

As of April 2026, Uganda hosts approximately 2 million refugees. 51% of these are children in need of protection, education, and psychosocial support. UNHCR works in partnership with the Government of Uganda, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, development partners and local communities primarily, to ensure the protection of refugee children in Uganda.

The vision is, by 2030, refugees and host communities in Uganda will have equitable and sustainable access to quality essential services, enabled by resilient, inclusive, and well-coordinated national and local systems.



Zyanti Salama, a seven-year-old refugee washes her clothes at Kabazana Reception Centre in Nakivale Refugee Settlement. ©UNHCR/ Frank Walusimbi

CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS



Case Management / Best Interests Procedure (BIP)



Community based child protection



Integrated Child Protection and MHPSS



Youth Programming

2,011,234

Total Refugee and Asylum Seekers in Uganda

51% of the total population are children

1,014,914

Total Number of Children

 49%	 51%
Girls 500,532	Boys 514,382

84,472

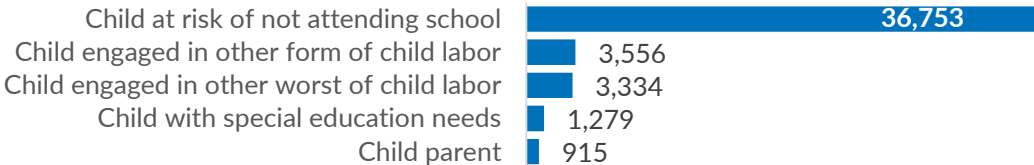
Children with Specific Needs

 52%	 48%
---	---

 30,460
 Total Children with disability

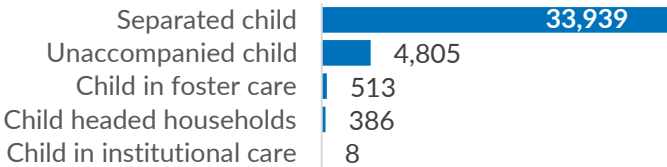
46,500

Children at risk



39,303

Unaccompanied or separated child



PROSPECT SUCCESS STORY | Refugee Children Inclusion into National System

Between 2024 and 2025, UNHCR Uganda, with support from the PROSPECTS partnership funded by the Government of the Netherlands, strengthened the inclusion of refugee child protection and GBV services in national systems by integrating refugee issues into the National Development Plan (NDP IV) and supporting refugee children’s access to complementary child protection services, including Best Interests Procedures. UNHCR also supported the piloting of government-led case management for refugees and host communities in Kampala through Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and Kampala Capital City Centre Authority (KCCA).

The successful pilot demonstrated the feasibility of locally led protection services and led to Kampala Capital City Centre Authority (KCC) formally integrating refugee inclusion into its 2025/26–2029/30 strategic plan and allocating resources to scale up case management across three city divisions. In total, 2,913 survivors and vulnerable persons accessed MHPSS, justice, health, and CP/GBV services, including rescue from forced marriages.



Some of the learners from the Somali community in Kampala participate in a Journey of Life (JOL) session at Nakivubo Blue Primary School. JOL is a community-based therapy programme designed to support children and caregivers in need of MHPSS. ©UNHCR/REPPSI

Key Child Protection Concerns & Trends for 2025

Severe Operational & Staffing Constraints

Caseworker Ratio: Due to funding shortfalls and subsequent partner staffing cuts, the current caseworker-to-child-at-risk ratio stands at **1:275**. This vastly exceeds the global standard of **1:25**, severely limiting the capacity for safe assessments, regular follow-ups, and comprehensive interventions. UNHCR and partners continues with advocacy and prioritizing high-risk cases while strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms and optimizing the use of available caseworkers.

Education and Out-of-School Protection Risks

School Non-Attendance: A total of 87,254 children are currently believed to be out of school, disproportionately impacting girls (50,852 girls vs. 36,402 boys).

Consequences: School dropouts—particularly adolescent girls leaving during upper primary education—directly correlate with heightened exposures to child labor, early marriage, trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

Key interventions aimed at removing barriers to access continues to be implemented. These include provision of MHM support for girls, scholarships and scholastic materials as well as alternative learning opportunities directly address school non-attendance and help mitigate risks of child labor, early marriage, trafficking, and exploitation particularly among adolescent girls.

Systemic Barriers to Birth Registration

Registration Gap: between 2008 and 2025, 247,097 children were born to refugee parents in Uganda. While NIRA has issued 202,277 birth certificates, **an estimated 44,820 children remain unregistered.**

Challenges: Progress has largely focused on children aged 0–5 years, leaving older children, particularly those requiring late registration, at heightened risk of exclusion from civil registration systems and subsequent national identity documentation in the home country (should they return).

UNHCR has maintained engagement with NIRA and OPM to expand service coverage, and ensure inclusive policy for refugees, including older children born in Uganda, with consideration for simplified procedures and flexible documentation requirements for their late registration.

 **Child Labor: Positive Reduction:** As of December 2025, 8,031 children were reported in child labor, marking a 7% decrease compared to 2024. This positive trend is driven by education sponsorships, family reunification, protective-

measures, and age transitions into adulthood. Strengthened continuous advocacy with the government to end child labour.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)



Suicide and Self-Harm: In 2025, 23 child suicide cases were recorded (18 attempts, 5 deaths), representing 12.9% of all suicide cases nationwide, with boys comprising the majority. Trend: While this averages out to a tragic loss of life every two months, the annual trend shows a notable 39.5% reduction in child suicide cases between 2024 and 2025. UNHCR and partners are strengthening integrated Child Protection and MHPSS services into broader child protection systems including the delivery of targeted interventions such as Journey of Life sessions for children experiencing psychosocial distress both in and out of school, focusing on building self-esteem and coping mechanisms.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Target Demographics: Children constitute 5% of all reported GBV incidents, with adolescent and newly arrived refugee girls facing the highest vulnerabilities (including rape, sexual violence, exploitation, and early marriage).

Drivers: Risks are heavily compounded by poverty, harmful social norms, and economic/food insecurity, which often force girls into hazardous environments (e.g., collecting firewood) to meet basic needs. Through programmes such as Spotlight, targeted adolescent-focused interventions are strengthening GBV prevention and response within the refugee response by addressing underlying drivers such as poverty, harmful norms, and economic vulnerability, while delivering integrated protection and empowerment support that combines risk mitigation, gender-transformative social norms change, and safe access to services that promotes the prevention of risks affecting adolescent and newly arrived refugee girls.

For more information please contact:

Gloria Muleba Mukama, Snr Community Based Protection Officer, mukama@unhcr.org

Phanice Were, Associate Child Protection Officer, werep@unhcr.org



With thanks
to our donors
and partners