



Govt refutes reports on deaths in northern region

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STATEMENT

The Government has rejected sensational press reports of high violent rates of death in the North. According to the report's calculations, death rates in Iraq are six times higher than those in northern Uganda.

At a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Prof. Apolo Nsibambi, it was revealed that the death rates in northern Uganda are not in any way comparable to those in Iraq.

It is unfortunate that the source of information for the report is the same World Health organisation Report on Uganda Mortality Survey, which was technically reviewed and found incompetent.

One of the most obvious inaccuracies of the latest OXFAM report is that the Iraq figures referred to the whole of Iraq. These figures were then compared with figures for the Acholi region, only in Uganda.

The appropriate comparisons would have been based on national populations and estimated deaths of both countries.

In this case, the mortality rate for Iraq would be 0.052 deaths per 10,000 people per day compared with Uganda's 0.008 deaths per 10,000 people per day.

Government wishes to make it clear that the situation in northern Uganda is as follows.

In the health sector, an Emergency Health Plan covering health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS worth over \$11m addresses the health needs of IDP camps as part of the Government efforts to scale up interventions.

A National Task Force oversees and reviews implementation of all actions pertaining to the health for people in IDPs and in the north in general.

District health teams have integrated the implementation of medical services in line with the Emergency Plan.

Among key services provided in the north are home-based care and malaria control as well as measles immunisation, now standing at 90% for the general population.

In IDP camps in particular, this stands at 100%. As a result of immunisation, there are virtually no measles cases in the camps.

Access to anti-malarial treatment is over 60% in the north, which is higher than the national average standing at 40%.

In regard to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, a viable programme exists which scales up interventions by providing ARVs, counseling and other outreach programmes, including prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Control of epidemics in the north has been prompt and effective as demonstrated in the Government's response and handling of ebola and meningitis.

Government has also effectively dealt with cholera outbreaks whenever these occur.

In addition viable referral and health management information systems are in place to handle all aspects of emergencies in the IDP camps, including reproductive health.

Water and sanitation are vital components of health and therefore the Government has put aside definite resources for water development in camps.

In 2005, the Government injected sh11.7b for improving water supply systems in the camps.

Currently, water supplies in IDP camps stands at eight litres per capita per day. This is expected to rise to 10 litres per capita per day by the end of 2006.

This compares favourably with the international standard of 15 litres per person per day in emergency situations.

This has been done through motorisation of boreholes, rehabilitation of hand pumps and sinking of new water sources.

Sanitation in IDPs is being improved through sinking of more latrines, provision of mobilets, provision of sanitation kits and by mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns on hygiene and sanitation.

Protection of civilian population strategic military operations in northern Uganda and southern Sudan by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and local defence forces have significantly weakened the strength and capacity of the LRA.

As a desperate move to survive, the LRA now operates between Southern Sudan and the DRC.

The Government has instituted a set of measures to protect her citizens against LRA terror.

These measures include the following:

Deployment of UPDF at critical crossing points of the LRA;

Deployment of UPDF in appropriate numbers in every IDP camps in the North;

Establishment of communications with every IDP UPDF force;

Establishment of road patrol units on all major roads and some popular minor roads;

Deployment of road mine-sweeping units as necessary;

Establishment of a mine clearing unit to de-mine suspected areas;

Establishment of local defence forces drawn from the communities in the north. Such militias provide daily escorts to the population as the latter engage in agriculture or other income-generating activities which take them some distance away from their IDP camps;

Establishment of civil-military liaison structures from district to IDP camps level;

Establishment of a tough code of conduct for all UPDF soldiers; and

Initiation of a voluntary IDP camp decongestion exercise.

These measures have led to significant realisation of peace in many parts of northern Uganda.

As a result, there is spontaneous return of some IDPs to their original homes. For example, 80% of the IDPs in Teso and 40% in Lango sub-regions have now returned to their homes.

In addition, the Government has initiated several peaceful conflict resolution interventions which have been ignored or flouted by the LRA.

The Government of Uganda reiterates her commitment to defeating the LRA, securing the protection of her people and through a comprehensive peace, recovery and development plan to rehabilitate, reconstruct and develop northern Uganda.

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