

REFUGEE RESPONSE IN UGANDA

September 2014 – Six Month Report

Prepared for the States of Jersey Overseas Aid Commission



Children celebrating world water day with a march through the camp. Credit: Oxfam



One of the 2,223 latrines built by the refugees on their settlement plots. Credit: Oxfam

Situation

Since the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan in December 2013, more than 120,063 South Sudanese refugees had sought refuge in Uganda by the end of June 2014. Oxfam estimates that 87% of the refugees are women and children.

Refugees are arriving mainly through four border crossing points at Elegu, Oraba, Koboko and Ngomoromo, and water and sanitation facilities at the refugee settlements have been overwhelmed. There has been a daily influx of almost 1,000 people per day, and the numbers are likely to continue to increase once the rains end in September and fighting resumes in late 2014.

Oxfam's rapid assessment on 16 January 2014 showed that there were very significant gaps in water and sanitation provision both in transit and planned relocation sites. Access to latrines, clean drinking water, and waste disposal facilities were severely lacking. There were also major gaps in the provision of food. Without urgent humanitarian assistance, thousands of people are at risk of malnutrition and disease.

What is Oxfam doing in Uganda

The response was split into two phases, the initial response work took place between January to April 2014 and implemented work in the transit centres and the resettlement plots. This was followed by refugees being moved wholly to resettlement plots from May onwards where the second phase of work will be focused until December 2014.

Oxfam is working across five camps in two districts, in Adjumani district there are four camps Ayilo, Baratuku, Alere and Mereiyi where we are supporting 25,000 people, in Arua district there is Rhino camp with 5,000 people. Our first priority was to provide water, we drilled five new boreholes and rehabilitated 23 existing boreholes in both districts. In Baratuku camp our efforts to find water resulted

in dry boreholes, therefore we trucked in 600,000 litres of water for 5,000 people from a borehole in Ayilo camp.



Water User Committee and caretaker training in Rhino Camp
Credit: Oxfam

In the camps we initially built 30 communal latrines and bathing areas. However following the allocation of settlement plots (20m by 30m) we changed our strategy and gave families tools, a latrine slab, poles and sheeting to make their own latrine on their plot. The families to date have built 2,233 latrines. The communal latrines in the camps will continue to be used for new refugees arriving in the transit camp. We identified 200 people with disabilities, who were unable to build their own latrine or shelter on their settlement plot. Therefore we paid labourers to build robust brick built latrines with a bathing area covered with a thatched roof. Families with young children were given potties as the latrines are difficult for young children to use properly.

The majority of the refugees are women and children, with 65% of them under 18 years old. Water borne diseases can be life threatening especially for children under 5 years old. We trained 40 hygiene promoters who were given a block each of 100 tents in the five camps to deliver door to door training on good hygiene practices. 9,000 women and girls were given menstrual hygiene kits with reusable pads and soap. As part of an environmental clean-up campaign we distributed kits with wheel barrows, rakes, shovels, brooms and heavy duty gloves to pickup and dispose of waste in 13 newly constructed refuse pits.

Unfortunately the situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future and so families have been moved to more permanent settlement plots, and we are preparing for new influxes of refugees once the rains stop and fighting begins again in South Sudan. Uganda is no stranger to conflict itself, a war was waged by the Lord Resistance Army for 21 years and ended in 2006. At its height over two million were living in camps in Northern Uganda. Therefore local agencies have the skills and experience to deal with large numbers of refugees.

Host communities and refugees living side by side

While terrible, emergency responses also help us to build trust and work alongside struggling communities such as the host community in Northern Uganda. A sudden influx of refugees within a community can provide tensions over already limited resources. Prior to the refugee influx, environmental experts had warned that Uganda was heading for a fuel and environmental crisis as a result of indiscriminate cutting down of trees. The settlement of refugees has exerted a lot of pressure on the local environment and caused friction, such as women from the camp being chased away by host communities when collecting firewood. In response to this we developed and implemented with our partners an environmental strategy which included distributing 6,900 fuel efficient stoves which has reduced the amount of firewood used by 50%. In addition we conducted 139 awareness raising sessions to 43,545 people in the camps and host communities on good farming practices, waste management, impact of bush burning and deforestation. To reduce degradation of the soil, we have supplied each of the settlement plots with five tree seedlings chosen in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, so far 28,819 trees have been distributed.

Oxfam will continue to work in both the transit and settlement sites until December 2014, we are planning new activities to support food production on the settlements sites.

**THANK YOU TO THE STATES OF JERSEY FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR THOSE FLEEING
CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN**

CASE STUDY

Keer Garang



Keer with her completed latrine

Keer Garang (left) lives in Ayilo settlement, she arrived from Bor in Jonglei state in South Sudan when fighting broke and her husband was killed. The 65 year-old Keer travelled from Juba to Numule and then came to Ayilo settlement through Dzaipi transit centre where she was registered as a person with disability needs.

In a monitoring visit by the Oxfam public health promotion team leader, Keer had this to share about her experience:

“I’m so happy that I had such a nice latrine built for me, which will also enable me to have a bath in privacy. I know this help came from Oxfam people who came around to talk to me about cleanliness, I thank them very much. They gave people materials to construct latrines but I did not receive them because I could not dig a pit.”

Keer lives in a temporary shelter constructed with plastic sheeting and but she has been prioritised because of her disability for a better shelter by the United Nations.

Mr Tombe



Mirieyi settlement is one of four settlements in Adjumani District where Oxfam has been implementing water and sanitation work since February 2014. This small settlement is hosting refugees who fled South Sudan before it gained independence in 2011 and those who fled in 2014.

At the beginning of the response, the settlement had five boreholes out of which only two were functional. Mr Tombe a village elder (in the blue suit left, receiving tools to build latrines) talks about the impact Oxfam’s help has had on the settlement:

“Oxfam gave us free slabs, poles, logs, tools and buckets to store drinking water. Oxfam has repaired our boreholes, some of which have been broken down for the last 10 years. Enough water is now available and congestion at water points has decreased and fights between host communities and refugees at the boreholes have stopped, resulting in peaceful coexistence.”