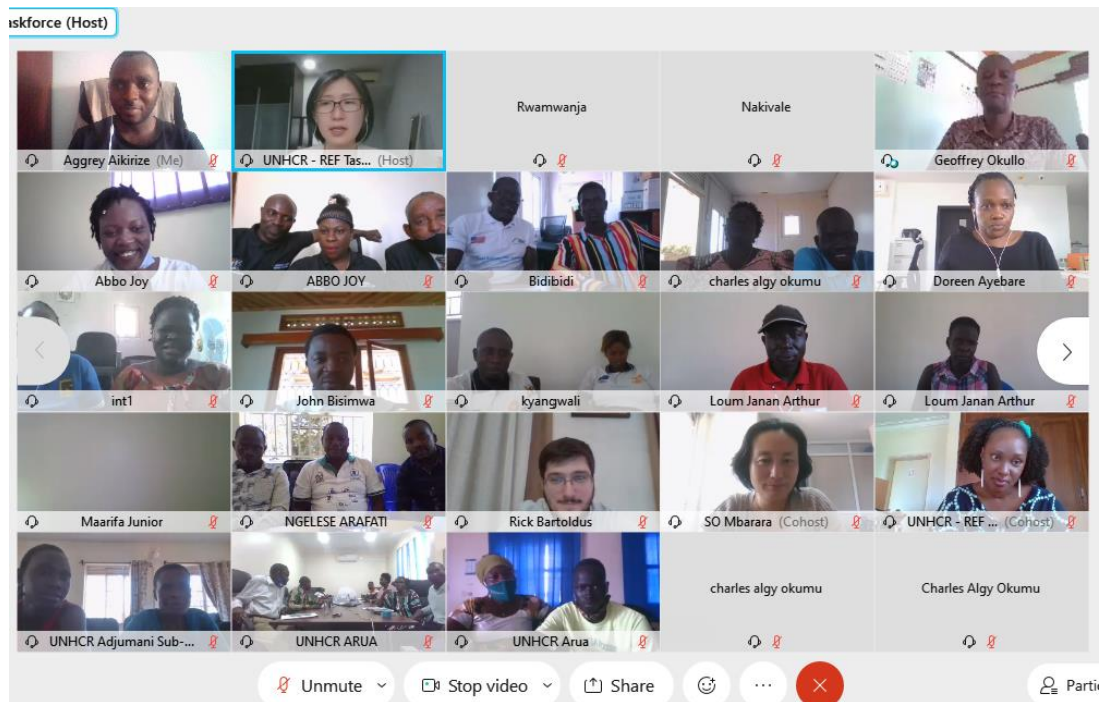


## 10<sup>th</sup> Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) Meeting Report

9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March 2021



### Introduction:

The Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) was established in October 2018 and is comprised of 37 members from the settlement and Kampala leadership reflecting diverse demography, gender and age groups. The REF meets quarterly, before every CRRF Steering Group meeting to inform the CRRF Steering Group in all decisions that affect refugees. Two elected members of the REF (one female and one male) participate in the CRRF Steering Group meeting.

The REF represents the refugee voice in Uganda. Through the REF, refugees inform the CRRF Steering Group in all decisions that affect them, as reflected in the community-based protection approach that puts the capacities, agency, rights, and dignity of persons of concern at the center of the refugee response in Uganda. Through the REF, the refugee community is also kept informed about the discussions and decisions of the CRRF Steering Group. The most recent and 10<sup>th</sup> REF meeting that took place virtually for three days: 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 with the financial support from IRC.

### Day 1, 09.03.2021

#### Opening remarks

**Session objective:** To officially welcome all the participants and give a brief introduction of the 10<sup>th</sup> REF meeting.

**Presenters' names and organisations:** Mr. Innocent Ndahiriwe – OPM and Ms. Yoko Iwasa – UNHCR

#### Key points presented:

Opening remarks from Mr. Innocent

- Thanked and welcomed members to the 10<sup>th</sup> REF meeting.
- Appreciated REF members for giving feedback to communities and encouraged them to participate actively in community meetings.
- Cautioned refugees to refrain from spontaneous return to countries of origin without informing OPM and UNHCR.
- Requested refugee leaders to sensitize the refugees on the procedures for voluntary return.

#### Opening remarks from Ms. Yoko

- Acknowledged commitment of REF members in organizing the 10<sup>th</sup> REF meeting.
- Notified members of the election of refugee representatives to the CRRF SG.
- Reminded members that REF is a platform for voicing refugees' concerns to authorities.
- Appreciated the active roles refugee leaders have played in service delivery during the outbreak of Covid-19 and its subsequent challenges.
- Thanked IRC and all partners for the support towards the 10<sup>th</sup> REF meetings.

#### Action Points:

- Refugee leaders to sensitize the community to refrain from self-repatriation and to leave the country following procedures to notify relevant authorities.
- REF leaders to get continuously involved in various community meetings as part of their oversight roles.

### Review of action points from the 9<sup>th</sup> REF Meeting

**Session objective:** To review progress against action points from the 9<sup>th</sup> REF.

**Presenter name and organization:** Ms. Ann Mbeiza - U-Learn

#### Key points presented:

- The REF members requested that consultative and feedback meetings to continue for the next REF meeting as a way of giving feedback to communities and sharing their concerns.
- Oxfam will support the REF priorities to enhance meaningful engagement of refugees and strengthen two-way communication with the extra support.
- REF members to share issues discussed at the REF meeting in the coordination meetings and inter-agency meetings at the settlement level.

#### Key feedback raised by the REF:

- The REF members requested to increase the number of participants supported for consultative and feedback meetings as the current small number is not enough to ensure the involvement of different categories of people.

#### Action points:

- The REF taskforce members to continue advocating for funding to support the facilitation of consultative and feedback meetings at settlement level, while embracing Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD).
- REF members to share feedback from the REF meetings in the settlement coordination meetings.
- REF Taskforce Co-chairs to follow up on the certificates for the REF members.

### Introductions to the election of the Refugee Representatives

**Session objective:** To inform REF about the process for voting and selection to the CRRF Steering Group.

**Presenter name and organisation:** Akiko Kobayashi - UNHCR

**Key points presented:**

- The REF Taskforce introduced the REF members about the process for voting to elect 2 REF members, a male and a female from different nationalities, to represent refugee population at the CRRF Steering Group.
- As the election would be held online on Day 3 – 11 March 2021, the current refugee representatives (Ms. Noella Kabale & Mr. Gakuru Hitimana) would attend the CRRF SG meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- Highlighted the qualification/requirements for candidates i.e. one must be a REF and RWC3 member, proficient in English, not served two full terms as the refugee representatives to the CRRF SG already.

**Key feedback raised by the REF:**

- A member submitted a motion not to hold the election of the refugee representatives online and to postpone the election until the REF could meet in-person. The members agreed to vote if they prefer 1) to hold the election as planned during this REF meeting, or 2) to postpone the meeting until the next meeting on Day2.

The REF members voted online on 10th March 2021 and the majority voted in favor to postpone the elections of REF representatives to the CRRF Steering Group until the next in-person REF meeting. The REF members also agreed to extend the term of the current representatives to the CRRF Steering Group, Mr. Gakuru Hitimana and Ms. Noella Kabale until an in-person REF meeting can take place.

**Briefing on the agenda for the CRRF steering group meeting**

**Session objective:** To inform REF members of the CRRF steering group agenda items.

**Presenter name and organisation:** Mr. Mike Bruce – CRRF Secretariat

The agenda for the CRRF SG meeting included:

- Adoption of the 2020 CRRF Annual Report including updates on ongoing projects, sector response plans and district engagements.
  - Adoption of the Strategic Direction 2021-2025 document and endorsement of the National Plan of Action 2021-2022, a flagship document for the implementation of the CRRF and the Global Compact on Refugees.
  - Informed members that the E-Monitoring tool (URRMS) is a new online reporting and monitoring tool developed by OPM for tracking development and humanitarian projects in Uganda. How to Access the OPM URRMS is shared in the Appendix.
  - The impact of COVID-19 on the Comprehensive Sector Response Plans, with a special focus on the Health Sector Integrated Refugee Response Plan to be presented by the Ministry of Health as requested by the Steering Group.
  - Information on COVID-19 vaccines, access and availability will also be presented.
- Urged REF representatives to CRRF SG meeting to prioritize key messages on COVID-19 vaccines.

**Key feedback raised:**

- The time allocated to the REF representatives to speak at the CRRF Steering Group meeting is always limited.

- REF representatives requested for an opportunity to endorse the minutes for previous CRRF SG meetings before proceeding with the next meeting.

#### **Action Points:**

- A request was made by REF members to CRRF Secretariat to raise the issues of minutes endorsement by REF representatives at the CRRF SG meeting.

#### **Presentation of the results of the Pre-Survey Report**

**Session objective:** To present findings from the Pre-REF survey that was conducted prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> REF Meeting to inform the development of key messages for the CRRF SG meeting.

**Presenter name and organization:** Mr. John Bisimwa – U-Learn

#### **Key points presented:**

The pre-REF survey presentation focussed on the following.

- Feedback from National Plan of Action (NPA) consultations at settlements, proposals on what to be included in the NPA.
- Messages to the National Policy discussions.
- The impact of COVID-19 on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Plans, proposals for COVID-19 response.
- Achievements and lessons learned for the REF from 2020.

#### **Key feedback raised by the REF:**

- The NPA Consultations were successful and REF members had a positive experience.
- Most of the proposed activities to be included in the next 2-year's action plan fall under SD3: "Mainstreaming CRRF into national planning to address long term impacts of hosting refugees".
- Increased access to education for the refugee children including access to scholarships.
- Expanding jobs and livelihoods opportunities for refugees.
- Need to improve Communication and information sharing: we do not get the reports and meeting agenda on time.
- Need for physical / face-to-face REF meetings.
- The REF taskforce should allocate more time for REF members to present their issues and receive feedback on pressing concerns during REF meetings.

#### **Group presentations on the pillars of the National Plan of Action**

**Session objective:** To share proposed activities to include in the National Plan of Action

**Presenter name and organisation:** REF members – group facilitators

#### **Key points presented:**

The REF members had breakout sessions for the following 4 topics and made plenary presentations.

- Group 1: "Strengthening CRRF National Arrangements to Coordinate the Comprehensive Response and Covid-19 response".
- Group2: "Strengthening district level coordination and Covid-19 response"
- Group3: "Transitioning from the aid model to more sustainable solutions and Covid-19 response"
- Group 4: "The role that Uganda and the international community can undertake to improve conditions in the Countries of origin and Covid-19 response."

#### **Key feedback raised:**

- Questions about the rumors on Covid-19 vaccines – that refugees will be used test the efficacy and safety of the vaccine.
- Involve refugees into the peace processes through their leaders. Refugees should be represented in the peace negotiation meetings in the respective countries of origin.
- Request for refugees to be continuously informed about developments in their countries of origin

#### **Action Points:**

- The two REF representatives to formulate and synthesize the key messages to be presented to the CRRF steering group meeting.
- UNHCR together with health partners to sensitize communities on information about COVID-19 vaccines. There is a need for clear communication on the vaccines.

### **Discussion of clear Key Messages for the CRRF Steering Group**

#### **Session objective:**

- To prepare key messages to be presented by the Refugee Representatives in the next CRRF SG meeting.

**Presenter name and organization:** Ms Noela & Mr. Gakuru Hitiman – Refugee representatives to the CRRF SG.

#### **Key points presented:**

- Need to have more health workers in the health facilities including translators.
- Plan for meetings with District leaders to improve relationship with host communities.
- Refugees to be involved in the District Planning process.
- Commercial agriculture among refugees.
- Improve access to credit and loans for refugees by registering refugee SACCOs.
- Improve financial literacy and include refugees in COVID-19 vaccination plans.
- Improve communication between CRRF and REF members through email, SMS and WhatsApp.
- Increase the number of refugee representatives to the CRRF SG.
- Provide cash grant support to refugees.
- Issues of sexual exploitation and abuse e.g., Aid workers impregnating refugee girls.

#### **Action points:**

- The CRRF representatives of the REF to sit and prioritise the issues raised as they prepare for the presentations.

### **Preparation for the presentation at the CRRF SG meeting**

**Session objective:** Generate issues for the presentation at the CRRF SG meeting.

**Presenter name and organisation:** Ms. Noela Kabale and Mr. Gakuru Hitimana – REF Representatives to the CRRF SG.

#### **Key points presented:**

- In reference to the agenda for the next CRRF Steering Group meeting, issues were sought from REF members through brainstorming.

#### **Key feedback raised by the REF:**

1. To strengthen district level coordination,
  - there is a need for increased, consistent, and regularised meeting between refugee leaders and district officials. One suggestion is to establish REF task force at district level.

- REF members should join the planning and monitoring activities in their respective settlements.
- 2. To support the transition from the aid model to more sustainable solutions,
  - Revise the design of livelihood projects by supporting individuals other than groups.
  - Diversify livelihood opportunities through livestock keeping and improved veterinary services.
  - Increase access to soft loans and credit facilities.
  - Request for irrigation / construct valley dams.
- 3. Improve the conditions in Countries of Origin, Uganda and International community to provide consultations, give pressure to Countries of Origin.
- 4. A request for universal vaccination against COVID-19 and the need for adherence to the preventive measures by the community. It is crucial to provide more information on the plan for the vaccination and the safety of vaccines to avoid misinformation among refugee community.

### **Discussion on the Election Guidelines for Refugee Representatives to the CRRF Steering Group**

**Session objective:** To prepare for the upcoming election and to discuss if there is a need to amend the election guidelines.

**Presenter name and organisation:** Ms. Akiko Kobayashi - UNHCR

#### **Key points presented:**

The facilitator presented the Election Guidelines for Refugee Representatives to the CRRF Steering Group and reminded the members on the qualification/requirements for candidates.

#### **Key feedback raised by REF members:**

- Request for an increase in the number of REF representatives to CRRF steering group from 2 to 4 to have regional representation at the CRRF SG.
- On the Election Guidelines, members suggested two amendments on the requirements to the candidates - 'An aspiring candidate shall not be the REF members who are already elected to represent the REF at other forum' and 'The gender of an aspiring candidate shall be rotated within Northern and Southern Uganda.' Some other members proposed to maintain the existing Election Guidelines.

#### **Action Points:**

- The proposed amendments to the Election Guidelines for the Refugee Representatives to be discussed and agreed before the next election.



## Day 2, 10.03.2021

### Feedback experience/ messages from community consultations

**Session objective:** For the REF members and facilitators to share experience and lessons learned from organizing Community Consultation and Feedback meetings and CRRF National Plan of Action consultations at settlement level.

**Presenter name and organisation:** Doreen Ayebare – Care International

#### Key points presented:

- Following the piloting of Community Consultation and Feedback meetings in some settlements prior to the REF 9 meeting, the support to organize Community Consultation and Feedback meetings was extended to all locations prior to REF 10 meeting. With the request from the CRRF Secretariat, the REF members also organized community consultation meetings to compile feedback for the draft CRRF National Plan of Action (NAP) in February 2021. This session was to hear from the REF members and facilitators from partner organizations to share what went well and what they learned from community consultation meetings.

#### Key feedback raised by the REF:

##### What Went Well

- Involvement of OPM and UNHCR as refugee coordinating agencies strengthened and legitimized the consultation and feedback processes.
- Invitation and involvement of partners such as IRC, DRC, DCA strengthened community feedback on the issues raised / strengthen the feedback process.
- Holding settlement specific consultation and feedback meetings enables capturing of context specific issues than sampling settlements.
- The consultative meeting was inclusive involving elderly, youth, men, women, persons with disability, minority groups, etc and therefore their concerns were taken into considerations.
- Involvement of RWCs to co-chair, chair, moderate meetings, mobilize empowers, leads to quality feedback and strengthens community-based approach to solving issues.

##### Lessons Learned

- With the capacity limitation of 20 participants per consultation, it was difficult to engage diverse members of the community in some locations.
- Absence of partners affected feedback processes; community issues not adequately responded to.
- For some locations, mobile money (as allowance for participants) was not disbursed in a timely manner.
- Transport challenges due to expanse and scattered settlement. The large settlements limited consultation and feedback meetings.
- Dues to a short notice for Community Consultation and Feedback meetings, the REF members and facilitators did not have enough time to prepare adequately.
- High expectations from community during meetings. Need to follow up and share the updates on what they have requested.

#### Action points:

- REF TF to continue working on improvements in logistics and facilitation of consultation meetings such as meals, refreshments, and transport refund especially for the timely processing of the allowance.

- REF members submitted the request to increase the numbers of participants in the future Community Consultation and Feedback meetings
- Community Consultation and Feedback meetings should be held earlier to allow adequate preparation and conceptualization of issues to present at the REF meetings.
- REF members should work with UNHCR, OPM, Focal Points, partners, and RWCs to strengthen community feedback.

## **Community Based Protection Training**

### **Session objective:**

- Ensure good understanding of the framework and approach of community-based protection, ensure general understanding of the process and key stages of CBP programming, and provide an opportunity for REF members to share experience, ideas, and practices.

**Presenter name and organization:** Mr. Aggrey Aikirize - IRC

### **Key points presented:**

- What is Community-based Protection?
- 3 Levels of "CBP" programming: Community-informed or sensitive protection, Community mobilization for protection, and Community-led or driven protection
- Guiding principles of effective CBP: Protection mainstreaming, Do No Harm (Risk Analysis and conflict sensitivity), Community leadership, Representation & Inclusiveness (A-G-D), Empowerment, Ownership & Sustainability, Transparency, Accountability (from CPC to community & IRC)
- Key features and stages of CBP: engage, mobilize, strategize, act & monitor.

### **Key feedback raised by the REF:**

- REF members shared in some settlements, agency staff do not want to be called to account.
- **Facilitator** requested members to always use other mechanisms available to address issues of accountability, such as FRRRM, settlement coordination meetings, etc. Accountability goes beyond money and includes feedback too.
- REF members were grateful for the detailed presentation and called upon members to embrace accountability.
- **Facilitator** requested REF members to further introduce themselves to partners through coordination meetings and follow up with individual partners concerned if they have issues.

### **Action points:**

- REF and community leadership structures should use existing accountability mechanisms to request accountability from partners, for instance through office walk-ins or FRRM.
- GBV and non-GBV criminal cases identified by leaders must be referred to relevant authorities for management.
- REF Task force to share the presentation with all members and upload it onto the CRRF online platform.
- REF members and partner focal points should popularize REF structure in their locations using the different coordination platforms.

## **Feedback from the Refugee Representatives on CRRF SG Meeting**

### **Session objective:**

- To provide feedback on the discussions held during the CRRF SG meeting.



**Presenter name and organisation:** Ms. Noella Kabale and Mr. Gakuru Hitimana – CRRF SG representatives.

**Key points presented:**

- The CRRF SG meeting focused on three key agenda items:
  - Adoption of the 2020 CRRF annual report including updates on ongoing projects, sector response plans and district engagements.
  - Adoption of the Strategic Direction 2021-2025 document and endorsement of the National Plan of Action 2021-2022 for the implementation of CRRF and the Global Compact on Refugees.
  - OPM E-Monitoring Tool for the Refugee Response
- OPM requested humanitarian actors to work in partnership with government agencies to avoid duplication of services to the community.
- The refugee representatives presented three issues at the CRRF SG meeting:
  - Strengthening district level coordination with refugees – to have a regularised meeting between refugee leaders and district officials.
  - A request to vaccinate the refugees against COVID-19 and to address rumors surrounding the vaccines.
  - Request to the CRRF to support livelihood programmes for self-reliance.
- Ministry of Health has denied the rumour that the COVID-19 vaccine safety was tested by inoculating refugees first. The vaccination had already started on 10 March in Kampala and it would target the front-line workers first then to the high-risk groups.

**Key feedback raised by the REF:**

- REF members requested two representatives needed to share a written update after attending the CRRF Steering Group meetings through WhatsApp and emails.
- REF requested feedback on livelihoods, environment, energy, among other sectors.
- IGAD did not do enough in the regional peace process especially in South Sudan.
- REF members requested for the video recording of the CRRF SG meeting.

**Action points:**

- Refugee Representatives to share a written feedback through a WhatsApp group and emails after the meeting.
- REF members requested that the CRRF Secretariat should share strategic documents such as National Plan of Action when adopted.
- REF Task Force to follow up with the CRRF Secretariat if its ok to share a video recording of the proceedings of their meetings and share with the REF members.

## Day 3, 11.03.2021

### Update on extra support to the REF

**Session objective:** To update REF members on the progress of extra-support to REF members.

**Presenter name and organisation:** Ms. Akiko Kobayashi - UNHCR

#### Key points presented:

- Oxfam is planning to provide the extra support to the REF to strengthen the REF members engagements with the community.
- Consultation with the REF members to prioritize the support took place during the 9<sup>th</sup> REF meeting. From the list of support requested by the REF members, REF TF supported Oxfam to identify the support that were feasible to implement with the limited time frame of funding and under COVID-19 restrictions.
- On behalf of Oxfam, REF Taskforce shared the planned areas of support (to be finalized) including airtime, facilitate radio talk shows, rechargeable speakers, and bicycles.

#### Key feedback raised:

- A REF member inquired why Oxfam delayed implementing this project as was promised.
- A member sought for more clarification on the modality for giving the airtime facilitation.
- Most REF members expressed the need for smart phones to improve communication. They said that previously provided smart phones are not compatible with WhatsApp.
- Rechargeable speakers and radio talk shows are not a priority for REF members.
- REF members emphasized that community leaders need transport facilitation.
- Oxfam should provide motorcycles rather than bicycles if possible.
- A member wanted to know the percentage of the total amount of funding that will be invested in supporting REF members.
- REF members requested laptops or iPads to effectively conduct their work.
- REF members shared the questions on the proposed support and new priorities to Oxfam.

#### Action Points:

- REF TF to share with Oxfam the new priorities communicated by the REF members.
- Oxfam to provide responses to the questions raised by REF members in the meeting.

### REF Good Practice Study Findings

**Session objective:** To discuss the Good Practice study findings and potential for improvement of the REF

**Presenter name and organization:** Marijke Deleu, Rick B., Kullein, Kai Kamei, Ann Mbeiza, Dzuy-Tam Tran – U-Learn

#### Key points presented:

- Purpose of the good practice study
- Positive of the REF meetings
- Challenges and opportunities of the REF meeting
- Consultation meetings
- Session on REF support materials

**Key feedback raised by the REF:**

- REF needs to be more representative of the diversity within their communities including people with disabilities and minority groups.
- Improve information sharing with partners and seek feedback.
- REF members requested minutes from REF meetings need to be shared in time.
- REF members suggested that REF should have internal governance, where its indispensable to have a REF member community and have a secretariat.
- REF members need financial support for transportation so they can share key takeaways from the REF with their communities.
- Leaders should also be better supported in livelihood activities. Allocating most of their time to serving communities makes them increasingly economically vulnerable.
- REF members selected presenter's guide as the preferred support tool for outreach and community consultations.
- REF members shared the need for support for ITC skills training to facilitate communication and online meetings, presenting, writing, and leadership skills.

**Action points:**

- Align consultative meetings with UNHCR and OPM calendars for better coordination and support as much as possible
- Recordings by REF members explaining what REF is, should be shared with U-Learn Regional teams and shared with Kullein for compilation.
- U-Learn to support the REF members to set up a new WhatsApp group.
- U-Learn to draft and share with U-Learn SG REF representatives and REF TF for input and review.

**Key takeaways from REF Meeting**

**Session objective:** Review the key messages and action points from the REF meeting.

**Presenter name and organization:** Mr. Geoffrey Okullo – U-Learn

**Key points presented:**

- Refugee leaders requested to sensitize the community on the official return to countries of origin - to refrain from self-repatriation and to leave the country in accordance with guidance and advice from relevant authorities.
- The REF Consultative and feedback meetings at settlement level is a great way to strengthen the two-way communication mechanism and the support for these meetings should continue ensuring the room to consult wider community embracing Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD).
- REF members are requested to share feedback from the REF meetings in the settlement coordination meetings.
- The REF members voted online on 10th March 2021 and decided that the elections of REF representatives to the CRRF Steering Group to be postponed until the next in-person REF meeting.
- The REF members agreed to extend the term of the current representatives to the CRRF Steering Group, Mr. Gakuru Hitimana and Ms. Noella Kabale until an in-person REF meeting can take place.
- To strengthen district level coordination, there is a need for increased, consistent, and regular meeting between refugee leaders and district officials. One suggestion is to establish REF task force at district level.
- More information on the plan for the vaccination and the safety of vaccines is crucial to avoid misinformation among refugee community.

- The REF consultation meetings should be held earlier to allow adequate preparation and conceptualization of issues to present at the REF meetings.
- REF and community leadership structures should use existing accountability mechanisms to demand for accountability from partners, for instance through office walk-ins or FRRM.
- The members requested the Refugee Representatives to share a written feedback through REF WhatsApp group and emails after the meeting.
- Oxfam to provide a response to the issues raised on extra support to the REF.
- To address community knowledge gaps about the REF, U-Learn will develop and share draft communication material (Presenter's guide) that will be used by REF representatives when explaining the REF to community members.

**Action points:**

- REF TF to share the key take-aways with meeting participants.

**Closing remarks**

**Session objective:** Officially close the three days meeting.

**Presenter name and organization:** Ms. Yoko Iwasa - UNHCR

**Key points presented:**

- Thanked members for their active participation in the 10th REF meeting.
- Requested REF members to share what was discussed with their respective communities.
- Thanked the REF Task Force for organizing and supporting the meeting.
- Wished those traveling a safe travel and to always remain in touch.

**Annex 1:** Detailed presentations are available on Uganda CRRF Portal under CRRF – Refugee Engagement Forum (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/working-group/286?sv=0&geo=220>)

**Annex 2: How to Access the OPM URRMS:**

- Go to: OPM website [www.opm.go.ug](http://www.opm.go.ug) - Refugees Department - Refugees Partnership Engagement
- View the home page: Public access (URRMS preamble, information management in Uganda, Policy issues, description and role of stakeholders, refugee settlements, refugee statistics, publications, login)
- To access details beyond home page, you should have Login User Credentials
- As a strategic User: Apply to OPM indicating what information you would like to view and why. [apollo.kazungu@opm.go.ug](mailto:apollo.kazungu@opm.go.ug), [douglas.asiimwe@opm.go.ug](mailto:douglas.asiimwe@opm.go.ug), [nelson.balyeku@opm.go.ug](mailto:nelson.balyeku@opm.go.ug)
- As a partner: Apply through the system to either get instant login user credentials for partnering with OPM or if you already have simply login using the user name and password previously provided.
- Note that individual partners' data within URRMS is confidential, however consolidated data can be shared.