

# Uganda

## January - March 2026

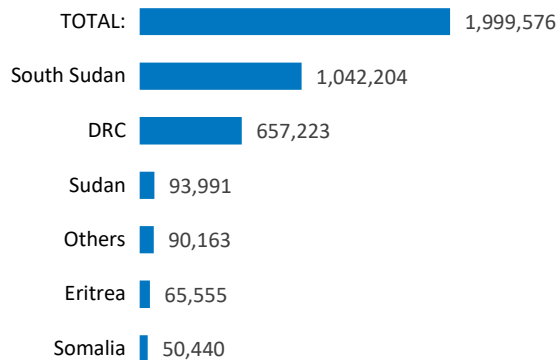
Uganda hosts 1,999,576 refugees and asylum-seekers - the largest refugee population in Africa - representing a 1% increase since December 2025. South Sudanese (52%) and Congolese (33%) refugees account for the vast majority. Women and children constitute 77% of the population, with over 1 million refugee children hosted in the country.

Uganda's progressive 2006 Refugee Act, guaranteeing freedom of movement, the right to work, and access to national services, remains foundational but is under mounting strain. In February 2026 a directive was issued by the Government ending suspending prima facie recognition for new asylum-seekers and extending protection timelines.

Only 14% (\$49.9M) of UNHCR's 2026 funding requirements (\$361M) were met as of 31 March. This critical shortfall has forced a 23% reduction in field operations and the scaling back of all but life-saving interventions. Without urgent new commitments, gains made across protection, health, nutrition, and education face irreversible reversal.

### POPULATION OF CONCERN

## Countries of Origin

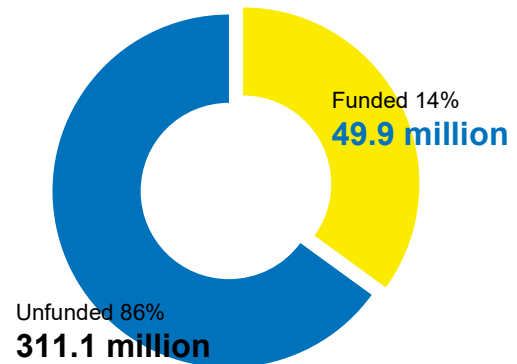


\* 1,951,214 refugees and 48,362 asylum-seekers  
\* Population figures as of 31 March 2026

### FUNDING (AS OF MARCH 2026)

## USD 361 million

requested for the Uganda situation



### UNHCR PRESENCE

#### Staffing:

- 260 National Staff
- 54 International Staff

#### Offices:

- 01 Country office in Kampala
- 03 Sub-offices in Adjumani, Yumbe and Mbarara
- 03 Field offices in Kiryandongo, Rwamwanja, Kyangwali
- 03 Field units in Kampala, Kisoro, Lamwo



## Key Figures at a Glance

<b>1,999,576</b> Refugees & asylum-seekers (31 March 2026) ↑ 1% since Dec 2025	<b>30,220</b> New arrivals registered since January 2026 ↓ ~50% vs Q1 2025	<b>77%</b> Refugee population comprising women and children
<b>14%</b> Of USD 361M required funded as of Q1 <i>86% - USD 311.1M - unfunded</i>	<b>-23%</b> Reduction in UNHCR field operations due to funding cuts	<b>1M+</b> Refugee children in Uganda requiring urgent services

## Operational Context

Uganda's refugee model, rooted in the 2006 Refugee Act and anchored by land allocation, freedom of movement, and access to national services, remains a global benchmark for inclusive refugee response. However, the scale and pace of new arrivals, compounded by deepening funding shortfalls, are pushing the system to its limits.

■ **New Arrivals:** 30,220 individuals were registered in Q1 2026, including 7,746 new births. While the pace of new arrivals has halved compared to Q1 2025, the cumulative caseload continues to grow, driving overcrowding at transit and reception centres and compressing access to basic services.

■ **Policy shift:** On 5 February 2026, the Government issued a directive ending prima facie refugee recognition for new asylum-seekers from the DRC, Sudan, and South Sudan, transitioning instead to individual Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures. UNHCR continues to engage closely with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to support implementation in accordance with Uganda's legal and protection framework, while advocating for clear operational guidance and adequate resources to ensure continued access to asylum and minimize disruption for new arrivals.

■ **Funding crisis:** UNHCR has received only 14% of its USD 361M funding requirements for 2026. UNHCR has reduced its field presence by 23% since 2025, closed its offices in Arua, Moyo, and Kyaka II, and continues to prioritize life-saving programming, while continuing to advocate with development actors for long-term investments in infrastructure, resilience, and system transition.

■ **Systems transition:** Uganda's National Transition Strategy (2025–2035) aims to shift health, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services from partner-led to government-managed systems. Progress is tangible - 92% of refugee health facilities are coded, 41% of settlement schools are integrated, and capitation grants now reach one-third of refugee learners. However, sustaining this progress requires sustained development finance, not solely humanitarian funding.

## Working with Partners

- Uganda's refugee response operates under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), co-led by the OPM and the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), as the national mechanism for implementing the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).
- Under the CRRF umbrella, OPM and UNHCR jointly lead coordination of refugee interventions through the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan (UCRRP).
- The UCRRP advances the Government of Uganda's strategic priorities, aligning interventions with national policies and complementing broader international assistance. There are currently 120 partners (7 UN Agencies, 52 International NGOs, 32 National NGOs, 19 Government entities, 10 Refugee-led organizations) reporting through ActivityInfo and engaged through interagency and sector working groups at both field and national levels to support coordinated planning, information sharing, and performance monitoring. Strategic dialogue and operational alignment are facilitated through coordination platforms such as the Refugee Humanitarian Partners Group (RHPG), the Development Partners Group (DPG), and national mechanisms with line ministries, ensuring coherence across humanitarian and development actors.
- Refugees and District Local Authorities actively participate in planning and implementation through the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) and District Engagement Forum (DEF), which bring together refugee leaders and district representatives from all settlements and Kampala.
- UNHCR's interventions are further aligned within the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), contributing to Uganda's national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

particularly SDGs 1, 3, 6, 10, and 16, by promoting inclusion, resilience, and equitable access to national systems for refugees and host communities.

## Main Activities

### Protection

Uganda hosts one of the most protection-intensive refugee populations in the world. Over one million children, tens of thousands of whom are unaccompanied or separated (UASC), and a gender-based violence (GBV) caseload driven by chronic underfunding all demand robust, multi-layered protection systems.

- While there are over 44,200 UASC identified as highly vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, child labour, and abuse, specialized care capacity is critically insufficient.
- GBV case workers fell from 96 (Q3 2025) to just 43 in Q1 2026 (a 55% reduction) driven by funding cuts and partner transitions. Over 50% of GBV cases go unreported due to fear, stigma, and access barriers, meaning the 855 reported incidents represent only a fraction of actual prevalence.
- Legal aid reached only 11,158 individuals in Q1 2026, representing a 59% drop from 27,119 at the same time in 2025 as refugee numbers and legal complexity increased, while available funding reduced.
- UNHCR coordinates the Protection Sector, rapidly scaling registration and documentation during emergencies. By 31 March, 22,474 individuals and 7,746 births were registered through mobile and continuous registration, preventing statelessness.
- Children comprised 51% of the refugee population; 84,669 were identified with one or more child protection risks. UNHCR and partners are scaling targeted education, health, and protection responses for the most vulnerable.
- 92% of identified GBV survivors accessed multisectoral support (psychosocial, legal aid, livelihoods, shelter, health). The FRRM/We.Link helpline received 67,404 calls (11% increase from Q4 2025) with 81% resolved at the helpline level, demonstrating strong demand and system efficiency.
- Further reductions in GBV case workers and legal aid staff will leave tens of thousands of refugees, including UASC, without any protection safety net. The consequences include increased trafficking, abuse, statelessness, and irreversible protection failures for the most vulnerable.



New arrivals from the DRC at Kabazana Reception Centre in Nakivale Refugee Settlement. © UNHCR/Ssozi Daniel Mukasa

## Education

Uganda's education system serves approximately 620,000 students across refugee settlements and national schools, with refugees and host community nationals studying side by side. While primary enrolment is strong, the secondary gap is critical - only 9% gross enrolment at secondary level - creating a 'lost generation' of youth with no pathway beyond primary school.

**618,431**

Students enrolled (64% refugees, 36% nationals)

**75% / 9%**

Gross enrolment: primary vs. secondary  
*The secondary gap is a structural crisis*

**13%**

Of USD 107M required (UCRRP) funded as of 31 March 2026

→ *Teacher salaries and infrastructure at risk*

- Teacher-to-pupil ratios have deteriorated sharply in primary school: 1:94 (standard: 1:53) from 1:86 and slightly improved from 1:41 to 1:39 in secondary (standard: 1:53), in the same period last year. Pupil-to-classroom ratios of 1:116 (primary) and 1:83 (secondary) indicate severe infrastructure pressure.
- Gross Enrolment (46%) declined by 5% compared to Q1 2025, signalling early signs of education system contraction. A significant cohort of pre-school and secondary-age children remain out of school, in neither education, employment, nor training (NEET).
- UNHCR rehabilitates learning spaces, recruits and remunerates teachers, and supplies teaching and learning materials. 41% of settlement schools are now coded for government support; 209,573 refugee children (54%) attend national public schools - progress toward full system integration.
- 218,108 host community children study in UNHCR-supported settlement schools, reinforcing education as a bridge for social cohesion. Refugees are included in the national Education Management Information System (EMIS), embedding them in long-term planning.
- Without increased funding, teacher salaries will not be sustained, enrolment will continue to contract, and the secondary gap will widen, condemning hundreds of thousands of young refugees to long-term dependency and exclusion. The cost of inaction will be measured in a lost generation.



Pupils at Ocea Primary School during an ongoing class session in Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement. © UNHCR/Ssozi Daniel Mukasa

## Health

UNHCR's health response emphasises primary care, reproductive and maternal health, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and disease prevention -- all progressively integrated into Uganda's national health system. 92% of refugee health facilities are now nationally accredited, though the number of operational facilities declined from 101 in 2024 to 89 in Q1 2026, a direct consequence of funding reductions.

<b>301,265</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>4.6%</b>
Outpatient consultations (Q1 2026) <i>1:52 clinician workload - above the Gov't standard of 1:50</i>	Crude mortality rate per 1,000 - well below 0.75 emergency threshold	Of USD 131M UCRRP health funding requirement received → <i>Only USD 6M secured</i>

- Outpatient facilities conducted 301,265 outpatient consultations (72% refugees, 28% nationals), an average of 100,421 monthly consultations. Clinician workloads at 1:52 per day exceed the government standard of 1:50. With 89 operational facilities serving nearly 2 million refugees, the system is structurally overstretched.
- The community health workforce has contracted sharply: only 163 village health teams (VHTs) are active, down from 2,700 in 2024 - a 94% reduction - critically limiting community-level primary care and disease surveillance.
- Mental health needs are rising, with 5,194 MHPSS consultations recorded during Q1 2026, while staffing to address psychosocial needs remains inadequate given the trauma profile of the caseload.
- 9,711 live births were recorded, with 97% attended by skilled health personnel and only one maternal death - reflecting the quality of maternal health infrastructure maintained by UNHCR.
- Mortality rates remain well below emergency thresholds of 0.75 per 1,000 (crude: 0.03; under-5: 0.13), demonstrating effective health delivery despite severe resource constraints.
- UNHCR supports 2,506 health workers and 65 ambulances across hosting districts, maintaining emergency response capacity. During Q1 2026, a robust disease surveillance system contained a 37-case measles outbreak in Kiryandongo Settlement.
- In the context of funding reductions, the reversal of hard-won public health gains - including low mortality rates and high maternal health coverage - is not a future risk; it is already underway. Outbreaks of measles, cholera, and other communicable diseases will accelerate without restored VHT networks and facility support.

## Nutrition

Food insecurity among Uganda's refugee population is worsening despite sustained food assistance. 65% of refugee households are food insecure - up from 61% in 2024 - with 7% in severe food insecurity. This deterioration is occurring as ration values decline, reflecting a structural mismatch between need and available resources.

- Critical acute malnutrition (GAM) rates in transit and reception centres reached alarming levels by the end of Q1 2026: 25% in Kabazana (exceeding the 15% emergency threshold) and 14.6% in Kiryandongo. Additional sites - Lokung (12.9%), Nyakabande (9.7%), Ocea (9.3%), Nyumanzi (8.6%) - show rising trends. Children are arriving malnourished, and some deteriorate further after arrival.
- Existing caseloads are receiving reduced rations: the most vulnerable receive 60% rations, moderately vulnerable receive 30%. This is not a temporary measure - it reflects a structural funding deficit with no short-term resolution in sight.
- Over 70% of refugee households depend on agriculture, yet only 27% cultivate at least 0.5 acres - revealing deep constraints on self-reliance potential despite the land-allocation model.
- USD 8.2 million transferred via cash-based transfers and 516 MT of food distributed in Q1, reaching 653,490 refugees (92% via cash, 8% in-kind). UNHCR, WFP, and the Government maintain hot meals and SAM/MAM treatment services at reception centres.
- Nutrition surveillance is integrated within national district health structures. Community-based initiatives and livelihood-linked food production programmes complement emergency food assistance.
- Further ration reductions will push more households into severe food insecurity and drive malnutrition rates above emergency thresholds across multiple sites. The combination of GAM rates at 25% in Kabazana and declining rations constitutes an imminent nutritional emergency requiring immediate donor action.

### Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to safe water and sanitation remains critical to preventing waterborne disease outbreaks across refugee settlements. While UNHCR's WASH response has maintained minimum standards, the collapse of the community hygiene workforce -- from 2,700 VHTs in 2024 to just 163 in Q1 of 2026 -- signals a system approaching a tipping point.

**15 l/p/d**

Average water supply - slightly below national standard

**68%**

Sanitation coverage (up from 67% in Dec 2025)

**2%**

Of USD 46M UCRRP WASH requirement funded

→ *Water supply collapse risk*

- Community hygiene promoter coverage has fallen to 1:1,027 - more than double the recommended 1:500 ratio - due to VHT reductions from funding cuts. This weakens disease prevention at the household level, where the first line of defence is most critical.
- 83% of water is pumped via solar energy - a slight reduction from 84% in December 2025 - reflecting some maintenance gaps and system degradation under budget constraints.
- 19,987 litres of water was supplied in Q1 2026, averaging 15 l/p/d. Sanitation coverage increased marginally to 68%, with latrine-to-person ratios maintained below 1:50, preventing disease spread.
- Rwamwanja settlement is now fully under national utility management - representing a significant milestone in UNHCR's strategy to transition water management to sustainable national systems. 24 systems (10%) of all systems are now utility-managed.
- In the context of reduced funding, water supply to settlements risks falling below survival standards. Waterborne disease outbreaks - cholera, dysentery, typhoid - would rapidly overwhelm the already underfunded health system, creating a compounding humanitarian crisis.

### Shelter, Settlement, and NFIs

UNHCR supports refugees with safe shelter, settlement planning, and essential Non-Food Items (NFIs) to uphold dignity and protection. Working with OPM and district local governments, site planning ensures access to services and promotes sustainable settlement development. With over 10,000 new arrival households requiring emergency kits in Q1 2026 alone, ongoing needs continue to outpace available resources.

- 10,948 registered new arrival households received emergency shelter kits in Q1 2026. An additional 118 highly vulnerable households received targeted semi-permanent shelter support.
- Pre-demarcated plots are being deployed to enable direct relocation of new arrivals, reducing processing delays and preventing overcrowding-driven land conflicts.
- Without sustained investment in settlement infrastructure and semi-permanent shelter for vulnerable households, overcrowding will deepen, increasing protection risks, disease transmission, and social tensions between refugees and host communities



Work is ongoing to upgrade 2 km of Yumbe-Barakala-Bidibidi road to asphalt, employing refugee and host community casual labourers.

### Access to Energy and Environmental Protection

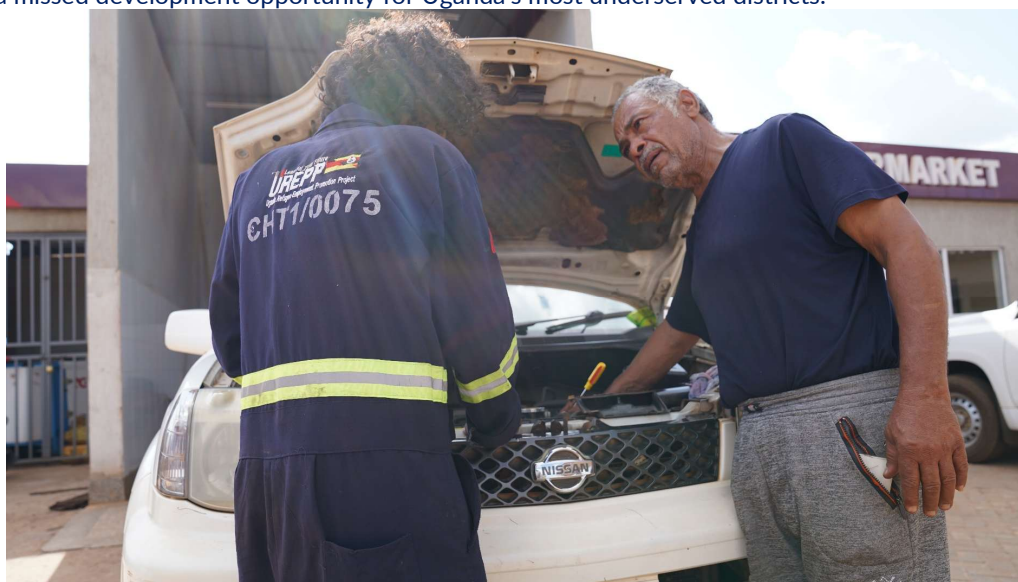
Environmental degradation in refugee-hosting districts represents a long-term risk to livelihoods, biodiversity, and climate resilience. UNHCR's dual strategy -- clean energy access and ecosystem restoration -- has shown strong results, but budget cuts are rapidly eroding these gains.

- 17 hectares of wetlands, riverbanks, and degraded forest reserves restored in Q1 2026, contributing to Uganda's Global Refugee Forum (GRF) biodiversity pledge.
- 91,234 tree seedlings were planted and 159,367 distributed. However, due to budget constraints, only 182 hectares of new woodlots were established -- 39% more than the same period in 2025 -- and 261 hectares maintained (18% decline).
- 1,531 households received clean cooking stoves (67% fewer than Q1 2025). 119 local artisans were trained in stove construction, while 5 institutions and 2,705 households adopted energy-efficient cooking technologies.
- Due to funding constraints, years of reforestation, ecosystem restoration, and clean energy investment will reverse rapidly without sustained resourcing. Deforestation will intensify, directly worsening food insecurity, respiratory disease, and climate vulnerability for both refugees and host communities.

### Livelihoods, Economic Inclusion and Self-Reliance

Refugee self-reliance is central to Uganda's long-term response strategy. However, declining land access, restricted formal employment, and underfunding are weakening the foundations of economic inclusion at exactly the moment when the caseload most needs to reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance.

- Only 4,993 refugee households accessed land in Q1 (2,693 acres) a 46% decline from the same period last year, constraining agricultural self-reliance despite the land-allocation model's centrality to Uganda's refugee policy.
- Formal employment remains inaccessible: only 656 refugees secured short-term informal employment during Q1 2026. Work permit barriers continue to block economic integration for the broader working-age refugee population.
- 9,469 individuals were trained in good agricultural practices and 7,215 in climate-smart technologies. Over US \$100,000 was distributed through livelihoods cash transfers, providing refugees with agency over their economic choices.
- 1,705 new arrival households received emergency livelihood kits (seeds, poultry, farm tools). 40 implementing partners active under the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Refugee Plan (JLIRP) across skills training, market linkage, and private-sector engagement programmes.
- Ongoing advocacy with OPM continued to ease work permit and tax documentation access for employed refugees.
- Failure to invest in self-reliance now will deepen long-term dependency, worsen food insecurity, and negate Uganda's settlement model. The economic exclusion of 1.99 million people is not only a humanitarian failure but a missed development opportunity for Uganda's most underserved districts.



Abbas Mohamed, a Sudanese refugee from Khartoum now living in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, inspects a vehicle at his mechanic workshop in Bweyale Town near the settlement. © UNHCR/Ssozi Daniel Mukasa

### Durable Solutions

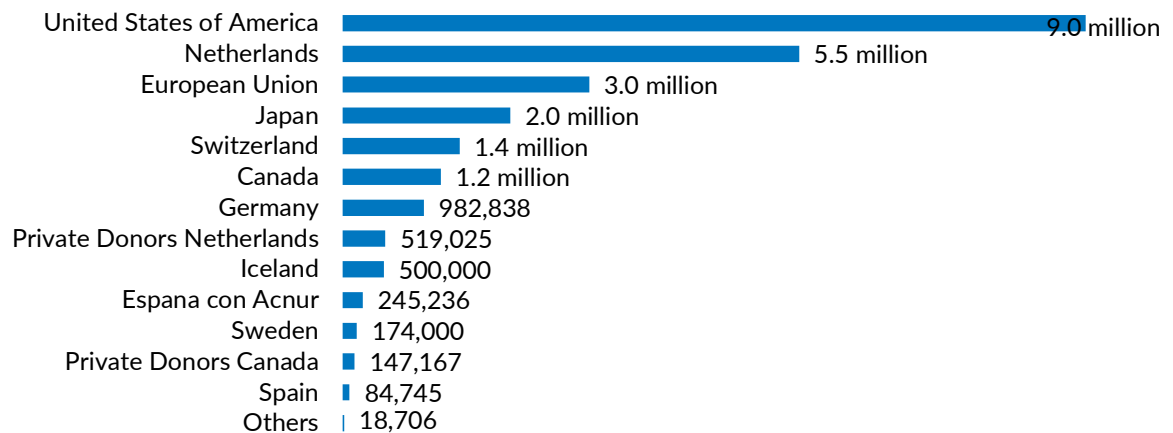
- UNHCR promotes long-term solutions that enable refugees to live in safety and dignity through voluntary repatriation, resettlement, complementary pathways, and local integration. Uganda’s inclusive refugee policy remains a global model for self-reliance and social cohesion.
- 145 Burundian refugees (48 households) were voluntarily repatriated between Jan- March 2026 (16,038 since the programme began in 2020).
- A significant level of ongoing advocacy and processing for the most at-risk individuals continues. During Q1 2026, 40 individuals were successfully resettled despite reduced capacity, while 315 accessed complementary pathways, creating a more sustainable and scalable model.
- Local Integration continues to expand through refugees’ access to land, education, health, and livelihoods within national systems.

## Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed funding to Uganda as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

### EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Earmarked contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 49.9 million.**



### BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of broadly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

Sweden for UNHCR 5.9 million | Ireland | Canada | Jersey | Private donors

### UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Sweden 79.8 million | Norway 61.6 million | Denmark 37.8 million | Germany 27.8 million | Switzerland 22.1 million | Ireland 14.5 million | Australia 14.3 million | España con ACNUR 12 million | Belgium 10.7 million

Algeria | Armenia | Canada | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Serbia | Singapore | South Africa | Thailand | Private donors

#### External/Donor Relations Contacts

**Letitia Dragomir**, Senior External Relations Officer,  
[dragomir@unhcr.org](mailto:dragomir@unhcr.org), Tel: +256 767 000 057

**Frank Walusimbi**, Associate Communications Officer,  
[walusimf@unhcr.org](mailto:walusimf@unhcr.org), Tel: +256 772 701 140

LINKS: [Uganda Refugee Response Portal](#) | [UNHCR Uganda Facebook Page](#) | [UNHCR Uganda Twitter \(X\) Account](#) | [UNHCR Uganda Instagram Account](#) | [UNHCR Uganda YouTube Channel](#)