

# UGANDA REFUGEE NEW ARRIVAL REPORT

## FOCUS ON PROTECTION IN THE MID WEST, NORTH, AND WEST NILE

January to June 2023



UNHCR staff in Ocea Reception Centre support children during the relocation of new arrivals to Rhino Camp Settlement. © UNHCR/Paul Kenya

*This report provides an overview of protection concerns in the first half of 2023, with a focus on new arrivals from South Sudan in the North and West Nile, and from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the Mid-West.*

### Situation Update:

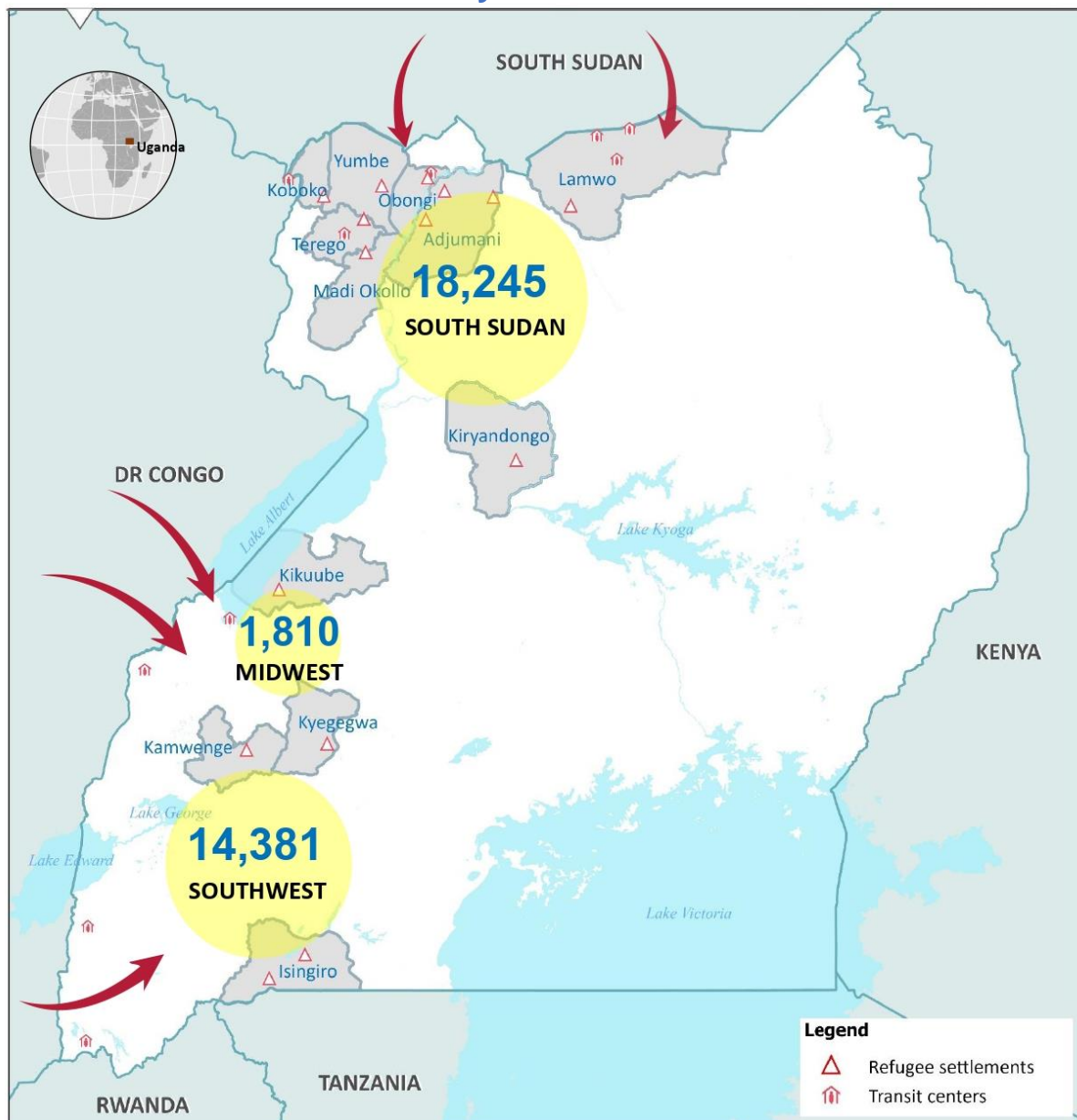
- Uganda continues to host the largest number of South Sudanese refugees in the region with a total of 882,765 refugees. They are accommodated in seven refugee settlements<sup>1</sup> in the North and West Nile of the country.
- Refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) make up the second largest refugee population in Uganda at 494,874 and are accommodated in six settlements<sup>2</sup> in the Southwest and Mid-West<sup>3</sup> regions.
- South Sudanese continue to flee from their country due to a combination of reasons, notably tribal conflict, violence, extreme climate, and hunger. Meanwhile, fighting between the government forces and rebels, as well as ethnic killings are the main reasons that necessitated the flight of Congolese new arrivals to Uganda.

<sup>1</sup> Adjumani, Bidibidi, Imvepi, Kiryandongo, Rhino, Palorinya and Palabek

<sup>2</sup> Imvepi, Kyaka II, Nakivale, Oruchinga, Rwamwanja and Kyangwali.

<sup>3</sup> Kyangwali and Kiryandongo settlements make up the Mid-West.

## New arrivals between January and June 2023



Between January and June 2023, Uganda received **34,436** new arrivals from South Sudan and the DRC. Of these, **18,245** individuals arrived from South Sudan, while **16,191** individuals are from DRC. Over 80 percent of the new arrivals are women and children.

At the end of June, 32,012 new arrivals were relocated to the settlements. Of these, 22,014 are hosted in West Nile settlements, while 9,998 are accommodated in South/Mid-West Settlements. Although efforts have been made to decongest the collection points at the borders and reception centres in the settlements by relocating new arrivals as soon as possible, Lokung Collection Point (CP) in Lamwo district has remained severely overstretched, reaching more than 200 per cent over capacity most of the time when it has capacity to hold just 560 individuals. This means that hundreds of new arrivals, including many children, live in inadequate and rapidly deteriorating conditions. Relocation efforts have been stepped up, and by the end of June, the Lokung CP was down to 851 individuals (52 per cent overstretched).

## Protection Update:



### Child Protection (CP)

- The South Sudanese refugee situation continues to be characterized as a children's crisis, with over 520,000 South Sudanese children registered as refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda.
- As of June 2023, 66,478 children have been identified with diverse specific needs. This comprises 57,745 unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) and 8,733 children facing various risks such as child labor, teenage pregnancy, child-headed households, and other vulnerabilities.
- Protection partners are currently delivering case management support for 10,874 cases of children, aimed at addressing their specific protection needs. However, the ratio of caseworkers to children at risk remains notably high, with an average of 178 Child Protection cases managed by a single caseworker, whereas the international standard is set at 1:25 within a given timeframe.
- Identifying child protection cases among new arrivals in a timely manner is a challenge due to limited Child Protection staff, delays in registration and the lack of child-friendly spaces at the collection points and transit centers.
- Parents and caregivers are leaving children alone to search for employment opportunities. This is expected to increase with reduced food assistance and limited livelihood opportunities. This will expose children to various risks. Child Protection Committees have been mobilized to sensitize households on the dangers of leaving children unattended.



### Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

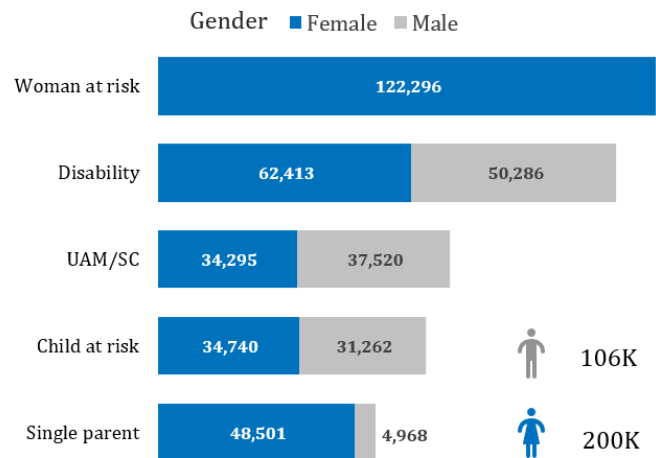
- During the first half of the year, 3,003 GBV incidents were managed from across the operation. 38% of survivors were South Sudanese. 75% of the reported incidents were perpetrated by intimate partners, which may be attributed to the reduction in assistance, limited economic empowerment and negative cultural norms. The top prevalent incidents are psychosocial abuse, denial of resources, physical abuse and rape. Forced marriage/child marriage remains a concern particularly among the South Sudanese population.
- Primary services provided include mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) as well as medical follow-up. While all reported cases receive support, there has been a reduction of services in prevention and response due to insufficient resources. Furthermore, the services available are overstretched, thus affecting the quality of the response. There is also a shortage of caseworkers across the settlements. GBV caseworkers often have between **60 to 75** cases at one time. The maximum ratio should be 1:20. In most Collection Points and Transit Centres, there are no dedicated GBV caseworkers.
- Under-reporting or delayed reporting of GBV incidents remains a major concern. Engagement with the refugee communities aims at raising awareness/disseminating information on available services or referral pathways, and addressing root causes to prevent violence in the first place.



## Persons with Specific Needs (PSNs)

- Protection response for PSNs focuses on identification at the point of reception and fast-tracked service provision and community engagement to provide support. Medical services in coordination with protection staff help to efficiently identify PSNs and provide an appropriate multi-sectoral response. PSNs are counselled to move to the settlements and prioritized for relocation.
- As of the end of June 2023, there were 92,348 PSNs in West Nile settlements, 69,902 in the North, and 48,450 in Mid-West settlements.
- Due to funding constraints, the resources that are available to support PSNs upon arrival are limited to a few selected households who receive shelter construction support. Similarly, PSNs who have stayed in the settlements for protracted period, live in dilapidated shelters and use latrines that require rehabilitation. However, due to funding constraints, the repairs have not been done.
- The largest group of PSNs are women at risk; they face several challenges, including lack of livelihood to support their families with basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and scholastic materials for children.

Top five vulnerabilities from all settlements



## Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

- There are high needs for MHPSS amongst refugee communities in Uganda. 35,000 South Sudanese refugees and over 15,000 refugees in Kyangwali settlement were reached with MHPSS services in 2023, with some receiving full or basic psychosocial assessment, as well as age/gender-specific group counselling, family and/or individual counselling.
- Suicide risk remains a major challenge linked to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs across the Uganda refugee response. Key factors contributing to a higher rate of suicide include traumatic events both before fleeing the home country and after arriving at a refugee settlement, incidents of gender-based violence, extreme poverty, and lack of meaningful access to education and jobs. With the funding constraints faced by the humanitarian actors which affect the service delivery for all sectors, the living conditions of refugees and other individuals in the settlements are likely to worsen.
- One of the strategies adopted by humanitarian partners to address the challenge of mental health is training and orientation of community gatekeepers as well as integration of suicide messages in all other humanitarian actions within the settlements. This is coupled with targeted awareness sessions as well as strengthened implementation of post-interventions for families, individuals, and communities that experience suicidal deaths.



## Education

- While the overall general enrolment increased from 53% in 2022 to 56% by the end of June, 54% of South Sudanese children are not enrolled in pre-primary school and 88% are not enrolled in secondary school.
- The highest rates of children not enrolled/attending due to pregnancy or child marriage were reported among host community households in Rhino Camp (21%), and both refugee and host community households in Bidibidi (16% for each group).
- In Palabek, a large proportion of refugee households reported non-enrolment/attendance due to health-related issues (69%), which could indicate specific health issues in Palabek.
- Many schools remained congested beyond their holding capacity due to the increased number of new arrivals. While the national standard of Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR) is 53:1, some classrooms had 200 students being attended to by one teacher. The classroom-to-student and student-to-teacher ratio at all levels does not meet the national standards.
- Due to limited infrastructure and funding gaps, refugee response partners have adopted the double shift school system in some locations to increase the absorption capacity and available facilities in schools.
- Education infrastructure remained inadequate, some of the classrooms in the settlements were held in temporary structures and were dilapidated. The congestion in the schools has stretched the WASH facilities in schools and there is a gap of sufficient water, latrines, and bathing spaces especially in the boarding schools.



Children studying in congested classrooms at Amuru Primary School in Rhino Camp Settlement. @UNHCR

## Identified needs across the Settlements

As Uganda continues to receive new arrivals, adequate land needs to be identified and allocated through formal arrangements to relocate new arrivals - especially in the North and West Nile settlements. New arrivals have been allocated plots in the existing old zones of the settlements. This limits the land for cultivation, creates tensions amongst some refugees and complicates follow-up on health, sanitation, and protection interventions. The situation is further exacerbated by the reduction of food assistance where after three months the new arrivals are provided with reduced food rations of 60%, which likely reduce

further depending on their vulnerability classification as part of the food prioritization exercise. The majority of refugees across the operation (82%) only receive 30% rations.

By the end of Q2 2023, 22% (\$191.5 million) of the total Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan (UCRRP) (US\$ 846 million) funding requirements have been covered, with only 10% going towards the South Sudan response and 16% to the DRC response.

As a result, there remain multiple gaps which need to be addressed, including:

- Provide children with alternative care arrangements, as well as foster families.
- Child-friendly spaces need to be established in the reception facilities.
- Need for adequate infrastructure in the areas of relocation, including shelters, communal bath shelters and lighting to reduce risk of GBV.
- Increase the number of dedicated staff for MHPSS in the settlements and transit facilities.
- Increase access to education, including cash support to pay school fees, as well as develop school infrastructure (classrooms, latrines, teacher accommodation).
- Provide essential medicines and expand health facilities, especially in new zones.
- Support for PSNs who have been identified, including with shelter construction aligned to their needs, mobility devices and hearing/visual aids.
- Resume distribution of female hygiene kits.
- Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) —including materials and training for the communities as well as refugee response partners.
- In the West Nile and North, security of land rights is a major concern due to the communal land ownership system and informal land transactions between refugees and landlords. There is a need to formalize the transactions through the engagement of lawyers.
- Increased access to WASH facilities in all receiving settlements.
- Enhance livelihood opportunities including income generating activities for refugees.

**Working in Partnership (West Nile and Northern Uganda):** OPM, District Local Governments, National Forestry Authority, National Identification and Registration Authority, UNHCR, Action Against Hunger (ACF), ACODEV, AFOD, AIRD, AmRef, AVSI, CAFOMI, CARE, Caritas, CESVI, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), FAWE, Finn Church Aid (FCA), ILA Uganda, International Rescue Committee (IRC), JEEP, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), HANDLE Uganda, KFUK-KFUM Global, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Finnish Refugee Council, Food for Hungry, Medical Teams International (MTI), Mercy Beyond Borders (MBB), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI), Palm Corps, Plan International, Refugee Law Protect, Right to Play, Save the Children International, Terra Renaissance, THRIVE Gulu, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), Tutapona, Uganda Red Cross Society, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, War Child, Windle Trust International, WFP, World Vision International, WORUDET.

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