

## Uganda-DRC cross-border dynamics

This brief summarises key considerations concerning cross-border dynamics between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the context of the outbreak of Ebola in North Kivu and surrounding provinces, December 2018. Further participatory enquiry should be undertaken, but given ongoing transmission, conveying key considerations and immediate recommendations related to community engagement have been prioritised.

This brief was drafted by Juliet Bedford (Anthrologica) and Grace Akello (Gulu University), with support from Theresa Jones and Ingrid Gercama (Anthrologica). It builds on a rapid review of existing published and grey literature, experience of previous Ebola outbreaks in Uganda and DRC, and findings from rapid fieldwork conducted from 10-14 December 2018 in Kasese District, Uganda.\* Informal discussions were conducted with colleagues from UNICEF, WHO, IFRC, Oxfam, IOM, USAID, GOARN Research Social Science Group and others. The brief includes inputs from expert advisers who reviewed the document prior to finalisation (listed at the end of the brief). Responsibility for the brief lies with the Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform (SSHAP).

\* Rapid fieldwork was conducted at Ebola and border checkpoints at the Mpondwe trading centre, Katwe and Kayanzi (on Lake Edward), Kithomi (on River Tako.), Kisololo, and Mirami (border crossing via Rubiriha River) with small-scale traders, armed security officers and people crossing the border. Community health workers were engaged at the Ebola Treatment Centre in Bwera Hospital and at Kagando Hospital.

## Key considerations and recommendations

- **Border region:** The border between Uganda and DRC is highly porous. The informal nature of many cross-border interactions must be considered, and it may be more appropriate to regard the border region as an entity (or group of entities) in itself rather than to define areas as being associated with DRC and/or Uganda. In this context, the complexity of implementing border control mechanisms for Ebola should not be underestimated.
- **Cross-border surveillance:** It is not possible to implement effective surveillance and screening along the whole Uganda-DRC border, and the numerous border management agencies have limited patrolling capacity. Attempts at formal regulation along the borders have largely failed in the past, and surveillance measures should be seen against the backdrop of pre-existing suspicions of political and/or economic exploitation. Observations at several border-crossing points (e.g. Mpondwe, December 2018) highlighted that the dominating presence was not of health workers but rather of armed soldiers from the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), whose attention was focused mainly on Swahili-speaking Congolese entering Uganda from North Kivu. Many appeared to be detained unnecessarily and/or were asked to provide payment to cross the border, whilst Ugandans re-entering the country were not always screened. There are many informal border crossings, including smuggling routes, that enable people to cross undetected (often by foot or by boat). It has been reported that people are avoiding the formal crossing points to 'dodge formalities' and avoid long waiting times, surveillance measures and 'ad hoc taxation'. Community surveillance using localised structures and social networks (and supported by partners such as the Ugandan Red Cross) may therefore be more effective than top-down interventions.
- **Community engagement:** Engaging with communities is essential, not only at border points but also at the community level more broadly. Establishing mechanisms for sustained dialogue is key. In addition to providing information, the response must learn from communities and be sufficiently nimble to adapt intervention and engagement strategies based on community feedback. Demonstrating accountability to the needs of the community and acting on community feedback will also help guard against 'campaign fatigue'. Local government structures (such as the Resident District Commissioner, the Sub-County Chief and the Local Chairpersons at district and village levels) can be effective entry points into communities, but many people in the border areas are experienced in evading surveillance, so it is essential that engagement initiatives develop trust in order that communities do not feel they are being coerced. Community engagement should therefore work hand in hand with community-led surveillance, and it is recommended that prevention (rather than preparedness) objectives and actions be emphasised. Linking with local associations is important as they have extensive reach and are trusted by their members; such associations include transport associations (bus, truckers, taxis, 'bodaboda' or motorbike taxis), trade associations and traditional healer associations. Vulnerable or marginalised populations, including fisherfolk, should be purposively included.
- **Language and ethnicity:** Socio-linguistic patterns have been influenced by the politics and history of the Great Lakes Region, and have complex implications for citizenship, migration, trade and stigmatisation. Many borderland residents are multilingual, but prejudices persist regarding the use of language / dialect and its link to identity. It is reported that, for many, ethnicity and social ties are more important than national affiliation. Investment should be made in understanding which local languages would be most effective for the response to use, particularly for direct community engagement.
- **Trade routes, markets and engaging traders:** Mapping trading networks will provide important insight into potential transmission routes and existing channels of communication (in both the immediate border areas and beyond). The response should work directly with associations of business owners, such as the *Fédération des Entreprises du Congo* (FEC), a national association of large business owners with branches throughout the DRC. FEC offices are organised as an umbrella structure, so the Beni, Butembo and Goma chapters should be directly engaged to disseminate information to sub-offices throughout their territories and across the border. Because much of the trade at this border is informal, it is also important to engage small cross-border traders' cooperatives (such as the *Bas Peuple* in the DRC) and associations that regroup informal traders around particular commodities (*associations de petits commerçants transfrontaliers*). There are local trading associations in Mpondwe and Bwera and a sizeable business community in Kasese. Large coffee and cocoa buyers, such as Esco and Olam in Bundibugyo and Bakwanye, have extensive cross-border networks that link farmers, intermediaries and small traders in the border region, and

there are also a number of farmers' associations, such as the Nyakatonzi cooperative and Nyakatora cooperative union. Markets are important sites for meeting and reinforcing connections as well as for trade, community engagement and the introduction of simple protection mechanisms such as hand-washing stations. Women play an important role in cross-border trade, and markets provide a valuable opportunity to engage directly with women (petty traders and consumers) who may not be included or participate in other initiatives at the community level.<sup>1</sup> During observational fieldwork at several border crossings (December 2018), traders suggested that '*Ebola is politics*' and doubted the outbreak was real because they had not '*seen*' any cases despite extensive travel in North Kivu. Traders at the Bwera border point were frustrated by the '*disturbance*' of having to wash their hands and the longer time it took to cross the border due to surveillance. They thought that Ebola was a '*ploy*' for political and financial gain. Farmers, transporters and traders along the market chain have a financial interest in ensuring the safe transit and sale of goods and therefore the rapid containment of Ebola, so it is important that this business case strongly underpin community engagement.

- **Refugees:** In addition to preparedness/prevention efforts associated with the main refugee settlements, the response should work through key agencies that are meeting points for refugees and that provide support to undocumented refugees when they first arrive in country, such as Congolese churches in Uganda, the Refugee Law Project, InterAid and HIAS. Most refugees do not settle in formal camps but assimilate into host communities, drawing on social networks of family, friends and local leaders for assistance (rather than formal authorities). Community engagement efforts should purposively include these networks, particularly in relation to community-level surveillance discussed above.
- **Christmas:** Increased mobility should be expected in the lead-up to Christmas. People return home to natal and marital villages to spend time with extended families; students return home at the end of their academic year; attendance at markets often increases. Conflict and violence often increases at this time of year and contributes to greater mobility. There is, therefore, increased domestic as well as cross-border movement, and this may impact areas classified as low and moderate risk in addition to high-risk areas. It is recommended that the response refresh links with religious leaders to provide detailed information about response activities as well as prevention messages, and that community engagement initiatives be conducted at places of worship.

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## Border crossings

- **Ugandan border areas:** Uganda shares a 2,698km border with the DRC. Due to the current outbreak of Ebola in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces (DRC), the Ugandan Ministry of Health has categorised 20 districts as being at high risk (those with a direct link to North Kivu and Ituri Province and Congolese refugee hosting districts: Ntoroko, Kasese, Kabarole, Bundibugyo, Bunyangabu, Kanungu, Kisoro, Rukungiri, Rubirizi, Kikuube, Kamwenge, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, Isingiro, Buliisa, Hoima, Kagadi, Pakwach, Kampala, Wakiso) and ten districts to be of moderate risk (those with direct links to DRC but not sharing a border with North Kivu or Ituri Provinces or other refugee hosting districts: Arua, Maracha, Nebbi, Zombo, Yumbe, Moyo, Adjumani, Koboko, Lamwo, Kabale) (see Map 1 at the end of the brief). The border runs not just across land but also across Lake Edward (which borders with Kasese and Kanungu districts) and Lake Albert (which borders with Ntoroko, Kagadi, Kikuube, Hoima and Buliisa districts), and the demarcation of borders between Uganda and DRC on the lakes remains unclear. The WHO situation report of 12 December 2018 confirmed there are 71 points of entry / points of crossing on the DRC-Uganda border, 64 of which were actively screening travellers and decontaminating vehicles on 10 December.<sup>2</sup>
- **Formal and informal border crossing points:** All the high-risk districts have both formal and informal border crossing points (see Map 2 at the end of the brief). Some crossings have different levels of infrastructure on either side of the border. The Ugandan side of the Mpondwe border, for example, is formalised, whilst the DRC has less structure, and traders on the DRC side '*disappear into the forest quickly*'. Formally, Uganda charges USD50 for a visa for Congolese citizens, whilst DRC charges USD100 for Ugandan citizens. These formal processes are not always enforced (e.g. traders who cross the border on market days do not need to present a visa or submit formal documentation), and people living in the border area can obtain daily authorisations to cross the border for free and travel within a range of 15km. Still, the formal border points are renowned as places for state services to elicit 'taxation', and petty corruption is rife on both sides of the DRC-Uganda border. In Lubiliha/Mpondwe, for example, small payments facilitate informal trading and the smuggling of illegal goods.<sup>3</sup> A large number of governmental agencies are active on both sides of the border. On the DRC side, for example, they include the *Direction Générale des Douanes et Accises* (DGDA), the *Office Congolais de Contrôle* (OCC), the *Direction Générale de Migration* (DGM), the frontier police, the hygiene service, *Agence Nationale de Renseignements* (ANR), *Département de Sécurité des Frontières* (DSF) and the presidential guard.<sup>4</sup> In general, government agencies are regarded with a high level of distrust. The official tax burden for certain commodities can be high, and 'negotiated' or 'informal' arrangements are often preferred, but authorities are known to extort inflated payments. It has been reported that some people have documents from both countries and utilise double IDs (including fake driving licenses and voter ID cards obtained in the 2006 and 2011 elections) to exempt them from paying certain taxes. It should also be noted that health-related documents (particularly yellow fever certificates) have been used as the basis for extortion at border crossings in the past. During observations at several border-crossing points in December 2018, officials were observed eliciting payments and several agreed that the cost of crossing the border had trebled in recent weeks due to the current '*security threat*' of Ebola and '*the risk the Congolese*' posed to Uganda. To avoid taxation and hassle at border points, many people cross at informal points and smuggling routes, often at night. (It was observed that formal border points are '*closed*' at night and UDFP '*detain*' those trying to cross).
- **Movement patterns:** From the immediate border areas, there are a number of major routes that take people deeper into Uganda and DRC and neighbouring countries. These include Beni and Butembo to Kasindi-Mpondwe-Kasese and Beni-Mbau-Kamango-Bundibugyo-Fort Portal. The recent collapse of the Semliki bridge (between Beni and Kisindi) means that trade and movements to Beni need to go via Butembo on the Karuruma road, which is known for its insecurity. Alternatively, those wanting to travel from Beni-Kasindi to Watalinga can opt to take the Lubiliha-Kasese-Fort Portal route, rather than move through Congolese territory. The Kabale-Kisoro road was recently tarmacked and reaches as far as Mbarara, Masaka, and Kampala. The road's main border-crossing point is at Bunagana (DRC) to Bugana (Uganda), located approximately 80km north of Goma. The Mpondwe-Kasese-Fort Portal road runs 134km from the border crossing at Mpondwe (also referred to as Lubiliha) to Fort Portal Town, the main town in Kabarole district. There is then a tarmac two-lane highway leading to Kampala. Many buses pass through Kabale from DRC

and Rwanda on the way to border districts such as Kisoro, and buses from Kabale also run directly to Kigali in Rwanda. In addition, there are airports in Beni and Bunia (DRC) and in Kasese, Kisoro and Bundibugyo (Uganda). Both Kasese and Kisoro have flights to Entebbe. Onward travel to Kampala from Kasese can also be done by overnight train, and in the north, travelers can take passenger trains from Pakwach in Nebbi District to Lira and Gulu. Private infrastructure has also been developed in the area. Around Lake Albert, for example, roads have been constructed to support (illegal) logging and mining industries and there are charter flights to Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve. Cross-border movements across the lakes result from fishing (legal and illegal), lake trade (e.g. salt from Katwe), the transport of basic goods to DRC including agricultural products (e.g. coffee) and both recorded and unrecorded migration.

- **IOM flow monitoring points:** IOM Uganda monitors mixed-migration flows along the border with DRC through six strategically located flow monitoring points: Butogo (Bundibugyo district), Busunga (Bundibugyo district), Kanara (Ntoroko district), Kisoro (Kisoro district), Mpondwe (Kasese district) and Nsonga (Buikwe district). Over the two-week period 15-30 November 2018, a total of 12,219 movements were observed with 65% entering Uganda and 35% exiting. Of those exiting Uganda, 69% were travelling to North Kivu or Ituri provinces, whilst 17% of those entering Uganda were doing so for reasons of conflict. Of the total movements observed, 56% were female and 45% male, and 72% declared to be Congolese nationals. Over 60% of the total movements observed were intending to stay for less than one week, and the main reasons reported for crossing the border were to undertake economic activities and to visit families. Twenty-seven percent of the movements were motivated by 'fleeing conflicts'.<sup>5</sup>
- **Screening at the border:** The WHO situation report of 12 December 2018 highlights that as of 9 December 2018, across all monitored points of entry or points of control in DRC, 19 million travellers had been screened, 18 million travellers had washed their hands and 16.5 million travellers had been sensitised about Ebola since cross-border surveillance started for the outbreak. As a result of the screening, 132 alerts had been notified, with 44 validated at the point of entry or point of control, two of which were confirmed cases.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that state actors are often viewed with suspicion at the border and the presence of the national army UPDF may exacerbate existing tensions. Cross-border movement patterns have been subject to military surveillance for many years due to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) insurgency, but surveillance has been more intensive since the start of the UPDF Operation Usalama in April 2016 and the recent deployment of the UPDF and UPDF Alpine Brigade to secure the border from ADF incursions. The increase in UPDF surveillance capacity for screening for Ebola at the border therefore comes at a time of already heightened border securitisation in the context of the ADF and in the run-up to the DRC elections (discussed below).

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## Ethnicity, linguistics and social ties

- **Language and ethnicity:** Post-colonial borders cut across traditional ethnic and community catchment areas. Socio-linguistic patterns have been influenced by the politics and history of the Great Lakes Region and have complex implications for citizenship, migration, trade and stigmatisation. Many borderland residents are multilingual, but prejudices persist regarding the use of language / dialect and its link to identity. It is reported that, for many, ethnicity and social ties are more important than national affiliation. In Uganda, English is used as an official language (in administration, media and education etc.); in DRC, the official administrative language is French, although in eastern DRC local Swahili is more widely spoken. Whilst Ugandan Swahili is widely understood (it is used by the military, police etc.), it should not be relied upon as an intermediary language except in larger towns in border areas and among certain professional groups. There are multiple local languages associated with different ethnic groups, and these should be locally understood for use by the response (particularly for direct community engagement). In the north of North Kivu (the *Grand Nord*), Kinande and Kikongo are mainly spoken in the border areas, but in the border areas located in the south of North Kivu (the *Petit Nord*) Kinyabwisha and Kinyarwanda are the main languages. In the North of Lake Albert (around Arua) populations speak Nilotic languages, and bordering and south of Lake Albert the population speaks multiple Bantu languages. Highly marginalised 'pygmy' groups also live in the border areas. They are not a homogeneous group, but rather have different customs and leadership structures and, again, have kinship, social and trade links on both sides of the border.
- **Cross-border living:** Crossing the border is part of daily life for many people. In addition to trade (discussed below), people cross to attend school and university, to attend their preferred place of worship, for social events and for healthcare (discussed below). Such movement is underpinned by the perception of higher-quality services in Uganda compared with DRC. It is common for family members to live on each side of the border, and people often maintain homes on both sides. Because of the insecurities associated with the border areas, some Congolese (particularly businessmen and traders) choose to spend the day in DRC and the night in Uganda. Crossing the border ('without bureaucratic effort') is also usual for special occasions, including weddings and burials. Wedding ceremonies are often attended by hundreds of people from both sides of the border. Inter-marriage is generally accepted, and marriage is often seen as a union between families as well as between individuals, thereby strengthening kinship ties. Many cross-border communities are reported to regard formal border procedures to be for 'guests' (including long-distance truck drivers and people in transit) rather than for themselves. During observations in Kesese district (December 2018), for example, communities stressed the familial relationships between the Bakonzo (Uganda) and Kinande (DRC), and locals (sometimes known to border authorities) often crossed back and forth during the course of a day without being screened.
- **Fisherfolk:** Fishing is a crucial source of livelihood to thousands of people living on and around Lake Albert and Lake Edward, yet fisherfolk are socio-economically, politically and geographically marginalised.<sup>6</sup> Fishers tend to be men, fish processors tend to be women, and fish traders both men and women. They are highly mobile, often moving between remote fishing villages or 'camps' on the lakeshore (some of which are only accessible from the water) and long periods out on the lake(s). Fluctuations in fish stock also drive mobility, including movement along the River Nile, north of Lake Albert (along Panyimur, Rhino camp towards Moyo and Adjumani). Fishing operates both legally and illegally, the latter implying boats that are not registered, using illegal techniques (e.g. with finely meshed nets) and/or in prohibited areas (such as spawning grounds). Fisherfolk are prone to water-borne disease such as schistosomiasis and cholera due to conditions of poor hygiene and sanitation.<sup>7</sup> Given their known vulnerabilities, it is important that fisherfolk be directly engaged by the response, through their own organisational and leadership structures as well as through the Beach Management Units, which operate as a local council system at fish landing sites.

## Trade and natural resources

- **Trade:** The history of trade flows between Uganda, DRC, South Sudan and Rwanda pre-date the colonial period and, for some groups, cross-border trade is a salient part of their social identity.<sup>8</sup> Most manufactured goods in DRC are imported and the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) has concluded that Uganda exports USD 176 million to DRC annually.<sup>9</sup> Most trade between North Kivu and Ituri Provinces and Uganda passes through four major border points: Mpondwe (Kasese district), Bundibugyo (Fort Portal district), Bunagana (Kisoro district), and Goli (Nebbi district, trading with Ituri). One of the most established trade routes in northwest Uganda and DRC lies between Arua (northern Uganda) and Ariwara market (Ituri province, DRC). In the past, Uganda held the dominant role in controlling cross-border trade and reaped most of the profits, although more recently Beni and Butembo have played increasingly important roles in regional trade.<sup>1,10</sup> Security issues, infrastructure developments and state policies have had a profound impact on the regional flow of cross-border trade in recent years, and prices continue to fluctuate. In April 2018, Uganda and DRC signed a deal to remove non-tariff trade barriers to boost trade, and both countries are part of the Common Market for Eastern and South Africa (COMESA) trade bloc and the framework of the Simplified Trade Regime. By the end of 2018, 'One Stop Border Posts' and 'Border Export Zones' (such as in Mpondwe) were supposed to have been established at all Uganda's key entry ports, using funds from the World Bank. Links between traders, government authorities (including customs officials and security forces) and the national and regional business and political elite have been well documented, including the resulting flows of money and influence.<sup>11</sup> Local state authorities have a history of concealing information from their central coordinators and revenue authorities. This is generally done through the underreporting of trade and through 'informal' tariffs imposed at individual border posts, with local authorities 'selling' their local knowledge and connections to central authorities whilst also skimming profits. It has been suggested that border agents may perceive large scale, centrally-organised interventions as an effort to curtail their own 'informal' practices, which could lead to their reluctance to share information and (inadvertently) subvert surveillance efforts.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore imperative that border agents be directly engaged by the response to ensure they understand the risks (to themselves and the broader community) and do not undermine screening and surveillance at formal and informal border crossings.
- **Market days:** Every day can be characterised as a market day along the border, with towns on the both the Ugandan and DRC sides 'taking turns' so that small-scale traders can move between markets without conflicting schedules. Movement across specific crossing points therefore increases on local market days, particularly given that markets are also sites offering services (such as healthcare and business) as well as trade. Close to Mpondwe, for example, the number of people crossing the border for the market can increase to 20,000 (from c.600-900 on other days).<sup>13</sup> The Mpondwe market, located directly on the border in *'the no man's land between the two states'*, attracts goods from a broad catchment area, including Kasese (58km to the east). The market is a major livestock trading post for the region, and livestock bought in Mpondwe is transported to DRC by locally hired herdsman.<sup>3</sup> Another important cross-border market is the Bunagana-Bunagana market (Monday and Tuesdays in Kisoro, and Tuesdays and Fridays on the DRC side). Whilst a significant part of trade around Lake Edward is bartered (with coffee being exported in exchange for basic goods), transactions on both sides of the border are often conducted in Ugandan Shillings, with the US dollar occasionally used as an intermediary.
- **Informal trade and smuggling:** Much trade occurs outside the legal framework of official border crossings, but lines between 'formal' and 'informal' trade are blurred and there is a high degree of interaction across the sectors. Informal trading refers to practices that breach state regulation only in that they evade, to some degree, the payment of border tariffs: the goods themselves and the means of trade and transport are otherwise legal. Smuggling is almost a culture in these cross-border areas, with people avoiding the authorities on principle, and smugglers are often captured carrying goods that are actually tax-free. In some areas, however, the large-scale cross-border trade in contraband continues (e.g. in the West Nile region), and it has been estimated that over 300 smuggling routes are operational on the Ugandan-Congolese border in north-western Uganda.<sup>11</sup> In addition to lower-rate contraband, the recent UN experts' report concluded that gold, timber and ivory continue to be smuggled across the Congolese border into Uganda and then exported to international markets.<sup>14</sup> The illegal timber trade continues with networks across Kivu, Ituri and Uganda. One main area of deforestation is the Ituri Forest to the west of Beni and Butembo and north along the road from Beni to Mambasa. Timber from this area is mainly exported to Uganda through the Mpondwe border crossing, whilst other important logging centres are located along the road from Beni to Komanda at Eringeti, Luna and Idohu. There are also black markets for the sale of charcoal, illegal drugs, alcohol and timber. Large quantities of fuel cross the border in both directions, first into DRC to benefit from negotiated tariffs and then back into Uganda through informal trade routes around Mpondwe. Cross-border trade is facilitated by a wide range of community-based actors including *'passeurs'* who have good knowledge of the informal border crossings and illegal backroads (*'panya'* roads). These middlemen play an important role in facilitating trade. They have established relations with local authorities and often represent a group of traders in negotiations to reduce duties and informal taxes. Communities are 'supported' to not report illegal activities by the middlemen, who organise 'favours' such as employment, paying school fees, arranging ambulances, paying for healthcare and improving local infrastructure (all of which serve as a form of local social insurance). In essence, the informal economy retains its own independent regulatory authority.<sup>11,15</sup>

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## Healthcare

- **Cross-border health seeking:** The weak healthcare system in DRC, and particularly in the Ebola-affected health zones of North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, encourages people to seek health services in Uganda. Referral hospitals in border districts are reported to be frequented by both Congolese and Ugandan citizens (and it has been suggested that members of armed groups may cross the border from DRC to seek treatment at trusted facilities such as Bundibugyo Hospital, although further investigation is required). According to the IOM, 5% of the cross-border movements documented between 15-30 November 2018 were associated with seeking healthcare.<sup>5</sup> Although health facilities in Uganda offer a higher level of care than those in DRC, it must not be assumed that all facilities, particularly those in the border areas, have sufficient diagnostic capacity, skilled health workers or the required infection prevention control measures, particularly in relation to Ebola.<sup>16</sup> A recent USAID preparedness note concluded that although most health centres in Uganda have appropriate handwashing facilities, many are not being routinely used, indicating that risk perceptions around Ebola remain low.<sup>17</sup>

- **Private facilities, pharmacies and traditional medicine:** For many people in the border areas, access to public healthcare is limited, and pharmacies are commonly frequented. Private facilities are also very common and in peripheral areas (such as the border districts) often provide routine care in line with government services (e.g. participating in national immunisation campaigns). Non-regulated healthcare providers, including traditional healers and herbalists, operate all over the region and the use of traditional medicine is widespread, particularly in more rural areas.
- **Ebola Treatment Centres Units in Uganda:** At the time of writing, Ebola Treatment Centres (ETCs) had been established in Bundibugyo, Kaseese, Ntoroko, Kabarole, Kikuube and Wakiso districts and in Kampala and Entebbe, and preparedness activities were underway at number of facilities, including Fort Portal Regional Referral Hospital, Maranatha Health Children's Clinic, Kinyamaseke, Kiburara, Bugangara, Kayenje, Kyondo and Kyarumba health centres.<sup>17</sup> Given that people who live near the border often cross from DRC into Uganda to seek healthcare, there is a risk that they may seek care from ETCs in Uganda, particularly if they are perceived to offer higher quality care (as is the case with other Ugandan health services). It has also been suggested that the recent collapse of the Semliki bridge between Beni and Kasindi may have an impact on care-seeking patterns.

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## Armed groups and the military

- **Armed groups and the military:** The cross-border history of armed groups in this area is long, complex and well documented.<sup>10,18,19</sup> Local traditions of armed resistance in Western Uganda helped shaped the ADF rebel movement (and perceptions of it), and the links between the Ugandan and Congolese parts of the Rwenzori borderland supported both the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) and the ADF to survive on Congolese soil, with the effect of a gradual 'Congolisation' of these movements.<sup>18</sup> Tensions between local authorities and their resistance to state power and central governments underpin cross-border dynamics, and border areas are known to be fertile recruiting grounds for armed groups. Cross-border cooperation between Ugandan and Congolese security forces (including the UPDF and *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*, FARDC) is weak and there are regular cross-border incidents. In July 2018, for example, the UPDF increased its presence on the border after one of its soldiers was killed during a routine patrol on Lake Albert by alleged perpetrators from DRC. The response to the outbreak of Ebola in DRC must be understood in relation to the ongoing insecurity in North Kivu and the impact this has on preparedness and prevention interventions in the border areas.<sup>20</sup>
- **Cross-border trade:** Armed groups are not only involved in trade and fishing themselves; they also sell protection for the transportation of goods across the border. Alongside trade, selling protection and informal taxation are a significant source of income for rebel groups (as well as for the state armies) active in the DRC's 'internationalised civil war'.<sup>15</sup> The Congo Research Group reported that the attack on Tanzanian peacekeepers (December 2017) was part of the battle to control the Mbau-Kamango road, which is understood to be a key smuggling route. Provincial authorities are often forced to compromise with powerful non-state actors in order to stay relevant.<sup>21</sup> This builds on a recent history of military involvement in informal trade. During the military interventions of the UPDF in Congo's wars (1996-1997 and 1998-2003), Ugandan army commanders mobilised trans-border economic networks to exploit economic opportunities in eastern DRC, and their involvement in the extraction of natural resources such as gold, timber and charcoal has been widely documented.<sup>10,18</sup> On Lake Edward, illegal fishermen often operate under the 'protection' of various armed Mai Mai groups as well as the Congolese navy to whom they may pay protection fees to fish, as on Lake Albert. There are continuous tensions and periodic incidents between fisherfolk and security services from both countries, exacerbated by competition for control of the lakes' natural resources.<sup>22</sup>

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## Refugees

- **Refugees in Uganda:** Congolese refugees fleeing ongoing conflict in DRC constitute 36% of the overall refugee population in Uganda.<sup>23</sup> As of 31 October 2018, 568,530 refugees and asylum seekers from DRC were identified by UNHCR in Uganda, although the number is likely to be significantly higher due to undocumented entrants.<sup>23</sup> Elections in DRC are scheduled for 23 December 2018.<sup>24</sup> UNHCR anticipates escalation of political conflict whether elections are held or postponed and expect that between November 2018 and February 2019 there will be 75,000 new arrivals in Uganda from DRC, and 300,000 over the course of the year.<sup>23</sup>
- **Points of entry for Congolese refugees:** Many refugees enter Uganda from DRC by crossing Lake Albert to arrive in the village of Sebagoro (Hoima district), close to the large Kyangwali Refugee Settlement Camp. The crossing is precarious, often on overcrowded and fragile boats, and incidents of drowning are not uncommon. Other major transit sites include Kanara, in the high-risk priority district of Ntoroko at the southern end of Lake Albert, and in Kisoro district.
- **Settlements:** The main refugee settlements close to the DRC border include Rhino (population 95,929) in Arua district, Kyangwali (population 76,717) and Kyaka II (population 66,896) in Hoima district, and Nakivale (population 98,998) in Isingiro district.<sup>25</sup> In Moyo and Adjumani districts, both classified as moderate risk, there are also established settlements for refugees fleeing South Sudan. Both the settlements of Kyangwali and Kyaka II (Hoima district) have reported cholera outbreaks since February 2018 due to poor sanitation and hygiene practices and cross-border spread from affected areas in Ituri Province.
- **Self-settlement:** The Ugandan Refugee Act 2006 allows refugees to self-settle across the country (as well as in settlements), so once in Uganda, refugees can continue to be highly mobile and many blend into the general population, particularly in the larger urban centres (e.g. Mbarara, Kampala and Arua) where there are more income-generation opportunities. As such, most refugees do not settle in formal camps, and 92% are reported to have assimilated into host communities.<sup>25</sup>
- **Registration and refugee response:** Registration at formal points of entry and in the refugee camps is done by UNHCR and national implementing partners (including INGOs and community-based organisations). Official transit centers have been established in Kisoro, Bundibugyo and Matanda, where refugees are temporarily accommodated and are supposed to be provided with food, the basic package of Core Relief Items (CRIs) and basic services. Refugees are registered in the Refugee Information Management System (RIMS) using biometric verification. At the time of writing, both new arrivals and back-logged cases were being processed. In the context of Ebola, the transit centres must be supported in their preparedness efforts and enhanced Infection Prevention Control measures put in place to lower the risk of transmission. Directly engaging refugees is essential.

## Reviewers

Ida Marie Amenda (UNICEF), Grace Bantebya (Makerere University), Ulrike Beisel (Universität Bayreuth), Benjamin Chemouni (University of Cambridge), Mandi Chikombero (UNICEF), Alain Epelboin (CNRS-MNHN Musée de l'Homme Paris), Alice Desclaux (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), Martin Doevenspeck (Universität Bayreuth), James Fairhead (University of Sussex), Jean-Benoît Falisse (University of Edinburgh), Stan Frankland (University of St. Andrews), Tony Goldberg (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Frederick Golooba-Mutebi (Independent), Jaime Hitchen (Independent), Kasper Hoffmann (University of Ghent), David Kaawa-Mafigiri (Makerere University), Nene Morisho Mwana Biningo (Pole Institute), Laban Musinguzi Kashaija (Makerere University), Charles Kakaire (UNICEF), Hugh Lamarque (University of Edinburgh), Miriam Lwanga (UNICEF), Boiketho Murima (UNICEF), Joe Collins Opio (UNICEF), Sung-Joon Park (University Halle), Melissa Parker (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Sarah Paige, Georgina Pearson (St George's University, London), Katie McQuaid (University of Leeds), Timothy Raeymaekers (University of Zurich), Jude Rwemisisi (University of Amsterdam), Kirstof Titeca (University of Antwerp), Bram Verelst (Ghent University), Judith Verweijen (University of Sussex), Danny de Vries (University of Amsterdam).

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## Contact

If you have a direct request concerning the response to Ebola in the DRC, regarding a brief, tools, additional technical expertise or remote analysis, or should you like to be considered for the network of advisers, please contact the Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform by emailing Juliet Bedford ([julietbedford@anthrologica.com](mailto:julietbedford@anthrologica.com)) and Santiago Ripoll ([s.ripoll@ids.ac.uk](mailto:s.ripoll@ids.ac.uk)).

Key Platform liaison points: UNICEF ([kchitnis@unicef.org](mailto:kchitnis@unicef.org)), WHO ([bhatiaseviap@who.int](mailto:bhatiaseviap@who.int)), IFRC ([ombretta.baggio@ifrc.org](mailto:ombretta.baggio@ifrc.org)), Communication Commission in DRC ([jdshadid@unicef.org](mailto:jdshadid@unicef.org)), GOARN Research Social Science Group ([nina.gobat@phc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nina.gobat@phc.ox.ac.uk))



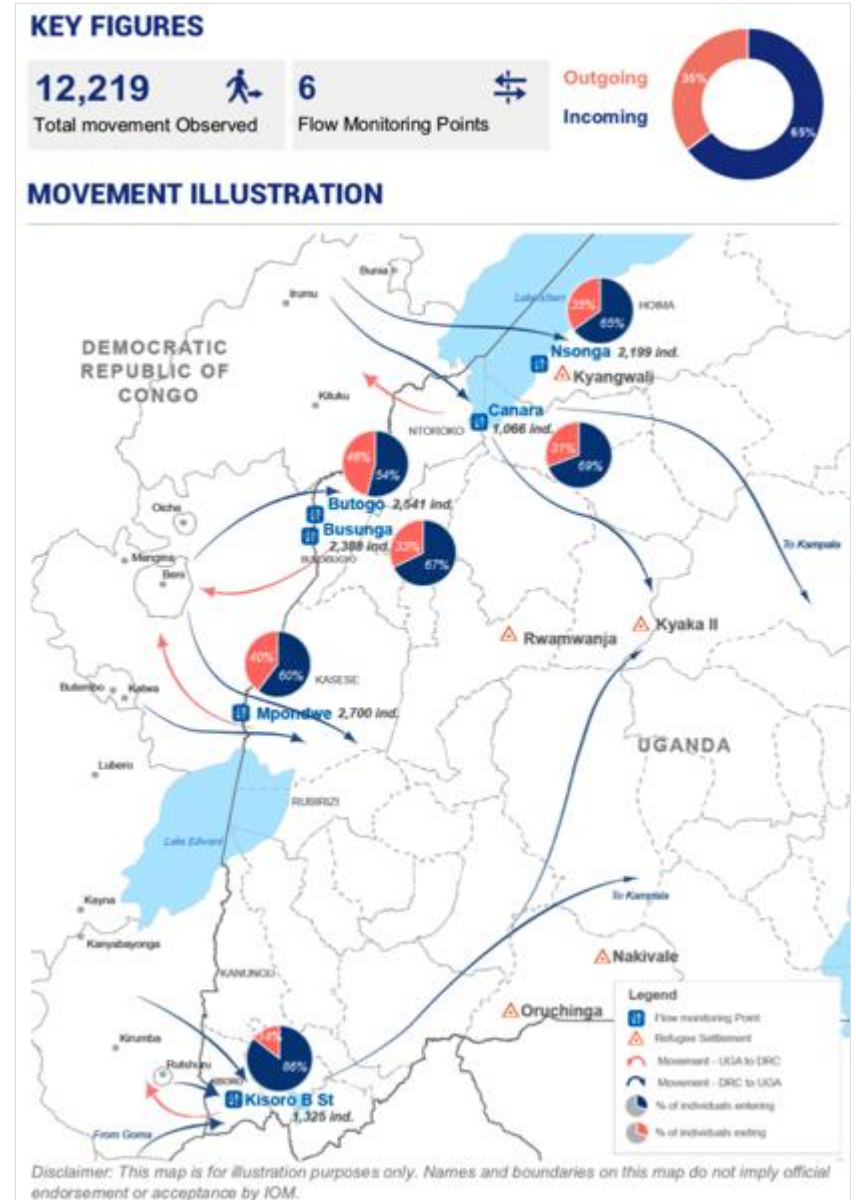
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Map 1 – Priority at risk districts (Uganda Ministry of Health)



Uganda Ministry of Health (2018). Uganda National Ebola Virus Disease Contingency Plan. October 2018-March 2019.

Map 2 – Flow monitoring points, 15-30 November (IOM)



IOM (2018). 'Flow Monitoring Dashboard: Uganda/DRC Border'. Publication date: 3 Dec, 2018. <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/uganda-%E2%80%94-94-flow-monitoring-dashboard-ugandadrc-border-1-15-november-%E2%80%94-30-november-2018>