



Summary

There has been no significant improvement in the civil and food insecurity situation in northern Uganda. Mixed maize growth stages will lead to protracted harvests. April rains supported access to water and pastures for livestock in pastoral districts. Exports and other demands put upward pressure on maize prices.

1.0 Northern Uganda: Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Pader Districts

A marked increase in Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel activities in northern Uganda (Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts) occurred in April, accompanied by more loss of lives, abductions and pillaging of household assets, mainly food, as rebels seek to replenish their stocks. Several internally displaced persons' (IDPs) camps were reportedly attacked by the rebels disguised as Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers. The rebels continue abducting IDPs, some of whom are used to carry away looted items to designated locations before being released. However, they normally retain children between the ages of 7 and 15 who are "recruited" into their ranks. Movement along the main roads to and from the IDP camps remains precarious due to risk of rebel attacks, especially in the evening after the UPDF soldiers return to their camps for the night. Figure 1 shows districts with significant numbers of IDPs.

The LRA has continued its incursions into the north and northeastern parts of Lira District as well, keeping up to 294,000 people in displaced camps. WFP has made the first delivery of approximately 1,800 MT of

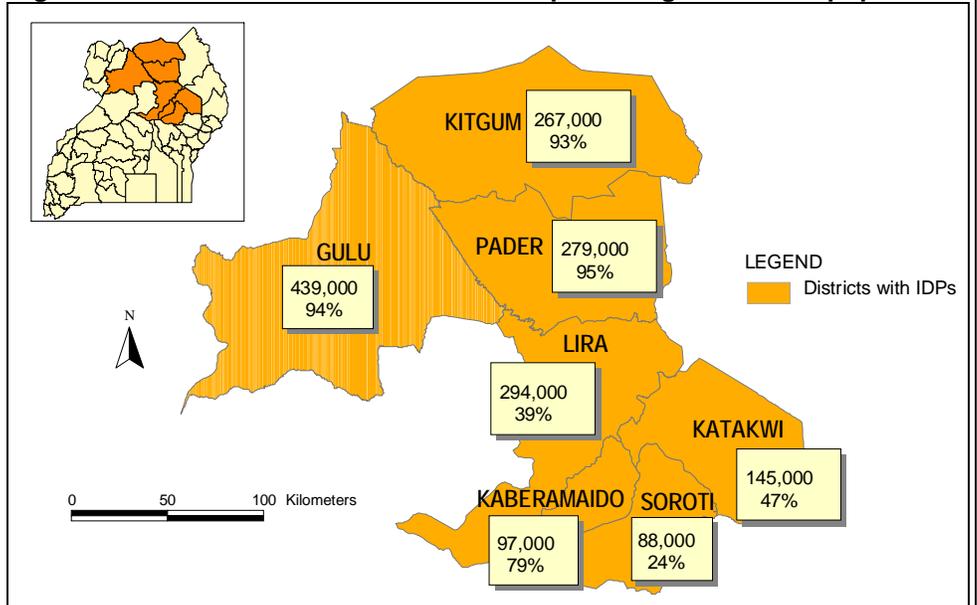
food aid to supplement the food sources of the rural IDPs in Lira.

There is no significant change in the IDPs' food security situation in any of the four northern districts. The displaced people are dependent on food aid, mainly supplied by the World Food Programme (WFP) and some non-government organizations (NGOs) for a major portion of their nutritional needs.

Although some IDPs can access food from sources other than food aid, the amounts vary by location of camps and the prevailing civil security conditions.

For example, in Lira, a large portion of IDP food needs is covered by their own stocks and market purchases. Similarly, in some camps in western Gulu, the lack of adequate vegetation cover for the LRA to launch attacks has enabled displaced households to cultivate all the land near the camps and, consequently, they have benefited from NGO and other humanitarian organizations' agriculture

Figure 1. Districts with IDPs: numbers and percentage of district population



FEWS NET/Uganda, May 2004;

Source of data: WFP Uganda and Uganda Bureau of Statistics

support programs. On the other extreme, access to land on the eastern side of Gulu is far more constrained, with planting limited to narrow swaths along the roads, which have been cleared in order to limit the LRA's ability to launch roadside ambushes. Among the NGOs active in the region are Catholic Relief Services, Hunger Alert, CARE, CARITAS, Gulu District Farmers Association, World Vision, ACDI/VOCA and Gulu's Department of Agriculture. OXFAM GB and International Service Volunteer Association (AVSI) are actively involved in seed distribution in Kitgum and Pader Districts. Nonetheless, many farmers and IDPs still lack access to cultivable land and will not be able to take advantage of this season's well distributed rains.

Apart from the military option of ending the war, civilian efforts to bring about peace continue, including a radio program in Gulu that features former rebels who testify against the heinous acts of the LRA and encourage former colleagues to stop fighting. Some positive results have been reported as a result.

As reported last month, relative civil security in eastern Uganda has enabled more IDPs to return home, where they are able to cultivate their fields, planting groundnuts, beans, sorghum and cassava. However, some IDPs still move between the camps and their homes, working in the fields during the day and returning to the camps before dusk. Normal rainfall received in the region during the month is helping support these agricultural activities and many people are cultivating.

1.1 Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripriti Districts: Karamoja Region

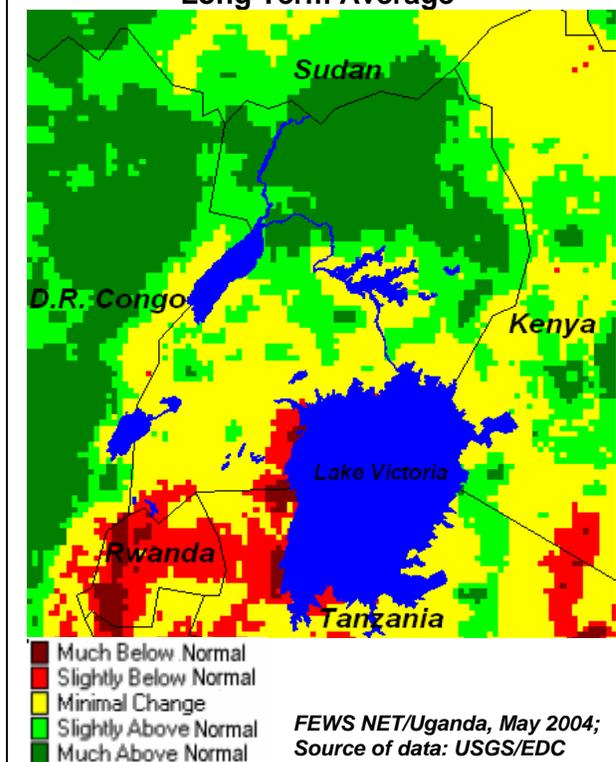
In Karamoja Region, household food stocks are adequate and expected to last until the harvest in July/August. Market prices for the major cereal grains have remained stable for the last 4 months at US\$ 260 (US\$0.14) per kg of sorghum. Most of the marketed grain is from the western agricultural zones within the region, but some is brought in from Soroti and Mbale. Cattle prices have also remained stable in the same period at US\$ 200,000 to 250,000 (US\$105 to 130) per mature head of cattle, indicating that most households are not in need of liquidating unusual numbers of livestock. As a result, the terms of trade for cattle have remained high at about 11.3 months' worth of grain for a family of six per head.

For labor-dependent households, a day's wage can adequately cover the food needs for an average family of six for one day.

2.0 National Trends:

2.1 Agro-climatic Conditions: Rainfall was normal in most parts of the country during April.

Figure 2. Rainfall Estimate, April 2004 vs. Long Term Average



Drier than normal conditions surfaced the last week in the southern half of Uganda, starting around Lake Kyoga in the centre. Northern to northeastern Uganda experienced normal to above normal rain conditions, signifying full establishment of the rainy season in these regions. In Karamoja, isolated cases of flooding were observed when several rivers in the plains overflowed their banks, leading to loss of lives (an estimated 10 people in Moroto District), assets and some crops.

Figure 2, which is based on *Meteosat* imagery, shows the spatial distribution and relative intensity of rainfall across the country. The image corroborates reports from the Department of Meteorology and Agricultural Officers of normal to above normal rains in most parts of the

country, with pockets of below normal rains in the southeast.

2.2 Crop Production and Conditions: District agricultural officers in central and eastern Uganda report a wide range of developmental stages for most cash and staple crops. For maize, millet and sorghum, development ranges from just germinated to tasseling/head formation and grain filling. Pulses, mainly beans, are also at various stages of development. FEWS NET confirmed this during recent visits to the regions.

District officials attribute this wide range to recent changes in rainfall patterns that have made it increasingly difficult for farmers to predict the real start to the rains and cultivation season. Therefore, farmers sow whenever it rains to increase their chances of harvesting something, and to decrease their chances of missing prime planting opportunities. The officials stress that this practice has led to increased seed loss as farmers successively re-plant, drawing down rapidly on seed stocks. This drawn out sowing period has also extended the harvest season. The overall result is that the known seasonal sowing and harvest periods are no longer predictable, making it much more difficult to plan for extension and marketing programs. For now, approximately forty percent of the maize crop in the country is in or approaching the tasseling and grain filling stage. Rainfall will be required through early July if this crop is to reach full maturity. Beans and other pulses require rains until mid- to late-June for pod filling.

There is no significant change in northern Uganda, where civil insecurity continues to hamper IDPs' access to cultivable land, reducing any chance for harvests. Food assistance is likely to remain necessary during the coming year.

2.3 Pasture and Livestock Conditions:

The April rains have supported vegetation growth and increased ground water supplies, promoting pasture, browse and water availability for livestock in the major livestock rearing areas of southwestern Uganda, which include Mbarara, Ntungamo and

Kabale Districts. Livestock access to pastures and water in Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts is good, following the onset of the rainy season in April. Sufficient pastures and water are helping sustain livestock herds in the pastoral districts, ensuring household members access to milk and other animal proteins.

3.0 Commodity Prices, Trade and Food Availability and Access

Wholesale maize prices have remained high since the beginning of the year compared to the same period last year. A comparison of average wholesale market prices at two major maize producing areas (Figure 3) indicates an increase of 6% on average between January and February, reaching a point 28% above the same period last year by March. However, this trend normalized in April due to reduced demand from institutions when they closed for holidays. The main demand for maize in Uganda comes from academic institutions and urban areas, WFP and other food aid agencies, and export traders for sale to regional markets in Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania. The reopening of academic institutions, sustained high regional demands and low stocks are expected to push prices higher in the next few months until stocks are replenished during the July harvest.

Figure 3. Average Wholesale Maize in Iganga and Kasese Districts, January to April 2003/04

