

RAPID CONFLICT ASSESSMENT IN KYAKA II REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, UGANDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) carried out a rapid conflict assessment in Kyaka II refugee settlement between 23-28 April 2018. The objective of the study was to provide DRC, ECHO and other humanitarian actors with a snapshot of the implications of changes in context in Kyaka II provoked by the ongoing influx of Congolese refugees since December 2017, as the first step in ensuring conflict sensitive programming. The study focused on identifying potential areas of tension among: 1) the 'old' and 'new' caseload of refugees and 2) between the broad refugee population and host communities. Findings are drawn from a desk review and five days of qualitative fieldwork in Kyaka II where in-depth interviews were carried out with long-serving staff from the DRC, Office of the Prime Minister and United Nations High Commission for Refugees, as well as teachers, refugee representatives from old and new caseload separately and host community representatives. A total of 39 respondents (from 17 KIIs and 5 FGDs) took part in the study.

BACKGROUND KYAKA II REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

- 81.5 Sq km of gazetted government land in Kyegegwa district, southwest Uganda that can accommodate up to 100,000 people if land plots allocated to refugee households are reduced to 30x30 metres.
- Established in 1983/84 to receive Rwandese refugees; reopened 1995 to receive more Rwandese; significant Congolese arrivals in 2005 and 2006; in 2008 refugees from Kyaka I all transferred to Kyaka II.
- Refugee population in Kyaka II: from 27,000-30,000 (pre-Dec 2017) to over 55,000 refugees (by April 2018).

KEY FINDINGS

- Relations between refugees and host communities remain overall positive. New refugee arrivals have not yet led to a change in how refugees are perceived by host communities. The general sentiment among nationals is still that "the positive effects are more than the negative ones".
- However, the shifting environment can lead to changes in refugee-host community relations in the mid- to long-term as demographic pressure increases, resources become more stretched and if there is a surge in cases of theft.
- In the short-term, relations between 'old and new refugees are more concerning and if unaddressed may deteriorate and lead to theft and inter-personal conflicts, such as family and neighbourhood conflicts. The study identified three key areas of concern:
 1. As population increases and land plots are further reduced, **livelihoods will come under increased strain**.
 2. Refugee leadership structures appear unable to manage individual grievances and inter-personal conflicts involving new refugees. This needs to be **addressed urgently to avoid escalation of low-level conflicts**.
 3. As the refugee population grows, **more investment needs to go into integrated social services** to ensure that nationals continue to see and experience the material advantages of hosting refugees.

From this follow two important questions for local authorities and humanitarian agencies to consider:

1. How to address the **humanitarian and protection needs of a continuous flow of new arrivals** and simultaneously account for the **new social and economic vulnerabilities of the protracted refugee caseload?**
2. How to ensure **host communities around Kyaka II continue to be receptive to a growing refugee population?**



The contents of this brief are the ideas and opinions of the author (DRC's regional conflict management coordinator for East Africa and Yemen, Diana Felix da Costa) and do not necessarily represent the views of DRC or of ECHO. For a more in-depth discussion see the full report: Danish Refugee Council, 2018. *"To have peaceful coexistence, people need to have full stomachs": Rapid Conflict Assessment in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, Uganda*, by D. Felix da Costa for DRC Uganda.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Impact of the refugee influx on land access and livelihoods

Observations

- Reduction of land available to refugee households with severe consequences on the livelihoods and economic self-reliance of 'old refugees'. From 100x50m plots (but informally several acres) to 50x50m to 30x30 plots.
- 'Old' refugees unwilling to let go of their old farms due to limited non-agricultural livelihood opportunities: reports of threats against new refugees.
- Invisible vulnerabilities: old refugees in trading centres most affected by land reductions – no land and no food distribution. Simultaneously, complaints of insufficient food also by new arrivals.
- Complaints of increase in cases of theft among refugees and by refugees of host community farms.

Recommendations

- Invest in and support innovative non-agricultural livelihoods/off-farm activities, alongside alongside improved market assessments and engagement with existing business communities.
- Special consideration for social protection mechanisms given to refugees who no longer receive food aid.
- Roll out sensitisation campaigns that discuss the importance of rationing food. Consider a mixed distribution of cash alongside food, which would permit new arrivals to select their own food.
- Consider the implications of limited livelihoods on gender relations.

Impact of refugee influx on refugee leadership structures

Observations

- Until April 2017 Refugee Welfare Committees (RWC) structures composed of 11 elected members; in April elections of two additional representatives of new arrivals into RWCs 1, 2 and 3: now total 13 members as a means of ensuring greater representation and legitimacy. However, complaints by new refugees that RWCs are biased towards old refugees and unable or unwilling to solve issues.
- RWCs address inter-personal conflicts – critical to tackle and correct dysfunctional elements as early as possible to avoid inter-personal grievances (family, neighbourhood, etc.) from becoming inter-group issues and escalating into violence.
- Traditional dispute mechanisms often first recourse used to address inter-personal conflicts – more information needed on these.

Recommendations

- Train new members of the RWC structures on Ugandan law, legal process, as well as their roles and responsibilities as RWC members. Joint trainings / awareness campaigns to all members of RWCs (old and new) emphasising the importance of collaborative work, fair and equitable representation of all refugees among other issues.
- Carry out sensitisation campaigns targeting new arrivals on existing authority structures and their roles.
- Install helpdesks in every zone.
- Institutionalize regular meetings between neighbouring LCs and RWCs.
- Further mapping of and research on roles of 'informal' dispute resolutions mechanisms.

Pressure on natural resources and social services

Observations

- Population increase impacting on availability of natural resources and quality of social services: new arrivals have impacted on availability of medicine, clean water supply, land available for farming and consequently on the availability of food.
- Competition over resources and overcrowded social services result in frustrations among users and can contribute to tensions among refugees but also with host communities who use those services.

Recommendations

- Improve and increase social services across all sectors.
- Provision of alternative sources of energy that can possibly reduce exposure to protection risks, especially of women.



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