



Refugee Law Project

Faculty of Law, Makerere University



**REPORT ON A VISIT BY THE LEGAL AID AND
COUNSELING DEPARTMENT TO MADI OKOLLO
REFUGEE SETTLEMENT 5 – 16 NOVEMBER 2007**

Refugee Law Project

Vision

Human rights for all people in Uganda irrespective of their legal status. This vision is informed by relevant international laws as well as the Constitution of Uganda.

Mission

To empower asylum seekers, refugees, deportees, IDPs and host communities in Uganda to enjoy their human rights and lead dignified lives.

Mandate

- **To promote the protection, well-being and dignity of forced migrants and their hosts.**
- **To empower forced migrants, communities and all associated actors to challenge and combat injustices in policy, law and practice.**
- **To influence national and international debate on matters of forced migration, and justice and peace, in Uganda.**
- **To be a resource for forced migrants and relevant actors.**

All of the above is achieved through a combination of activities broadly categorized under legal aid and counseling, research and advocacy, and training and education.

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INTRODUCTION

The Refugee Law Project (RLP) Legal Aid and Counseling (LAC) Department visited Madi Okollo refugee settlement in Arua district between 5th and 16th November 2007 conducted in-depth interviews 2007 with refugees living in the settlement, the neighboring host community, local leaders, Government and UN officials and NGO staff working in the settlement. The team that visited the settlement included, Mr. Mindrea Godwin Buwa, Mrs. Eunice owiny, Ms. Susan Ombaru, Mr. Syldie Bizimana and Mr. Fred Ssekandi. The team was based in Arua town owing to unreliable accommodation facilities in the settlement due to the repatriation programme. The team made daily visits to the settlement during the period of the visit. The purpose of the field trip was to provide legal aid and psychosocial counseling for the refugees in the settlement and protection monitoring in general in the wake of the repatriation of the Sudanese refugees. Before the visit, the team had the opportunity of witnessing similar repatriation programmes from Rhino settlement refugee settlement and Kyangwali refugee settlement earlier in the year. It was therefore easy to make comparisons and draw comparative conclusions from the visit.

The following represents findings on most of the salient issues that emerged from the visit to madi Okollo Refugee Settlement, Arua. This document is circulated so as to inform the key stakeholders on the progress of the repatriation process and pertinent issues that accompany such repatriation programmes particularly the Madi Okollo repatriation programme.

1. The repatriation exercise in general.

Introduction

Madi Okollo refugee settlement was set up in 2003 to basically accommodate and settle Sudanese refugees who had been displaced by the LRA¹ attacks on Acholpii refugee settlement in Pader district in northern Uganda. The SPLA² struggle against the Arab dominated Khartoum government in Sudan that started way back in 1983 intensified in early 1990s and displaced thousands of Sudanese across the boarder into Uganda. Those Sudanese refugees who crossed into Uganda became recognized as refugees by both Uganda government and the office of the UNHCR³ in Uganda on *prima facie* basis and settled in refugee settlements. Thousands of Sudanese refugees who crossed the boarder into Uganda through Palabek in kitgum were settled in Acholpii refugee settlement in Pader district over the years. To the dilemma of these refugees, the Lords Resistance army of Joseph Kony started a rebellion against the Uganda government in Northern

¹ LRA stands for the Lords Resistance Army of Joseph Kony, that is currently fighting against the Government of Uganda.

² SPLA stands for the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army.

³ United nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Uganda. The rebels initially operated in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. The Joseph Kony rebellion depended mainly on abduction of people that they subsequently trained into their ranks. These abductions in that region did not spare the refugees. In fact they became an easy target for the rebels. Thus between 2000 and 2002, the rebels made a number of attacks and raids on Acholpui refugee settlement, where they killed scores of refugees, looted their food and other property and abducted both men and women into the bush. The worst of the attacks was in August 2002 where hundreds of refugees were killed and scores abducted. This incidence led to mass secondary displacement of the refugees into the neighboring towns including, Lira, Gulu, Pader and other villages in the region. The Government of Uganda and the office of the UNHCR decided to close the refugee settlement and relocated the affected refugees to Kiryadongo refugee settlement in Masindi district. This was an emergency measure but in fact Kiryadongo refugee settlement could not accommodate the high numbers of refugees displaced from Acholpui refugee settlement given that at the time it was hosting considerable numbers of refugees already. The Government relocated some of the Acholpui case load from Kiryadongo refugee settlement to Kyangwali refugee settlement in Hoima district between 2002 and 2003 but again Kyangwali refugee settlement could not hold all the displaced Acholpui caseload.

Consequently, the government of Uganda established two other refugee settlements in West Nile to relocate the displaced Acholpui refugee case load from Kiryadongo refugee settlement. Madi Okollo refugee settlement in Arua district and Ikafe refugee settlement in Yumbe district were established between 2002 and 2003. Initially the refugees refused relocation to these settlements citing fears of further attack by the LRA rebels as they believed that West Nile could be accessible to the LRA rebels. They also expressed fears that since the two settlements are in border districts to Sudan, they stood risks of abduction by the SPLA rebels if they wanted to replenish their forces by way of abduction. UNHCR supported the position of the refugees in disagreement with the Government of Uganda. The relocation of the Acholpui refugee case load to West Nile became highly politicized in 2003 to the point that Uganda Government declared the then UNHCR Country representative in Uganda *persona non grata* and ordered him to leave the country within 48 hours. Upon the departure of the UNHCR representative, the Government embarked on forceful relocation of the Acholpui case load from Kiryadongo to Madi Okollo and Ikafe refugee settlements in West Nile.

Given the forceful nature of the relocation, it was not done in an orderly manner; some families got split and are settled separately in the two different settlements. Given the trauma of violence right from Sudan then Acholpui and then the violence of forceful relocation from Kiryadongo to West Nile, many of the refugees required compulsory psychosocial counseling and support. Some of the refugees lost their family members in the attacks in Acholpui refugee settlement. In some cases, entire families were wiped off. Some of the youth lost both parents in the attacks in Acholpui. Some of the children born in Uganda who have lost their parents and relatives in the attacks in Acholpui have no

knowledge of their homes back in Sudan. There have been remarriages of single parents who lost their spouses in the attacks and the children from their former marriages are abandoned to fend for themselves especially if the remarriages are across tribes. It is against this backdrop that the repatriation process in Madi Okollo refugee settlement and the accompanying protection concerns in the wake of the repatriation should be viewed.

Findings on the visit.

Madi Okollo refugee settlement occupies an area of about 21,000 square kilometers. It is situated in Arua district in west Nile. The settlement is administered by the Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate of Refugees. It has the office of the settlement commandant. UNHCR runs programmes in the settlement through DED⁴, its implementing partner in the settlement. DED has offices and staff in the settlement. The population of the settlement was quoted by the deputy settlement commandant and the Programme Coordinator of DED in the settlement, Ms. Sarah Afusa to be 8,215 refugees before the repatriation programme started in the settlement in August 2007. The population is primarily composed of Sudanese refugees with very few Congolese refugees not numbering up to ten. The repatriation programmes for Sudanese refugees kicked off some time in early 2007 with registration for repatriation but actual repatriation started in August 2007. By the time of the visit, there were already five convoys of refugees repatriated to Sudan. The total number that had been repatriated by the time of the visit stood at about 1015 refugees.

From the start of our interaction with the refugees, we noticed overwhelming desire among the refugees to repatriate to Sudan. Over 90% of the refugees had registered for repatriation and an overwhelming majority expressed disappointment at the slow rate at which the repatriation was being carried out. Day in and day out they sought to be repatriated as soon as [possible but the resource available for the programme could not permit their repatriation at the rate they wanted.

We gathered that, information on repatriation and country of origin (Sudan) had been provided to the refugees by the Norwegian Refugee Council and the UNHCR by way of announcements and posting information on various notice boards in the various villages of the settlement. The Norwegian refugee council also distributed portable radios to the refugee welfare Council chairpersons that would enable every village to collectively access information on the situation in the Sudan and information on repatriation. The Norwegian refugee Council also holds weekly talk shows on radio (Nile FM) on repatriation programme every Saturday since the start of the repatriation programme. However the information provided does not allow refugees to ask questions and find

⁴ Duetscher Entwicklungsdienst. A non profit organization registered as German NGO.

answers to their dilemma. The headmaster of a primary school in the settlement (Tindi primary school) had this to say;

“ The information given to the refugees is one sided, refugees are not given opportunity to ask questions. It is like the authorities have made a decision for the refugees to return under all circumstances. There is need for public dialogue. Most people are making decision to return because others are doing so. What does an illiterate person read from the notices on the notice boards? How does a person get to clear his head on announcements made without any opportunity to ask questions?”

It was observed that the desire to return is propagated by the elders in the communities. The elders see repatriation as affording them an opportunity to return to die and be buried on their ancestral lands. Any other considerations are irrelevant to them. They oblige their families and communities to return to Sudan. A 30 year old Sudanese refugee had this to say.

“My father has obliged me to return. He forced me to register for repatriation. I do not want to repatriate to Sudan. I am very sick and I am not sure if I can get treatment there. I may be signing my death warrant by repatriation yet my father is forcing me. The day they came to collect us, I refused that is why my family has not been repatriated and now I have a conflict with my father over my decision not to repatriate. I want to remain in Uganda for treatment or be sent to another country so that I can receive adequate treatment”

It is apparent that majority of the refugees do not have adequate knowledge on the conditions of return and are making decisions to return as a result of pressure from the communities to return. Their decisions to return are not informed. Asked whether his decision to repatriate was voluntary and informed one refugee had this to say;

“Yes it is voluntary. Voluntary means that you surrender yourself to the authorities and they take you back. Every body seems to be going. You have to surrender yourself. If I don't surrender what will I be doing here in Uganda yet UNHCR says their protection will cease for those who refuse to return. I have surrendered I have no option”

The respondents unanimously informed us that Information on repatriation and conditions of return is provided to refugees by UNHCR and NRC However by deeper interview we realized that much as UNHCR and NRC provides information on repatriation and condition of return, the information provided is to prepare refugees to return and not to make a decision on whether to return or not. A group of refugees on a focus group discussion had this to say;

“ we hear that there is peace in Sudan and UNHCR tells us that it is safe to return so we have registered to return”

Asked whether they are aware of the political statements made by the president of the government of Southern Sudan Silva Kir about the possibility of return to war if the North does not implement its part of the CPA,

"We know nothing about the implementation of the CPA. No body told us about that. We were told it is safe to return that it."

Ironically, the information they claimed ignorance on was posted by NRC on some of the notice boards in the settlement. This poses the question how effective is the methodology adopted by UNHCR and NRC in ensuring effective communication of information on repatriation and conditions of return to the refugees?

Regardless of all the above shortcomings in the communication of information on conditions of return and the repatriation programme, there is overwhelming desire among refugees to return on repatriation to Sudan. The Refugee Welfare Council II chairman attributed this overwhelming desire to the following factors;

"These refugees have spent two decades in refuge and gone through chains of violence and any prospect of return home in peace is overwhelming for them. The Elders do not want to die in exile and so they encourage their families and communities to return to Sudan. The visit by the repatriation commission from Sudan highly encouraged refugees to return. The climate in the settlement is uncertain and sometimes very disastrous for refugees for example last year; there were no rains and thus no agriculture. There was severe famine and the food rations were so inadequate for human survival. It was almost a humanitarian crisis. Refugees would like to return to Sudan and establish them selves and start to lead normal lives. Another thing is that those who have been repatriated maintain contacts in the settlement and they are communicating with their relatives and friends in the settlement, enticing them to repatriate. Now there is also a talk of booming economy and trade in Sudan and the refugees who have lived in poverty for close to two decades are eager to return and share the benefits of the booming trade and economy in southern Sudan."

One refugee informed us *"I hear there is a lot of money now in Sudan yet we are here in poverty. One may not see a note of money for close to a month. Why not return and see if life can change there?"*

A good number of youth who have dropped out of school told us that there is no future for their studies in Uganda since UNHCR pulled out from sponsoring them two years ago yet they have limited means of raising school fees for themselves in the settlement. They expressed optimism of raising school fees for them selves if they returned to Sudan. Repatriation presented them with an opportunity to explore possibilities of continuing with their studies.

Much as there is an overwhelming desire to return among refugees, there are numerous push and pull factors that input into their decision and desire to return to Sudan. Their return may not necessarily entail entirely voluntary decision to return in the sense of the

use of the term voluntary repatriation as a durable solution to the refugee problem in international protection.

The repatriation process.

The UNHCR conducted a registration process for repatriation in the early part of the year. The registration entailed filling repatriation forms. Most of the respondents we talked to had filled the repatriation forms and got registered for repatriation. They informed us that the registration process was very smooth. The feedback from the respondents indicated that information on registration was widely spread and that every one was aware. There were very few complainants who claimed they were not registered. This was either because they had lost necessary documents for registration such as ration cards or some of their family members were out of the settlement and so the family could not register as a whole. Other than that most of the refugees had successfully registered for repatriation.

By the time of the visit about 1000 refugees had so far been repatriated in five convoys. UNHCR has established a collection centre in the settlement where the returnees are gathered overnight pending boarding of the repatriation trucks. The centre is dotted with movable tents that are fixed for accommodation in the night. The sanitation of the centre may not necessarily comfortably accommodate the numbers of returnees per convoy however given the short period spent at the collection centre that does not pose a serious threat. The returnees are provided a hot meal the night before departure and are provided with five long packets of biscuits and some water for the journey and they board the trucks and are dispatched for Sudan.

Initially returnees were allowed to carry 30 kilograms of food per person, 3 to 5 goats per family, reasonable numbers of other domestic animals except cattle. Families are also allowed to load the entirety of family household property other than those prohibited. On the other hand returnees were prohibited from loading property of commercial nature. A grinding meal was classified as a commercial property. The rules have been relaxed and basically remain on paper. Persons are allowed to load as much food items as they can afford. Families are allowed to load as many goats as they can given the fact that some families do and other do not have goats. The refugee community has managed to persuade UNHCR to allow returnees with grinding meals to load them on the trucks. We were informed during the visit that about four grinding meals had been transported by UNHCR during the repatriation process. What remains a prohibited item for loading are cattle. Owners of cattle are asked to either sell them off or clear with the veterinary department and organize their own transport to Sudan. Given that Madi okollo is in Arua district which borders Sudan, owners of cattle prefer to clear with the veterinary department and move with their cattle across the border.

UNHCR has so far had five convoys of returnees repatriated to Sudan. This is such a low number compared to those who simultaneously registered for repatriation. Refugees are getting impatient with the rate of the repatriation and are increasingly frustrated. As a result there has emerged the phenomenon of spontaneous repatriation, where refugees intending to repatriate leave for Sudan on their own. The numbers are not handful but nonetheless the authorities confirmed the phenomenon.

Protection concerns in the wake of repatriation.

Much as there is overwhelming desire among Sudanese refugees to repatriate back to Sudan, not all of them are interested in repatriation. A handful of refugees do not wish to return to Sudan but rather seek other durable solutions. Some say that under no circumstances can they return to Sudan. They are seeking further protection. This group of refugees are worried because no other durable solution has been fronted by UNHCR in the settlement since the start of the repatriation programme. They claim that during the world refugee day celebrations in the settlement the authorities informed refugees to register for repatriation and warned that those refusing to repatriate will not receive further protection. Different categories in this group have different reasons for refusing to repatriate to Sudan and they fall under the following reasons;

1. The jalaba factor.

The term jalaba is a slung coined to mean Arabs and in the context of the Sudanese refugees it means an Arab collaborator, a traitor who betrays the blacks to the Arabs, a person who has changed his religion, name or way of life in line with those of the Arabs, a person who once worked for the Arab government in the Sudan, a person who has relationships of either consanguinity or affinity with Arabs and a person who has lived with Arabs amicably for sometime. These persons are resented by the communities in southern Sudan and it has found extension in to the refugee settlement. They are isolated and persecuted severely by the communities in southern Sudan. They fear to return to face such isolation and persecution. Not only is the jalaba persecuted but the persecution is spread across his or her family. So whole families suffer for the actions or the deeds of a jalaba family member. The jalabas and their families fear to return to Sudan and most of them have not registered for repatriation and are in fear of what happens to them after the repatriation programme.

2. Revenge killings.

In most of the communities in southern Sudan, there is the culture of an eye for an eye. Where a person kills another, the accused suffers extra judicial death to avenge the killing of the deceased. Where the accused can not be found or traced, a family member of the sex of the deceased has to be sacrificed to avenge the killing. Where the deceased is a man and there is no male family member of the accused, two females are sacrificed to avenge the killing of the deceased. During the SPLA/M struggle in the south, there were killings by SPLA soldiers and other opportunists in the war. Where such killings

occurred and they were not avenged, family members of the accused persons still stand wanted for the revenge killing in case the accused can not be traced. Similarly refugees who had killed back in Sudan fear revenge killings when they return to Sudan. Vast numbers of Sudanese refugees and their families under the spell of revenge killings fear to return to Sudan and are seeking other durable solutions.

3. Human compensation.

Again in most Sudanese communities in southern Sudan, where a person accidentally causes the death of another, the family of the deceased seeks compensation from the family of the accused by way of surrendering a family member of the same sex as the deceased as compensation for the loss of the deceased. The object of compensation by culture loses all ties with his or her original family and is considered as part of the family being compensated, yet the compensated family does not have the same level of care and concern for the object of compensation as the original family would. In case the object of compensation is a female, the compensated family will only be interested in the bride price they will reap from her or if she turns out to be fit for marriage in the compensated family she is married within the family without recourse to her consent to the marriage. In case the object of compensation is a male the compensated family is only interested in his labour and any benefits he can bring to the compensated family. The compensated family is the one which makes a choice out of the family of the compensating family as to which member of the family becomes the object of compensation. Families afflicted with the dilemma of surrendering a family member as an object of compensation fear to return to Sudan for the sake of the family member who will be selected as compensation.

4. Unaccompanied minors/youth.

Given the chain of violence suffered by the Acholpii caseload right from Sudan into the country of asylum, so many children have been totally orphaned. Some have even lost every close relative especially in the LRA attacks on Acholpii refugee settlement. Unfortunately some of these children were born in exile in Uganda. Even those who were born in Sudan and who have lost their parents and close relatives in Uganda are in the same position as those born in Uganda. They do not know their home areas let alone their lands back in the Sudan. They have always regarded the refugee settlement as their home and repatriation seems a form of displacement for them. They have no where to return and nothing to return to. They are unwilling to return to Sudan. They argue that in case their lands can be traced back home, they have no social connections and these lands must have been occupied by other people already and trying to reclaim them in the absence of any social connections back home will expose them for elimination by those occupying their lands back in Sudan.

5. Widows.

Women refugees who lost their husbands in the war or in exile in Uganda fear to return to Sudan. First they can not return to their parents or relatives yet under customary law of the communities they can not own land. Land belongs to the men and so they have no claim to lands of their late husbands. The lands of the late husband revert to his brothers or other kinsmen. It is worse where such a widow only has children born in Uganda not known to the relatives of the deceased husband. she can not prove that these children belong to the deceased husband. They therefore fear being rendered homeless back home in Sudan. They would rather continue to dwell on the land that has been allocated to them in the refugee settlement in Uganda. They prefer other durable solutions such as resettlement for their plight.

6. Forced marriages back home in Sudan.

A few cases of very young girls of school going age fear to return because they have either been arranged to be married off when they reach Sudan or they fear such arrangement back home in Sudan. They fear that they will be sacrificed as capital for their families to start up life in the Sudan. The search for a start up capital is likely to drive their parents to sell them off to get bride price for start up. One such young girl informed us that her marriage has been arranged yet she would like to continue with her studies. She has declined to return to Sudan. She says girls like her have been protected in Uganda by the law but such laws are non existence in the Sudan and the cultural practice back home in Sudan is to marry off girls at young age. Another facet of this phenomenon is that the fear of forced marriages back home in Sudan is now causing young girls to get married to their boy friends in the settlement to avoid being married off to strangers who they might not love.

7. Personal scores with soldiers in the SPLA.

Some refugee fear to return because they have personal scores to settle with some army men in the SPLA. One of them fears to return because he marriage the wife of an SPLA soldier and the soldier has promised to kill him and his wife and children should he set foot in Sudan. Another one fears because he caused the arrest of an SPLA soldier back in the settlement when the soldier infiltrated the settlement for recruiting refugees to join the SPLA. The Government of Uganda later released the soldier who returned to Sudan and promised to deal with him should he set foot back top Sudan.

8. Accusations of blocking the repatriation from SPLA.

When information on repatriation started flowing in the settlement, some of the refugee leaders asked very pertinent issues about the situation in the Sudan for safe return. This was misinterpreted by some SPLA infor5mers in the settlement and reported to SPLA in Sudan that some of the refugee leaders were trying to block the repatriation. The concerned refugee leaders have allegedly been earmarked for discipline one they return to Sudan. The refugee leaders told us that when the tripartite commission from sudan visited the settlement, the commissioner from Magui county particularly warned

refugee leaders that they will face discipline back in Sudan after the repatriation. The refugee leaders fear to return as a result. They feel that they have been targeted for persecution and will as a result not return to Sudan. They are seeking further protection or other durable solution.

9. Studies.

For refugee students studying in Uganda, they would want to continue with education in the Ugandan educational system especially those in secondary school would like to complete their respective level in Uganda and if possible the next levels in Uganda. The pupils in primary school are not so much bothered but those in candidate class wished to complete their PLE exams and obtain their results first before repatriation. This has delayed certain families whose children are in candidate class. In some cases the families have repatriated and left such children under the care of family friend who are still in Uganda. This arrangement is done with the knowledge and sanction of the Government and UNHCR officials in the settlement. This kind of arrangement has also been done with respect to students in secondary schools. But in some cases the families of the students insist to wait for their children to continue with their studies and thus have not registered for repatriation. Besides most refugee students are uninformed on the education system in Sudan. There is a general misconception among them that the language of instruction is likely to be Arabic which most of the youth are not conversant with.

10. Remarriages.

For women who lost their husbands in the war in the Sudan or in exile in Uganda and who have remarried other men especially from different tribes here in Uganda, return to Sudan is quite hard because over the years they have been living in the settlements without avenue to make wealth. Once back in the Sudan they will be forced to pay bride price to the families of the deceased husbands, which wealth they do not have. This is likely to cause conflicts and lead to insecurity for the remarried spouses. Such spouses are not keen on repatriation to Sudan.

11. Intermarriages.

There are inter marriages between refugees and national. A host of interviews conducted with both nationals and refugees indicated that this has been a problematic area in the face of repatriation. Whereas nationals do not know what to do in such circumstances, the Sudanese have managed to repatriate with children of the said union with or without the knowledge of the other spouse. The refugees claim that their national spouses in most cases have been turned away from the repatriation center because repatriation is meant for only Sudanese. Others claim that when the dowry has not been completed, the Sudanese spouses' parents decide to repatriate with their children and grandchildren threatening the Ugandan spouse at the same time for failure to complete the dowry. On the other hand, the nationals expressed fear of completion of dowry because of the repatriation exercise which takes away their spouses. In such cases

the family is divided and the parents end up fighting for the children or in case of a Sudanese spouse, escaping with the issues. Those that have agreed to settle in Uganda are doing so without legalizing their stay.

OTHER DYNAMICS AROUND THE REPATRIATION PROCESS.

A number of families who registered for repatriation chose not to engage in Agriculture, anticipating immediate repatriation. Over the months, they have not been repatriated and they have no farm produce for their sustenance. They are increasingly getting frustrated and complain that the food rations given to them are not enough to sustain them.

UNHCR and DED the implementing partners of UNHCR in the settlement have almost solely embarked on repatriation. There is a marked reduction in the scale and intensity of other programmes in the settlement. There are no signs of resettlement programme and other settlement programmes such as the self reliance programme.

Given the numbers that have been repatriated some homesteads have been vacated and in some villages, most of the people have been repatriated leaving those who have not to be isolated. There are fears of insecurity as a result of the vacuum created by those who have been repatriated. This has caused such isolated people to become night commuters. At night they move to sleep in areas which are still heavily populated and return to their houses in the morning. Some of these people have engaged in agriculture on the plots allocated to them and they fear that moving permanently to the populated areas will expose their produce to theft. Some refugees have moved on their own from the isolated areas to areas still highly populated. They fear that nationals might attack them at night. They complain that nationals have allocated for them selves houses and property of refugees who have been repatriated. There is need to re-cluster the existing population taking into account the concerns about their farm produce.

The repatriation programme has caused high rate of drop outs from school. Parents see no sense in sending their children to school in the wake of repatriation. Initially they had anticipated that the repatriation would take place at a faster pace but over the months it is becoming apparent that their decision was misplaced as the repatriation is taking long to be realized for many refugee families. UNHCR has withdrawn education assistance it used to render to the schools in the settlement by way of provision of scholastic materials and food. Teachers are worried about the security of their jobs given that refugee children are being repatriated. For example in Tindi Primary school out of the 815 pupils in the school only 20 of them are nationals. In case the repatriation is completed, these teachers are likely to loose their jobs. This has caused demotivation in the teachers; they are more on the search for jobs than teaching. The same situation affects the health center in the settlement and the aid workers in the settlement.

Miscellaneous.

Madi Okollo is one of the settlements where there is very minimal complaint against administration. Refugees praise the deputy settlement commandant Mr. Abdul as being humane and protection conscious. We even observed the manner in which he handled refugee complaints in haste and with humane considerations. We had no opportunity to interact with the settlement commandant who was away during the entire period of our visit but all the same the office of the settlement commandant had no complaints against it. The refugees extended the praise of good administration to the Refugee Desk Officer in Arua. Similarly, refugees praised the attitudes of the staff of DED to their plight.

There were some complaints about UNHCR in the settlement relating to the manner in which they handle protection cases referred to them by OPM. The complaint is two fold. First the preparation of resettlement cases take extremely long that in cases of emergencies, such long processes would undermine the importance of resettlement as a protection tool. Secondly that some of the cases referred by OPM are rejected by UNHCR for resettlement yet they are serious protection cases. We could not meet the protection officer of UNHCR in Arua for her comments as she was reported to be in Nairobi through out the period of our visit.

We identified about 13 cases that on the face of it need further protection. The cases are being screened for confirmation and further action. Since these are individual cases, for reasons of confidentiality, the details shall not be availed in this report.

Recommendations.

1. For effective communication purposes in future repatriation programmes UNHCR and implementing partners should adopt a strategy that allows dialogue .Apart from the use of the notice boards which are in particular centres, adopt the process of going from village to village and organizing community meetings that allows refugees to ask questions and receive answers so that they can make informed decisions
2. There is need to start and speed up the re-clustering process to ensure the security of the refugees who are yet awaiting repatriation.
3. There is need to organize meeting with the he neighboring host communities of the consequences of their acts and encourage cordial relationship that existed between the refugees and the local communities.
4. There is need to put in place in place proper procedure for handling cases of intermarriage at the time of registration for repatriation
5. UNHCR should step in and identify protection cases that need further protection rather than repatriation and look for alternative protection mechanisms

Conclusion

By and large, the repatriation exercise is smooth and the refugees express overwhelming desire to return to Sudan. They are however getting frustrated at the pace of the repatriation programme. There is need on the part of UNHCR to increase its capacity in the repatriation programme and repatriate the bulk of refugees who are increasingly becoming impatient with the waiting. Government of Uganda and UNHCR need to address the issues identified in this report and think through the recommendations herein. For those refugees who cannot genuinely repatriate to Sudan, there is need by UNHCR to find alternative protection mechanisms and durable solutions by way of resettlement and local integration.