda  
LC: Local Council  
MSF: Medecines Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders)  
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation  
OPM: Office of the Prime Minister  
RDC: Resident District Commissioner  
RWC: Refugee Welfare Committee  
SCUK: Save the Children, United Kingdom  
UPDF: Uganda People's Defence Force (the Ugandan national army)  
UN: United Nations  
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund  
USAID: United States Agency for International Development  
WFP: World Food Programme

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The recent history of Bundibugyo district is dominated by the prevalence of conflict and subsequent displacement. Not only has the district had to cope with a five-year rebel insurgency during which the majority of civilians were forcibly displaced from their homes, but it is now host to thousands of refugees who recently fled from the recent upsurge of fighting in Ituri, the north-eastern province of neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As a result, an already impoverished situation is rapidly deteriorating even further. This study seeks to give an understanding of the condition of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees living in Bundibugyo, and the impact of their presence on the resources and infrastructure of the district. Section two begins with an outline of the two major sources of conflict that have led to displacement within the district: the recent Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebellion that took place in Bundibugyo and created high levels of internal displacement, and the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that has generated the recent influx of refugees. The third section considers the impact of displacement, positive and negative, on both the local communities and the refugees. Section four presents an overview of the responses of the local government, the national government, and the numerous international actors involved, to the presence of thousands of refugees within the district. The study concludes with recommendations for future action.

### 1.1 Methodology

The paper draws on a number of different sources collected over a twelve-month period. For the background to the ADF conflict, material is drawn from a week of field research in Bundibugyo in August 2002 and additional field research in July and August 2003 following the influx of Congolese refugees. Further information was gained from interviews in Kampala with civilians, government officials, humanitarian workers, and ADF ex-combatants.

Information was also collected from two workshops that the Refugee Law Project held in Bundibugyo district in July and August 2003 in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), under the Community Resilience and Dialogue activity (CRD). The workshops, entitled “Refugee Law, IDP Guiding Principals, Human Rights and Conflict Resolution”, were initiated by CRS in response to growing concern over the situation in Bundibugyo following the arrival of the refugees. They sought to provide background information on refugees and IDPs within a human rights framework, generate a forum for debate between participants, and increase coordination between participants in order to diffuse possible conflicts from developing. Participants included district officials, religious leaders, refugee leaders, IDP leaders, and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) workers. In addition to facilitators from the RLP, the Protection Officer for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) added valuable input and debate during the second workshop.

The first workshop, 7<sup>th</sup>—9<sup>th</sup> July 2003, provided basic information on the rights and obligations of refugees and IDPs, presented an overview of human rights, and held discussions on the root causes and consequences of conflict. During the second workshop, conducted 5<sup>th</sup>—6<sup>th</sup> August 2003, participants were encouraged to apply what they had learned in the previous workshop to specific case studies. There was also an opportunity for participants to develop a work plan for continued action within the district. The process showed the extent to which participants had gained a basic

understanding of the concepts, and were beginning to apply them to specific case studies. The discussions that took place in these workshops are incorporated into the analysis below.

## **2 BACKGROUND TO THE DISTRICT AND THE RECENT INFLUX OF REFUGEES**

Bundibugyo district lies in western Uganda. It borders Kabarole district to the east, Kasese district to the south, and the DRC to the west, and has a population of 174,800.<sup>2</sup> The main economic activities of the district include fishing, subsistence farming, tourism, vanilla processing and forestry.<sup>3</sup>

Cross-border movement between Bundibugyo and the DRC has been a common phenomenon for many years: regular trade routes exist between the two countries, and there have been previous refugee flows in both directions. The recent influx of refugees from DRC into Bundibugyo and Nebbi districts, began in April 2003 with the anticipation and actual withdrawal of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) from Ituri. The majority of refugees arrived in one of three main areas of Bundibugyo district: Ntoroko, a landing site on the edge of Lake Albert on gazetted land in Semuliki game reserve; Rwebisengo, also on the edge of the reserve; and Karugutu, located further to the north. It is impossible to assess accurately the number of refugees, but researchers received detailed information from refugee leaders claiming that 7,252 refugees had crossed to Ntoroko by 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2003.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.1 The ADF Rebellion: Conflict and Displacement<sup>5</sup>**

Bundibugyo district's recent history has been dominated by the insurgency of the ADF, which perpetrated high levels of violence against the civilian population and led to widespread displacement throughout the district and beyond. The ADF conflict began in late 1996 with an incursion into Uganda from the eastern DRC. The rebels originally comprised recruits from across Uganda as well as possible remnants of the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda and the defunct Rwenzururu movement, both regional insurgencies. In the initial stages of the conflict, the Rwenzori Mountains bordering the DRC offered a base from which to carry out attacks and a supply route to the outside. By late 1997, the rebels began to target civilians—characterised by killing, looting, and forcible recruitment—with heavy attacks continuing throughout 1998. A particularly notorious attack took place on 8 June 1998, when rebels invaded Kicwamba Technical Institute in Kabarole district and not only abducted over 200 civilians, mostly children, but set a locked dormitory on fire, burning to death approximately 80 students.

The intensity of the attacks drove many civilians out of their homes into newly created camps for IDPs. By mid-2000, approximately 175,000 people had been displaced within the region, the majority in Bundibugyo district.<sup>6</sup> The scale of displacement created a complete loss of livelihoods, and the local economy collapsed when farmers were forced

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<sup>2</sup> District Information Portal, Bundibugyo district, [www.udg.or.ug/DIP/Bundibugyo](http://www.udg.or.ug/DIP/Bundibugyo).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "Rapport Synthèse du Comité des Réfugiés Congolais à Ntoroko, District Bundibugyo, August 2003." Given to the researchers at the workshop by one of the refugee leaders.

<sup>5</sup> For a more extensive analysis of the ADF conflict see Hovil and Werker, *The Allied Democratic Forces in Uganda: Portrait of a Failed Rebellion*. Unpublished paper, May 2003.

<sup>6</sup> African Rights 2001, p. 20.

to abandon their land.<sup>7</sup> In addition to chronically low living standards,<sup>8</sup> insecurity remained a problem in the IDP camps: violent rebel attacks continued, despite the presence of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

It is widely believed that the ADF received funding from a number of external sources, including Mobutu's Zaire, the Sudan government, Al Qaeda and other radical Islamists.<sup>9</sup> Due to these alleged links, the ADF was included on the United States (U.S.) "Terrorist Exclusion List" following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the World Trade Centre.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, documents purportedly written by Bekkah Abdul Nassir, the "self-described chief of diplomacy" of the ADF, were found in the Iraqi intelligence headquarters. These documents discussed budgets, attack capabilities, and the possibility of training in Baghdad.<sup>11</sup>

Reports on the ground confirm the origins of such funding, largely by association. For instance, the district chairperson in Bundibugyo claimed that "an Arab" was once killed amongst the rebels, and reported the presence of Arabic writing on boxes of supplies that were captured.<sup>12</sup> A government intelligence officer talked of how the ADF obtained assistance through Sudan. He claimed that eight trailers of arms came in before the conflict began, and that the DRC was used as a "reception centre."<sup>13</sup>

Despite the enormous impact of the ADF rebellion on the civilian population of Bundibugyo and surrounding districts, the conflict remains largely undocumented. Only two substantial reports have been written on the war to date. The first is a study by African Rights<sup>14</sup> that places the conflict within its historical and geopolitical context. It is based on interviews with civilians in the area, as well as a number of ex-combatants. The second is a collaborative report by Oxfam, Kabarole Research Centre, and the German Development Service<sup>15</sup> that describes the situation in the IDP camps and highlights specific issues to be addressed to enable their return. Based on household questionnaires and interviews with displaced persons, it gives a broad overview of the current living standards for IDPs, and the factors that are impeding return.

The lack of analysis of the conflict is compounded by the fact that the war has received so little national and international attention. Only significant massacres in the region tended to make it into the press, as well as the attack on a group of tourists in Bwindi National Park on the border with DRC in February 1999.<sup>16</sup> Although such selective publicity is not unusual, it has contributed to the fact that the suffering of thousands of people living in western Uganda has gone largely unnoticed.

The subsequent silence that hangs over the war is further exacerbated by a paucity of explanations. The conflict has been described as a "rebellion without a cause": the

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<sup>7</sup> IRIN 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Oxfam 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with regional security expert, May 2003.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Smucker and Bowers, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with LCV, Bundibugyo, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with intelligence officer, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

<sup>14</sup> African Rights 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Oxfam, Kabarole Research Centre, and the German Development Service, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> The attackers are thought to have included ADF elements alongside remnants of the *Interahamwe*, Rwandese Hutu militias who are held responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

rebels never communicated a coherent set of grievances nor gave any indication of a political agenda.<sup>17</sup> Some bystanders see the insurgency as having been little more than the activity of a criminal network. Others view the ADF as a pro-Muslim group, specifically associated with the Salaf Tabliq sect. Yet for most citizens with whom we spoke, there was continued confusion about the rebels' motivation beyond a vague acknowledgement that they were fighting "the government." To add to the confusion, the majority of ex-combatants interviewed denied that there was a specific Islamic agenda to the struggle. As one ex-combatant said, "the agenda of the ADF was purely political. The religious aspect came later as a way to get support and recruits . . . Islam was a ticket, so the leaders disguised their political motives in religion."<sup>18</sup>

The ambiguity that characterised the war appears to continue. During a discussion on conflict in the first workshop, for instance, participants were noticeably reluctant to talk about the ADF rebellion preferring, instead, to focus on a conflict that took place in the 1960s between the Baamba and Bakonzo on the one hand, and the Batooro on the other. This reluctance is disturbing and shows the extent to which people are still fearful of how the conflict is talked about. It is also an indication of the extent to which the local people are trying to disassociate themselves from the conflict: several individuals mentioned the fact that the ADF were not from among them but were outsiders. Clearly, the conflict has profoundly damaged the psyche of the district and the fear that it generated continues to hinder recovery.

### **2.1.1 A Displaced Civilian Population**

Regardless of the cause, however, the impact of the war on civilians living in Bundibugyo was devastating. The apparently indiscriminate acts of violence perpetrated against them in their own homes left civilians with no choice but to leave, despite the profound disruption to their lives. Although they tolerated the rebels initially, once levels of violence intensified there was universal evacuation of homesteads to nearby 'displaced villages'. As one displaced person, a former member of parliament during the 1960s, recounted: "When you see someone has been killed, you have to go. And then the government said we should move nearby the road so that we can get security there . . . My neighbours remained, they were two. But then they were killed by the rebels. So everybody left."<sup>19</sup>

This displacement was exacerbated by government policies that essentially forced villagers to leave conflict zones. Due to the scale of displacement, anyone who remained was assumed to be a sympathiser, and moving to the camps became proof of not being an informer or collaborator. One IDP expressed his wish that the Ugandan soldiers would not "think civilians in villages are collaborators, because the moment you remain there the UPDF will fire at you."<sup>20</sup> In addition, despite having moved into what the government called "protected villages," inadequate protection meant that civilians continued to be attacked by the rebels: the killing, abductions, and looting continued.

The wide-scale displacement that took place in Bundibugyo is a strong indication of the level of brutality levelled against the civilian population. In a war in which one of the

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<sup>17</sup> African Rights, 2001, 1 – 4.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with ex-combatant #3, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Interview in Hakitengya IDP Camp, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Interview in Harugale IDP camp, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

trademarks of ADF executions was the removal of the victim's trachea,<sup>21</sup> it is hardly surprising that such high levels of displacement took place. As one IDP said when describing an attack on their village, "They shot at us . . . killed many people; others were slaughtered and others abducted. Women and girls were raped and defiled . . . They burnt people in houses, even my three children and wife were burnt in the hut."<sup>22</sup>

The impact on the civilian population reflects not only the intensity of ADF attacks but also the inability of the UPDF to protect people in villages and camps during the initial stages of the conflict. Although the UPDF seem to have enabled humanitarian assistance to reach the camps, there were frequent complaints of soldiers staying in the middle of the camps, leaving the civilians unprotected and, in some cases, themselves committing atrocities against the civilian population.<sup>23</sup> However, with the appointment of Brigadier James Kazini to the region in 1999 and a corresponding increase in UPDF presence, the course of the war began to alter.<sup>24</sup> In particular, mountain combat units, with crucial information from civilians, challenged the hold the rebels had over the mountain/borderland region, endangering their supply routes and targeting encampments.

This anti-insurgency tactic within Uganda was accompanied by the well-known campaign in eastern DRC, where Ugandan troops occupied territory in order to prevent the ADF from using Congo as a sanctuary, among other more controversial reasons. Although the rebels were eventually routed out, the damage inflicted by the conflict was immense, and continues to haunt the district. IDPs who had their homes in the mountains began to return home in March 2002, and a second phase of return to Bwamba county followed in January 2003.<sup>25</sup> However, an estimated 20% of the population still remains in IDP camps, which are beginning to take on a permanent nature.<sup>26</sup> As one IDP explained, "For me, I have bought land, so I am staying here. We have not received any assistance at all. Some of these [IDPs still in camps] are handicapped and cannot return home. Their husbands and children have died."<sup>27</sup>

Those who have returned home have done so with little or no external assistance. The District Vice Chairperson of Bundibugyo, and a resident of Harugale sub-county, explained the situation as follows:

There are a number of people so badly affected by the war, specifically abductees, those whose families were killed, and so on. Some of our daughters were taken by UPDF soldiers, impregnated, and then abandoned. Some of them are badly suffering. These

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with LCV Chairman, Bundibugyo, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with male IDP, Kitengya IDP camp, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

<sup>23</sup> This point is made, for instance, in a paper written by a group of community leaders in the Rwenzori region, presented at the Human Rights Focus Workshop on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

<sup>24</sup> African Rights 2001, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Balinda Gideon, District Vice Chairperson, Bundibugyo, and resident of Harugale sub-county, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Communication with NGO representative, August 2003. However, district authorities refute this number, stating that anyone who has not returned home is no longer recognised as an IDP. (Personal communication with Assistant RDC, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2003.)

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Ugandan male, resident in Hakitengya IDP camp, Bundibugyo district, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

should get special consideration. Most of the displaced people returning to their villages have no shelter or food.<sup>28</sup>

Additionally, as the LC2 chairman of Butama displaced camp said, “There are places which are very far and the people still have doubts that there is security. Those who have gone back have received no assistance. They are surviving on their own initiatives.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, although some have chosen to remain, their lives are still harsh. They no longer receive any assistance and the situation is not seen as critical, exemplified by the fact that Medecines Sans Frontiers (MSF) pulled out of Bundibugyo district in July 2003.

## 2.2 Background to the Refugee Influx

It is into this context of conflict, displacement and poverty that thousands of Congolese refugees began arriving in March 2003, fleeing the recent intensification of fighting in eastern DRC. For the past five years, the DRC has witnessed an appalling armed conflict that has claimed the lives of an estimated four million people and drawn in more than half a dozen African countries. Despite the recent progress that has been made in negotiations to bring the different factions together into a power sharing agreement, fighting has continued and intensified in the DRC’s north-eastern Ituri province, in particular since the withdrawal of the UPDF that was completed in April 2003. Intense fighting by armed political groups and militia has caused the brutal deaths of unknown numbers of civilians and displaced thousands more. Furthermore, reports point to the prevalence of child soldiers in the fighting.<sup>30</sup>

The province of Ituri, which borders Uganda, has a population of approximately 4.5 million.<sup>31</sup> It is an area rich in natural resources, with deposits of gold, diamonds, and other precious minerals. According to a recent Amnesty International report, “competition for control of these resources by combatant forces has been a major—if not the main—factor in the evolution and prolongation of the crisis in Ituri.”<sup>32</sup> This competition has led to the mobilisation of factions along ethnic lines, popularly characterised as Lendu against Hema. Furthermore, the conflict has clear international dimensions, with the Ugandan, Rwandese and the DRC governments allegedly being responsible for arms transfers to and training of armed groups in Ituri.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Balinda Gideon, District Vice Chairperson, Bundiguryo, and resident of Harugale sub-county, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003. One explanation is that the IDPs have been away from their fields for so long that the forest is starting to re-grow. This means that there are no open areas and the grass that would normally be used for their thatched roofs has been shaded out. Hence they see themselves caught in a dilemma: they cannot go back to their fields without shelter, and there will be no shelter until they re-clear their fields. (Communication with Roger Furrer, CRS, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Tibakunirwa Robert, LC2 Chairman, Mutunda village, Butama IDP Camp, Bundibugyo district, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>30</sup> As one refugee who had fled the fighting said, “the militias are dominated by young boys willing to do anything. All the Lendu are taking drugs”. Interview with Congolese female refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003. See also a report in *The Washington Post*, “Rifle-toting boys in Congo’s front line”, cited in the *Guardian Weekly*, June 19—25 2003.

<sup>31</sup> “Democratic Republic of Congo: On the precipice—the deepening human rights and humanitarian crisis in Ituri.” Amnesty International, March 2003.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Although a French-led intervention force helped to reduce the carnage, sustainable peace remains elusive, and fighting has continued despite the nominal presence of peacekeepers.<sup>34</sup> In addition, wide-scale human rights abuses have characterised the conflict. One young Congolese boy who arrived in Uganda on 6<sup>th</sup> July described what had happened to him:

I fled from my home on 11<sup>th</sup> March this year. It was after there had been an attack on our village. We woke up in the morning and saw armed men, they were Lendu militiamen coming into the village blowing whistles. There were gunshots while we were sleeping. We were forced to run towards Mai and they came pursuing us. I tried to cross but they were shooting at me. One bullet ripped my clothes. Then they captured me and asked if I was a civilian or a soldier. I said I had money in my shop, so they took me there. But when we got there, I saw that it had already been stolen. I knew they were going to kill me then. They gave me luggage to carry and we had to walk very far. Many died on the way—they were too weak. Those who couldn't walk were just killed, they were cut down. Many of the Hemas were killed, and the other tribes were spared. I lied and said I was not Hema. My father came and found me. He paid \$2000 to the militias and they released me and these two girls here.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the unexpected return of this young man and his two female companions had sparked a celebration in Ntoroko landing site on the 6<sup>th</sup> July. However, most of the stories the refugees told did not have such a positive outcome. Another refugee talked of the brutal atrocities characteristic of the conflict:

When they attacked, they cut off the hands of so many. They just killed and killed. It was just anger. They had guns, pangas, knives, machetes . . . Three hundred were killed in Tchomia alone. Even in hospitals, they went in and killed sick people, where they were lying. For me, my older daughter came here in June. On 31<sup>st</sup> May in Tchomia, the two sisters were separated during an attack. One escaped, the other was blindfolded and led away. Their mother, my wife, was killed during the attack. Also my youngest daughter who was just four years old.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of such attacks, thousands of Congolese were forced to flee to neighbouring Uganda, many on boats over Lake Albert to Ntoroko landing site. Some came in their own boats, while others paid fishermen to transport them across. One security official recalled helping refugees to cross over the lake, a four-hour journey on a 16 horsepower boat. Many others crossed by land with their cattle.

### **3 THE CURRENT SITUATION OF REFUGEES AND IDPS**

Thus Bundibugyo, still reeling from the impact of the ADF conflict, has been forced to cope with a sudden influx of thousands of refugees fleeing a similarly horrific conflict over the border. The introduction of a new group of forced migrants into a district still trying to resettle its own displaced persons has put a huge strain on the district. The impact has been considerable, and the current situation begs a number of questions. How can the people of Bundibugyo be supported to overcome their traumatic experiences in order to reconstruct their livelihoods and economy? Furthermore, how

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<sup>34</sup> For instance it was reported that Lendu militia had killed approximately 30 people and wounded 100 more in raids in Ituri over the weekend of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of August. *The Monitor*, August 14<sup>th</sup> 2003, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Congolese boy refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003, translated from French.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Congolese male refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

can they extend their support to the refugees? What is the best approach for assisting the refugees in a manner in which both hosts and refugees can benefit from the assistance they receive, and the potential for conflict between the groups be averted?

### 3.1 Settlement or Self-Settle?

Underpinning many of these issues is the policy that governs the treatment of refugees in Uganda. When the refugees first began arriving, they received some material assistance from international agencies. However, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) then decided to move the refugees to Kyaka II settlement, approximately 200 kilometres to the east. In June 2003, the Minister for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Lt. General Moses Ali, issued an instruction to districts holding refugees from the DRC that the refugees should be moved to designated settlements and that no more assistance should be provided by NGOs to refugees who are not in settlements. In addition, he stated that individuals refusing to move should be subjected to migration procedures.<sup>37</sup> The majority of refugees resisted this move, and assistance provided to them was duly stopped. A security official described the situation at Ntoroko in this way:

After registration we informed the RDC [Resident District Commissioner] office who told OPM and the NGO reps like WFP, Red Cross, etc. They came to assess with OPM and, so far, they have got assistance from WFP. But now I believe they have stopped giving food as they have been told to go to the settlements to get assistance. It has been argued that Ntoroko is a reception centre where they can be kept anyhow that we can, and then they should go to Kyaka. But because of all the bureaucracy and numbers, by the time UNHCR had acted, they had already settled among us. The problem is, this place cannot even support our own people—we don't have the infrastructure. We have even had our problems here, like when the ADF rebels were operating in the park and they cut off our trade routes. We really suffered. Also, as far as international law says, they should be settled at least 50 kms away from the border. Now this place is like a settlement.<sup>38</sup>

Asked why the refugees refused to go to Kyaka, he gave a number of different reasons: "Some have relatives in Fort Portal and have gone to be with them. Others have come over with cattle, and they do not want to leave them behind and go to Kyaka. Others are fishermen. How can they go and dig? They only know how to fish." Additionally, the RDC for the district suggested that refugees "know this war is going to end shortly"<sup>39</sup> and hope to be able to return home. According to one newspaper report, refugee children currently being looked after at the Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Transit Centre in Kasese were initially reluctant to go to Kyaka because they feared seeing the people

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<sup>37</sup> From a personal communication with Mr. Juan Castro-Magluff, Acting Country Representative, UNHCR.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Security official, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003. Of course, there is no specific treaty basis for this claim although it has often been cited by officials and other actors in refugee protection. While UNHCR EXCOM Conclusion no. 48, paragraph 4c of 1987 recommends that refugees should be settled 'a reasonable distance' from the border, this should not override article 26 of the 1951 Refugee Convention that gives refugees the right to choose where to live. I would argue that the application of the EXCOM Conclusion is selectively implemented in this instance: why follow an EXCOM Conclusion when a binding treaty provision is not being followed consistently?

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Dr. Ernesto Gubare, RDC Bundibugyo, Bundibugyo Local Government headquarters, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

who had killed their families.<sup>40</sup> However, following a visit to Kyaka organised by Save the Children UK, many of the children voluntarily agreed to relocate to the camp.

The desire to continue with a familiar means of livelihood was reiterated by all the refugees interviewed. As one man said:

UNHCR has approached us about going to the camps, but we cannot go for many reasons. First, there are so many incidents we have heard about in the camps. Then also most of us are fishermen and thrive on fishing. Since we came, we have been continuing to fish. We don't know how to dig. Also the herdsman with cattle live with their cows, that is what they know. They can't take their cows with them to the camp, so how can they leave them? There is grazing land here, and there are only about 5000 cattle here—they graze on land that was empty before. The other thing is that some people went to see Kyaka, and they described it: there is no water, the land is poor, and they mix Lendu and Hema so conflict could erupt. We just have the hope of returning home.<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, a young Congolese woman talked of how she was supporting herself: "I have lived here for six months. . . We have received relief food three times. The last time was last month. I have also got some cows from a Ugandan relative of mine. There were 30 but now only 18 are left. I sold them and used the money to buy food."<sup>42</sup> In some instances, those with big families have apparently sent some of their family members to Kyaka, while others remain to look after the cows.<sup>43</sup>

Not only are refugees keen to stay with their cattle and continue a familiar means of livelihood but they also want to remain close to the border: "We stay here because we want to go home. Even some Hema have stayed there. We would return if it becomes secure. Fishermen go across every day and bring reports on the situation."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the antagonism towards moving to Kyaka is so strong that one refugee reported knowing of individuals who had chosen to return to the DRC rather than going to Kyaka.<sup>45</sup>

There appears to be a further reason for the refugees' reluctance to move to Kyaka. The researchers learned of a number of rumours being spread through the refugee communities about conditions in Kyaka, claiming that it is a place full of snakes and lions. There was general consensus that these rumours were being spread by nationals benefiting from the refugees' presence. One interviewee noted: "People who are benefiting here from the refugees helped to spread the propaganda about that place. It is like when they first arrived, the bars were full, they were spending money, the nationals had customers and they wanted them to remain."<sup>46</sup> Despite their prevalence, it is unlikely that these rumours were the defining issue in refugees' refusal to go to Kyaka. Indeed, refugees consistently indicated that the primary issue related to livelihoods and the desire to continue to support their selves as best they can, using the skills they already have.

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<sup>40</sup> The Monitor, July 29<sup>th</sup> 2003, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Congolese male refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Congolese female refugee, Kiranga village, Bundibugyo district, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Pastor Charles Bamuloko, Secretary for Bundibugyo Disaster Management Committee, Rwebisengo Village, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Congolese male refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Pastor Charles Bamuloko, Secretary for Bundibugyo Disaster Management Committee, Rwebisengo Village, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with security official, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

### 3.2 Impact on the Communities

The impact on the nationals hosting the refugees has been mixed. On one hand, many of the refugees arrived with money and/or commodities. Initially local bars were full, many nationals profited financially by renting out properties, and the presence of external assistance benefited both the national and refugee populations. However, given their lack of income-generating activities, the refugees have begun to run out of money. At the same time, external assistance has been cut off due to the government's policy of assisting only those refugees who agree to move to a settlement.

Thus, while initially the influx appeared to have had an overall positive effect, the longer-term implications are more troubling for nationals and refugees alike. It would be a mistake, however, to see the impact purely in terms of economic gains or losses. The majority of nationals demonstrated sympathy towards the refugees, and an inclination to help them. It has only been as resources have become increasingly stretched to breaking point and insecurity has grown, that nationals have been confronted with the dilemma between wanting to host the refugees and the pragmatics of survival. The dynamic this has created is explored in the following section, which considers both the positive and negative impact on the host communities and refugees of the recent influx.

#### 3.2.1 Positive Impact

Directly following the influx, many nationals saw the refugees' arrival in a positive light. As stated above, the immediate impact was one of boosting the economy, as refugees injected cash and commodities—in particular cattle—into the local economy. As one local man said, “We don't have a problem with these people. My wife here, her father came from Congo. So we don't have a problem. We speak the same language, we resemble. In the trading centre we don't have a problem. We've been renting a house at 2,500 [Uganda] shillings, but with the refugees, they pay 10,000 shillings and they pay the whole year.”<sup>47</sup> Another talked of how nationals have been using the refugees as a resource: “In Karugutu, refugees survive by going to Ugandans who give them a piece of land to dig, and they pay them. They get some food to eat. Others, after getting some money, they use it as capital and sell bananas. Those who have cows sell milk. They sell even animals and buy land, building materials, etc. The one who came with 200 cows now has 100.”<sup>48</sup>

There appear to have been amicable relationships between the refugees and their hosts. Asked how he saw their relationship with the nationals, one Congolese man replied: “The nationals have been good to us. There have been no conflicts. Even my children are attending school, which is free. The teachers help by explaining to them in Swahili.”<sup>49</sup>

Although there was initial tension over the grazing of cows in the area, the RDC approached the Minister for Tourism and Uganda Wildlife Authority and requested

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Timothy Kyamanywa, Councilor for Rwebisengo County at district level and Secretary for Technical Services, Works and Security, Rwebisengo sub-county, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Pastor Charles Bamuloko, Secretary for Bundibugyo Disaster Management Committee, Rwebisengo Village, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Congolese male refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

permission for the refugees to use part of the Semuliki Game Reserve to graze their cows until the situation improves, under supervision of the Wildlife Authorities.<sup>50</sup> At least temporarily, this creative solution appears to have diffused the tension over grazing land.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.2.2 Negative Impact

However, although the refugees were initially well received by the communities, researchers discovered growing concern about the long-term feasibility of the situation when they visited in July and August. The sheer size of the influx relative to the local population shows the scale of the situation: Ntoroko has a population of approximately 4000, and there were an estimated 8000 refugees living at the landing site in July.<sup>52</sup> Communities that were already impoverished before the refugees arrived were coming under increasing pressure. As one security official said, “Ntoroko was never directly attacked by the ADF, but it was badly affected. When the rebels had been cut off in the mountains, then they came into the parks and cut off the trade routes. The people could not get to the markets. . . . It made people here become very poor.”<sup>53</sup> Likewise in Rwebisengo, “the ADF came to this county and killed some people. In this sub-county, the problem we face is that people fled from around to here. And they are still here. It is hard to know how many.”<sup>54</sup>

An IDP leader attending the workshop similarly articulated the problem: “When refugees come to our small district, they are many. Even for us here, when the ADF attacked, we all went to the unit centres. Land was a big problem to have where to put the pit latrines or to have land to plant tomatoes. How should we keep sharing this small piece of land with refugees?”<sup>55</sup>

Community leaders expressed particular concern over the extent to which basic amenities were being stretched beyond their limit, and the consequent potential for disease. As the District Internal Security Officer (DISO) for Ntoroko said,

Our biggest worry is we fear the pressure on sanitation might explode into an epidemic. We are even surprised that it has not happened yet. We are more worried about epidemics than relations between the people. Those things we can settle, but we have no capacity to deal with an epidemic. Another worry is tension when there is competition over our one borehole. We need some of these international organisations to come and help us.<sup>56</sup>

This concern was shared in Rwebisengo: “Another problem is sanitation. We are still having little water. We have few boreholes in the trading centre and many people. With the refugees, the people in the trading centre increased by three times. But the refugees

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Dr. Ernesto Gubare, RDC Bundibugyo, Bundibugyo Local Government headquarters, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Whether or not it will have an adverse long-term effect on the park has yet to be established.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with the DISO for Ntoroko Country, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Security official, Ntoroko landing site, Ntoroko, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Timothy Kyamanywa, Councilor for Rwebisengo County at district level and Secretary for Technical Services, Works and Security, Rwebisengo sub-county, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>55</sup> IDP community representative, RLP/CRS Training Workshop, 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with the DISO for Ntoroko County, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

do have their clinic, and we benefit. Now they must build another borehole.”<sup>57</sup> One official expressed his concern stating, “We are sitting on a time bomb. If cholera, dysentery or meningitis starts, we are in trouble. All the latrines are nearly full. Someone must come and help us with these people.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the researchers witnessed children collecting and drinking water that was dripping out of a refrigerated truck carrying fish, demonstrating a lack of sanitary resources.

Once refugees ran out of money, their presence lost its economic benefit to the nationals. Bars that were once full became empty, as refugees spent all the money they had managed to flee with. At the same time, the presence of some refugees with greater resources has also created tension. The LC1 Chairman for Rwebisengo sub-county talked of the perception that they were using their money to take advantage of the situation:

Some of those people from Congo are very rich while the people here are very poor. So the Congolese have started to buy the land, they may bring in over 500 cows. This is raising concern. Our land board has told them that those people from Congo are not nationals. So any time the government will come and take the land away. Just recently, the people have been quarrelling that they are squeezed here because of these people coming with their cows. But our people have been allowed to graze in the reserve, so now that is not a problem.<sup>59</sup>

On the whole, therefore, the majority of nationals interviewed showed their willingness to host the refugees, but were increasingly unable to cope with the implications of doing so. Thus, while a few nationals expressed hostility towards the refugees, the majority were not so antagonistic: they were simply concerned about how they were going to sustain living alongside the refugee population with no additional assistance. A Ugandan woman voiced her concern:

We received refugees well because they are our relatives and they were suffering. Of course there are problems because of the cows. But we can't chase them back to Congo because there is war. Now they have also been allowed to graze. But we have a problem with lack of water, and also food prices are beginning to rise. We can stay with the refugees, but we need more social services like water.<sup>60</sup>

It was an opinion that was shared by one of the refugees:

The people here are good, but life is progressively difficult. Ugandans have moved out to let us stay here in these houses, paying rent.... But now there's no work, and there is no more assistance coming in. We have received food only once. After that we were told to go to Kyaka to get food, but we'd rather return to Congo. We desperately need another borehole, and don't understand why Oxfam can't come to do that. Also, our children struggle to go to school because of the language problem. What future will they have when we return to Congo? All over the world, even where there's war, children go to school. Why is it that our children from Congo can't go to school? Why is it that the NGOs won't help us? War has disrupted all our means of livelihood.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Miraji Mugisha, Secretary LC1, Rwebisengo sub-county, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Security official, Ntoroko landing site, Ntoroko, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Ahmed Hussain, LC1 Chairman, Rwebisengo sub-county, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Ugandan female national, Rwebisengo county, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Congolese female refugee, Ntoroko landing site, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003

The willingness of the local communities to accommodate the refugees is being increasingly eroded as demand over resources becomes more and more pressurised. With the cessation of external assistance to the communities, refugees and nationals alike are struggling to survive. Although nationals showed substantial resourcefulness by renting their properties and using refugees as a labour resource, and many refugees were coping by continuing to fish or selling cattle, life is clearly getting progressively difficult for refugees and nationals alike. Although some nationals expressed their desire for the refugees to be moved to Kyaka, the majority saw renewed assistance to the communities as being a viable alternative to solving the current resource strain.

### 3.2.3 Security Issues

In addition to concern over limited resources, nationals were increasingly concerned about the security implications of hosting refugees. At one level this fear was based on a general concern that combatants might come over the boarder with civilians. As one Ugandan resident of Rwebisengo said, "There is also insecurity because, as you know, people who have come because of war carry guns. There have been illegal killings of refugees killing refugees. . . So we feel insecure."<sup>62</sup>

However, the most widespread fear was of attacks from the DRC by militia groups, something that had indeed begun to occur by August. As one national explained: "We [and the refugees] are all Bahema and we are all cattle keepers. We were very happy for them to come here. . . But the problem is these Lendu people who were hunting for the Bahema are now hunting for us as well. We may end up also entering into their danger. Four days ago, some Lendu came to Kamuga village 38 kilometres from here and killed some Ugandan Hema. Now the Lendu are warning that they have to enter Uganda any time. They are looking for the Congolese."<sup>63</sup>

The LC Chairman of Katanga village told a similar story of Lendu militias entering Ugandan territory in June and killing seven Ugandans who had gone fishing: "Three bodies were found in the lake, and they had been cut. From that day up to now, people still run away when they see a boat on the lake. We have also heard rumours of the warning that they are coming any time. Up to now, the Lendu are still taking people from the lake. There is a UPDF detach here with only 40 soldiers."<sup>64</sup>

In a district that has so recently lived through the ADF conflict, the threat of attacks by militias has a particularly frightening resonance. Furthermore, there have been rumours of the ADF re-grouping in the DRC, and we witnessed an increased UPDF presence in Bundibugyo town during the workshops. Indeed, participants in the workshops were tangibly reluctant to discuss the ADF conflict, and it was clear that the psychological impact of the war and the fear it generated had not left with the rebels. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the threat of such militia attacks on the civilian population of Uganda, coupled with rumours of the ADF re-grouping in the DRC, has led to growing fear at the presence of thousands of refugees in the district.

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with Ugandan male national, Rwebisengo county, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Ugandan male resident of Rwebisengo, Bundibugyo district, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with LC1 Chairman, Katanga village, Bundibugyo district, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

### 3.3 An Ongoing IDP Crisis

While the relatively recent arrival of refugees from the DRC has dominated attention within the district, it is vital that the plight of remaining IDPs, and of those who have returned to their homes and are struggling to survive are not overlooked. In particular, material assistance must be distributed in a manner that allows people both to meet their basic needs, and take ownership of their lives. While discussions at the workshops revealed the existence of sympathy between IDPs and refugees who shared a common experience of displacement, IDP participants also emphasised the extent to which they still have desperate needs themselves, and expressed worries about being overlooked. As one IDP leader said, “We understand their situation, but please don’t forget us. We are still crying.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, it is abundantly clear, even from casual observation, that the level of assistance being received in Bundibugyo does not match the need. The ADF conflict may be officially over, but the ramifications continue to be felt acutely.

## 4 RESPONSES BY LOCAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Many of the issues and dilemmas outlined above require a robust response by local and central government, as well as international actors. While the constitution of Uganda places the responsibility for refugees, IDPs and disaster management under central government, what is not clear is the role that the local government should play, and how this should function on the ground. Which tier of government is responsible for responding to the IDP crisis? Who is now responsible for resettling the IDPs? How much responsibility should the local government take in such situations? Who is responsible for registering the refugees and formulating a strategy to assist them? Should districts keep their own records? Where do the responsibilities of the district, the central government, the NGO community and the UN lie? The current situation in Bundibugyo, as host to both IDPs and refugees, brings these questions into sharp focus and demonstrates the need for comprehensible demarcation of responsibility, and the clarification of the local government’s role.

On the ground, it is apparent that such clear demarcations of responsibilities are lacking. Our initial findings indicate the presence of two inter-related issues regarding the response of the district: the district’s actual inability to cope with the crisis, and the wider policy context that appears to have disempowered the district. Initiatives taken by local government officials are constantly being undermined by the fact that management of refugees and IDPs falls under the central government, and the role of the local government remains unclear.

During the two workshops, it became increasingly apparent that there is a perceived crisis in the capacity of the district to ‘manage’ disaster. At one level this is not surprising: the district has been worn down by years of civil war, has had to confront the widespread displacement of its inhabitants, and is now facing an influx of refugees. Discussions regarding the District Management Committee showed a lack of confidence in its capabilities and efficiency. Representatives from the NGO community spoke of a breakdown in communication and co-ordination between NGOs and the district, and district officials talked of the lack of available resources. Furthermore, there was a clear breakdown in communication between different district officials, particularly regarding

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<sup>65</sup> IDP female community representative, RLP/CRS Training Workshop 7<sup>th</sup>—9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

procedure in refugee and IDP matters. Indeed, there appeared to be no tangible planning initiated from the district as to how the issues previously raised by the IDPs, or currently by the refugee influx, should be dealt with.

However, while the District Management Committee struggles to cope, individual local government officials on the ground have taken initiative in resolving the current crisis. Within the refugee-hosting areas, the researchers saw a clear desire on the part of local officials and refugees to work towards creating a workable solution to the situation. For instance, one of the refugees attending the workshop presented the RLP with a list of the names of all refugees who had crossed into Ntoroko between May and July 2003. Likewise, local government officials spoke of how they had sought to register refugees, and had a clear idea of the specific needs of the people currently living within their areas.

Although there was a tangible desire to assist the refugees, there was a lack of empowerment to do anything about it. This was translating itself into an increasing abnegation of responsibility through assertions that refugees are the responsibility of OPM and UNHCR. This tendency may have emerged because the process that had taken place since the influx showed that the actions of the OPM would negate any initiative taken by district officials and the refugees themselves. For instance, the Secretary for Bundibugyo Disaster Management Committee, Rwebisengo Village, described the situation as follows:

The refugees first received humanitarian assistance in June, and we were helping with that process. Then Mr. Douglas from the Office of the Prime Minister and Mr. Gonah from UNHCR came and asked us to stop giving assistance to the refugees. They said that according to Ugandan policy, refugees are supposed to be in camps. We were ready to use Karugutu as a reception centre, but Mr. Douglas said that we are not supposed to construct a reception camp for the refugees. . . . Even now, World Vision has some relief but they have been stopped from giving it out. Those like UNICEF, which had already stored up drugs, blankets, basins, jerry cans, soap, mobile toilets, insisted on giving them out because there is no way they could take those things back. The Deputy RDC allowed them to distribute. . . . But since then, we have only given relief to those going to Kyaka.<sup>66</sup>

The sequence of events outlined above shows the gap between initiatives taken by those on the ground and the processes being imposed from outside. During the workshops when problems were raised—such as refugee children not being allowed to go to school because they did not have shoes—the participants repeatedly responded that there was need to go through the local authorities. As one district official said, “We, the community, can help the refugees. Our leaders should go and talk to the head teachers and explain the situation.”<sup>67</sup> Yet initiatives taken by individual district officials appear to have been constantly undermined by the wider structures placing refugees under the control of central government. Likewise, as the LC1 of Katanga village said,

We want to help the refugees, but there is no one to help us. We have not got any support for the refugees. Some of them are fishing to provide for themselves. But in May, the Uganda Revenue Authority and marine people imposed fishing guidelines on

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Pastor Charles Bamuloko, Secretary for Bundibugyo Disaster Management Committee, Rwebisengo Village, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

<sup>67</sup> UN Volunteer, RLP/CRS Training Workshop 7<sup>th</sup>—9<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

the refugee fishermen. The refugees were forced to flee to Congo to avoid being caught by URA and they got killed by the Lendu. They even left their families here. So the Ugandan law and policy is what makes a problem for the refugees.<sup>68</sup>

The sentiment expressed here shows the level of frustration experienced by district officials. It summarises the researcher's impression that people want to help, but are simultaneously overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation and disempowered to act. The lack of clarity regarding the relationship between local and central government in situations of emergency has not only restricted the district's ability to find creative solutions but has also jeopardised the lives of the refugees.

## 5 CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that refugees currently living in Bundibugyo district are in dire need and that nationals in the district, worn down by a brutal civil war, are struggling to reconstruct their own lives. Despite this situation, many locals have shown a genuine willingness to help refugees and have sought to host them. Although tensions exist between the different groups, initial findings suggest that the current potential for mutual co-existence is great. However, policy constraints continually undermine the efforts made towards this end and conspire against a workable solution. At the same time, the weak capacity of the district constantly reinforces feelings of helplessness on the ground.

In light of these findings, the report makes the following recommendations:

1. In recognition of alleged abuses committed by members of the armed forces during the ADF insurgency, we recommend that a committee be set up to investigate such claims and make recommendations for those who have suffered to receive compensation. Making reparation to victims of such abuses is vital to the process of healing within the district.
2. Involving IDPs and refugees in decision-making processes is crucial to their recovery, and ensures that their knowledge and insight is taken into consideration. Therefore it is recommended that IDPs and refugees be consulted when formulating assistance and protection policies. This approach is not only rights-based but also allows for the incorporation of the creativity of refugees and IDPs in policy formulation.
3. Given the chronic conditions under which many IDPs, returnees and refugees are currently living, it is recommended that both the Government of Uganda and its development partners urgently provide more social services such as water, sanitation and health facilities to the affected areas.
4. Although there is a clear sense of hospitality among the host communities, the pressures that the populations are under is such that unless a concerted effort is made, conflicts between refugees and nationals could easily develop. Therefore, we recommend that joint committees of IDPs, refugees, district representatives, and NGOs be set up in areas currently hosting displaced people, in order to build good relationships and develop early warning mechanisms for potential conflicts.

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with LC1 Chairman, Katanga Village, Bundibugyo district, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

5. The findings suggest that current refugee policy undermines the willingness of local communities to assist in hosting refugees. Therefore, it is recommended that the government re-consider its approach to disaster management, and implement progressive policies that reinforce rather than undermine such willingness, and target refugees and their hosts simultaneously.
6. Furthermore, given that the majority of the refugees are either pastoralists or fish farmers, receiving assistance should not be dependent on their going to a settlement. It is illogical to ask refugees to abandon their means of livelihood and cattle to take up foreign practices of farming in a settlement.
7. Situations of conflict and forced migration are, by their very nature, sensitive and complex. Therefore there is need for ongoing human rights training in areas of displacement. Such training should aim to sensitise the different groups about their rights and obligations, and to reduce xenophobia.
8. Given the confusion that exists over levels of responsibility, it is vital that clearer systems be put in place to allow for adequate communication and the demarcation of roles within the different levels of government. At the local government level, it is vital that the district-level Disaster Management Committee be re-invigorated and empowered to function in a more effective way.
9. The district continues to live with the threat of insecurity, particularly from its border with the DRC. Therefore, it is recommended that a collaborative approach to security be taken: refugees and nationals should cooperate with central government in securing the border region. A precedent has already been set for this approach, as cooperation proved vital in ousting the ADF rebels from the district. Furthermore, moving the refugees to Kyaka would not necessarily stop the militias from targeting Ugandans who have shown willingness to host and protect refugees. Indeed, the border area will continue to be insecure for as long as the war persists in the eastern DRC.
10. Given the on-going situation of forced displacement within the district, there is need for further research to be done in the district, both to follow up on information already received and to gain a greater depth of understanding of the many issues it has revealed.

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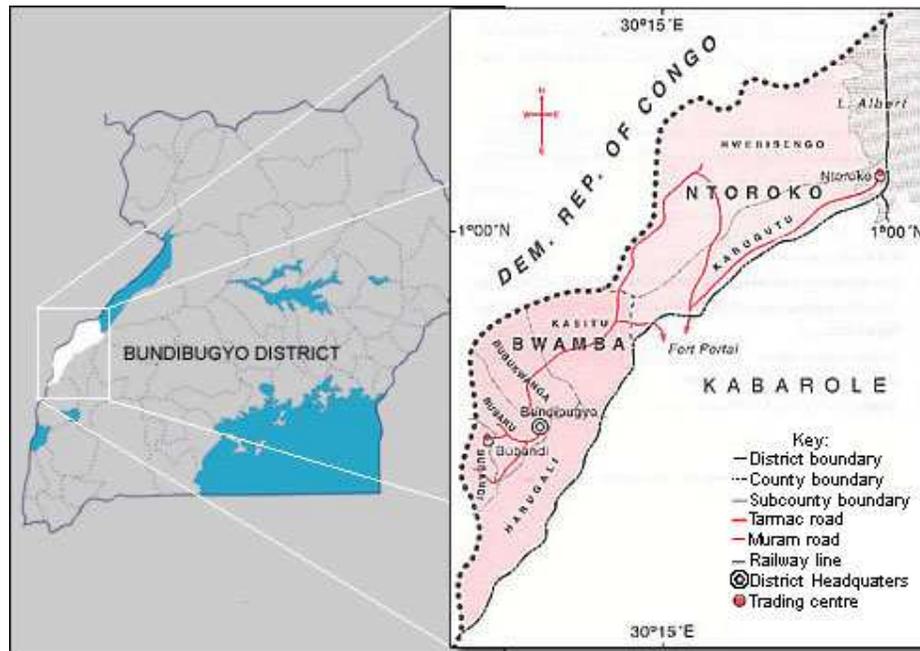
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### Map of Bundibugyo District



From Bundibugyo District Information Portal [www.udg.or.ug/DIP/Bundibugyo](http://www.udg.or.ug/DIP/Bundibugyo)