

Applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

Overview: Uganda

Last updated: October 2017

I. Context

For over five decades, Uganda has provided asylum to people fleeing war and persecution from many countries, including its neighbours. Uganda is party to key refugee conventions and international human rights treaties, and currently hosts over 1.35 million refugees, the majority from South Sudan (75%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (17%), Burundi (3%) and Somalia (3%)¹. When renewed conflict broke out in South Sudan in July 2016, an unprecedented number of refugees came to Uganda, doubling the refugee population in less than seven months. Uganda has since become the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, with refugees making up 3.5% of the country's total population of 39 million. The economy faces challenges, compounded by adverse weather and spill-over from the civil unrest in South Sudan.

II. Towards a more comprehensive refugee response

Despite the challenges generated by the influx from South Sudan over the past year, Uganda maintains one of the most progressive policies to refugee protection. With an open-door policy, the Government upholds an **inclusive approach**, granting refugees freedom of movement, the right to seek employment, establish businesses and access public services such as education, on par with nationals. Refugees in Uganda do not live in camps. In line with Uganda's **settlement approach** – which the Government pledged to continue at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees on 20 September 2016 in New York - refugee families receive plots of land on which they can live and do farming. The Government has set aside many thousands of hectares of land for refugee use, and more have been provided by local communities.

In order to ease pressure on local services and leverage the **positive economic impact of refugees**, Uganda has integrated refugees into national development plans. Likewise, it has established the Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA), which supports the development of refugee-hosting districts by investing in infrastructure, livelihoods, peaceful coexistence initiatives and environmental protection. The STA takes into account the protracted nature of displacement and their impact on local communities. Furthermore, it is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its main principle to "leave no one behind". Owing to this, Uganda is regarded as a model for many other refugee-hosting countries.

III. Strategic roll-out of the CRRF

Building on these existing approaches toward a comprehensive refugee response, the CRRF in Uganda addresses five mutually-reinforcing themes: **admission and rights; emergency response and ongoing needs; resilience and self-reliance of refugees; expansion of solutions through resettlement and complementary pathways** such as scholarships and work placements abroad, and, finally, **voluntary repatriation** which in the current situation focuses on investment in human capital and transferrable skills as well as support to the countries of origin.

The Office of the Prime Minister and UNHCR officially launched the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) on 24 March 2017, adapting the principles and objectives set out in Annex I of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants to the Ugandan context. The following day, Uganda's signed on to the [Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees](#) (25 March 2017) to find solutions for Somali refugees, including voluntary repatriation.

A multi-stakeholder workshop was held in June 2017 to further develop a roadmap for CRRF and establish government-led governance structures for implementation under the CRR framework. Reflected in the

¹ As at end 2015, source: World Bank

[Kampala Declaration on Refugees](#) (2017) the objectives under the comprehensive framework in the Ugandan context are to:

1. Maintain and support Uganda's progressive policy towards refugees, and protect asylum space;
2. Support the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities;
3. Expand solutions for refugees, including third country options;
4. Support Uganda's role in the region and invest in human capital and transferrable skills.

In October 2017, a high-level, multi-stakeholder Steering Group was set up - the **first ever Government-led forum bringing together humanitarian and development actors**, local government and authorities, refugees and the private sector, to engage and provide guidance on refugee matters. As part of its responsibilities, the Steering Group mobilises support from humanitarian and development actors, including civil society and the private sector. It will also document lessons-learned from the Uganda refugee context to inform relevant global, regional and national initiatives, including the development of a global compact for refugees in 2018.

With support from UNHCR, the CRRF in Uganda has been fully initiated by the Government, who assumes full leadership of the process. The Steering Group set up a Secretariat, which will benefit from secondments from within Government agencies as well as external stakeholders. The Secretariat is scheduled to be fully operational by the end of 2017 and has been tasked to update the Road Map and Work Plan for endorsement by the Steering Group before the end of the year.

Through the CRRF governance structure, Uganda seeks to create a **more predictable and sustainable approach to refugee management, respond more efficiently to the refugee emergency, and accelerate the implementation of the Government's Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategy**. ReHoPE provides a national framework for integrated and holistic support to refugees and host populations; it was incorporated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 2016 and thereby supports the National Development Plan II and the Settlement Transformation Agenda. The refugee response and ReHoPE represent key building blocks to realize the CRRF in Uganda, making refugees part and parcel of the development agenda. In keeping with the spirit of the New York Declaration, ReHoPE seeks to enhance peaceful coexistence between refugees and Ugandans and to protect asylum space, and helps equip refugees with skills and knowledge to rebuild their countries when peace returns.

IV. Key Partnerships

The **World Bank** has approved a US\$50 million loan to help Uganda invest in the socio-economic development of refugee-hosting districts. Likewise, the Bank is considering Uganda as a recipient of the IDA-18 regional sub-window for refugees and host communities, which aims to support low-income countries to deliver services to refugees and the communities hosting them. Furthermore, the ReHoPE Strategy is the World Bank's and United Nations' contribution to the implementation of the Government's Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA). Under this programme, humanitarian and development actors, jointly with the private sector, work together to support the Government to deliver socio-economic progress in refugee-hosting areas.

An **online Refugee Response Portal** has been launched to support coordination among partners and to make information about the refugee response in Uganda available in a reliable and predictable manner. The portal contains a specific section on CRRF and can be found here: <https://ugandarefugees.org>.

V. Current challenges

The main challenge is the fact that the refugee response is chronically underfunded. Without more support from the international community, and investments by existing and new partners, Uganda's ability to fully realize this exemplary model is at risk. In June 2017, the President of Uganda and the UN Secretary-General, with the support of UNHCR and the UN family in Uganda, co-chaired a Solidarity Summit on Refugees. The Summit (more information [here](#)) mobilised around USD 355 million in new funding for

Uganda. However, the humanitarian response remains critically underfunded and the refugee-hosting districts continue to face major development challenges.

VI. Operational and funding needs to deliver on a comprehensive refugee response

- 1. Support towards more sustainable responses for emergencies**, including early engagement of development actors. The ongoing influx from South Sudan offers a timely opportunity to test this early engagement and harvest lessons from early harmonized efforts between humanitarian and development actors from the first stages of an emergency.
- 2. Resettlement:** The projected resettlement needs for 2017 for refugees in Uganda are 16,500 persons. More resettlement countries need to be identified.
- 3. Complementary pathways:** Third-country governments – in cooperation and with the support of other stakeholders, such as the private sector, civil society and diaspora organizations – are encouraged to establish and expand complementary pathways for refugees living in CRRF roll-out countries. These pathways may include expanded family reunification and family-based mobility; labour mobility schemes; scholarships and education programmes; and regional mobility schemes. (Note: implementation of such pathways necessitates certain facilitative administrative measures, as well as protection safeguards. UNHCR may support States with technical advice in these areas.) UNHCR can provide more information on the needs relating to complementary pathways.
- 4. Greater support for broad involvement of government offices** including line ministries, district authorities and host populations in the strategic roll-out of CRRF.
- 5. Greater coherence and rationalization** of NGO and UN Agency support to the CRRF Secretariat, for maximum efficiency.
- 6. Need for expanded private sector and civil society partnerships** to encourage the integration of **innovative approaches** in refugee responses.
- 7. Funding:** the Operating Plan for the refugee response in 2017 is US\$ 500.7 million; this plan is currently only 15% funded. Another funding strand that is severely underfunded is the Uganda section of the South Sudan emergency response appeal, which is only 17% funded. UNHCR received a list of ReHoPE projects amounting to US\$ 42 million to be considered for funding – 9 million of which has been committed. Through the UNDAF, the UN agencies collectively have indicated a requirement of some USD 213 million to implement ReHoPE, of which approximately 60 million is expected to be funded by the end of 2017.

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