



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

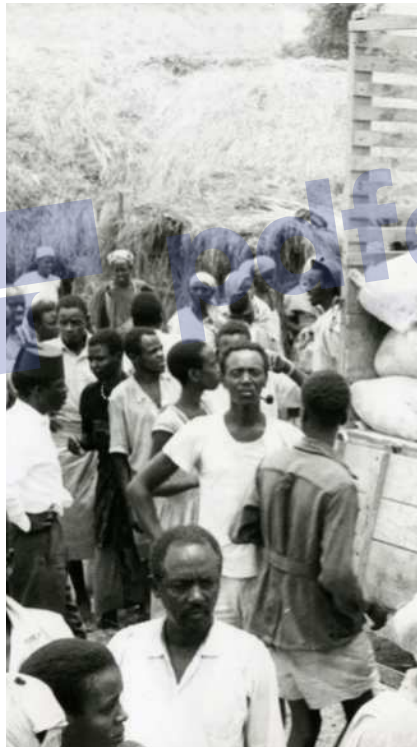
# Uganda's Refugee Response

# OUR STORY

BASED ON THE FACTS AND EXPERIENCES

# what's inside

## HISTORY



## POLICY

## BEST PRACTICES



## CONSTRAINTS



Between 1942 - 1944, 7000 Polish refugees mainly women and children were received in Uganda during World War II. They were settled in two camps; Nyabyeya Camp in Masindi and Koja Camp in Mukono District.

*Photo credits: Unknown*



FACT | 1 |

## Uganda has a long history of hosting refugees and asylum seekers since 1940s

For several decades, Uganda has been generously hosting refugees and asylum seekers from 13 countries, many conflict-affected, in its neighborhood, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Rwanda, Eritrea and Burundi. On average, Uganda has hosted over 160,000 refugees per year since 1959, a number which fluctuates proportionally to security conditions in neighbouring countries.



Commonwealth Resort, 19th - 23rd October

African Union addressing the challenge of forced displacement in Africa



YOWERI KAGAME MUSEVENI  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
UGANDA

H.E. MRS DOLLY JOINER  
CHAIRPERSON  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Uganda / AU Summit / Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni and AU Commission Chairperson Dolly Joiner during a joint press briefing soon after signing Draft AU Convention on protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) and the Draft Kampala Declaration. UNHCR / J. Akena / October 2009.

Photo credits: UNHCR Media

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challenge

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FACT | 2 |

## Uganda has a progressive refugee policy

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Uganda's refugee laws are among the most progressive in the world. Uganda's progressive approach started in 1951, when the Government of Uganda signed the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as its 1967 Protocol, committing to protect persons fleeing from persecution; the commitment was renewed in 1969 with the OAU Convention, granting *prima facie* refugee status to refugees fleeing from conflicts. Many more conventions and agreements have since been signed showing Uganda's commitment to address the plight of refugees and asylum seekers.

In the newly established Pagarinya 2 camp in Adjumani District, northern Uganda, a group of young South Sudanese refugee children are enjoying the freedom to run and laugh in the sun. They recently crossed the border to escape new outbreaks of violence.

*Photo credits: UNHCR Media*





**FACT | 3 |**

## Uganda is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa and 3rd largest in the world

Currently, Uganda hosts over 1.3 million refugees making it Africa's largest refugee hosting country and one of the five largest refugee hosting countries in the world. Most recently, throughout 2016-2018, Uganda was impacted by three parallel emergencies from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi. In view of the ongoing conflicts and famine vulnerabilities in the Great Lakes Region, more refugee influxes and protracted refugee situations are anticipated in the foreseeable future.



Refugees fleeing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo arrive in Sebagoro, Uganda where they will be taken by bus to Kyangwali refugee settlement.

**Photo credits: UNHCR Media**



**FACT | 4 |**

## Uganda has an open-door refugee policy

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Despite the scale of the concurrent emergencies, Uganda has kept an open door policy to refugees fleeing their countries of origin seeking protection. Uganda's open borders policy is crucial for the life and protection of refugees, ensuring access to the country and avoiding the risks related to repatriation and refusal of entry. Many Ugandans are deeply proud of the country's unique stance toward refugees - the spirit of brotherhood. It is a common message that no one chooses to be a refugee and therefore they should be welcomed and treated like brothers and sisters.





Children, both biological and adopted, stand outside the shelter of their mother, Chandia Queen, who farms a parcel of land at Oligi settlement in Uganda.

Photo credits: **UNHCR Media**

FACT | 5 |

## Refugees live alongside the locals in Settlements

In Uganda, refugees are hosted in designated areas called 'settlements' where they are allocated pieces of land to put up shelters, grow food and start their own businesses. The settlement approach facilitates integration with the host community, promotes self-reliance and creates a conducive environment for pursuing development-oriented planning for refugees and host communities. The idea is that in five years the refugees will no longer need to depend on humanitarian aid.



Chandia Queen is one of many South Sudanese refugee farmers growing rice and other crops at Oligi settlement in Uganda. She has leased a parcel of land, which she and her children work on to support their large family, including her own children and many she has adopted.

*Photo credits: UNHCR Media*





FACT | 6 |

## Refugee empowerment begins with the host communities

Through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the Government has given renewed and more prominent visibility to host communities, catalyzing shifts in the geographical focus of Uganda's refugee response from the settlement location to the area that is hosting them. Uganda was able to access a soft loan of 50million USD from the World Bank over 5 years through its Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP) exclusively to benefit the host communities.

Meet Gladys Acacio, 25, a South Sudanese refugee, living in Pagirinya settlement in Adjumani. Gladys has recently graduated in motorcycle repair training, a trait that is mostly considered an unconventional for women but Gladys hopes to train in motor vehicle repair and even learn how to ride.

*Photo credits: UNHCR Media*





FACT | 7 |

## Refugees have the freedom of movement and a right to work

The Ugandan government provides refugees with the right to work and set up businesses, freedom of movement and equal access to Government-provided social services such as education and healthcare that encourages economic interactions between refugees and their host communities. Settlements located in even the most remote parts of North-West Uganda host vibrant markets where refugees can sell what they manage to grow on their government-provided plots of land.

When she was in grade five, Christine Night's parents both died and she dropped out of school because her ailing grandmother could not afford her education. At Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda, she's been given the opportunity to study again, thanks to UNHCR's Accelerated Learning Programme.

*Photo credits: UNHCR Media*



**FACT | 8 |**

## Refugees have access to government-provided education services

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Out of the over 1.3 million refugees, 60 percent are children, these refugee children are included in the national education system and have access to the free primary education. This has put further strain on already limited resources in host communities. To address these huge needs, the Government of Uganda, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), working closely with its humanitarian and development partners, developed the multi-year Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (2018-2021). It is the first of its kind worldwide and sets out exactly how refugee and host community children can be provided with quality education.



Maternity ward at Nyumanzi Integrated Health Centre for both Ugandan nationals and refugees from South Sudan.

**Photo credits: UNHCR Media**



LifeElement



**FACT | 9 |**

## Refugees have access to government provided healthcare services

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Uganda includes refugees into its national health service delivery system. The Government of Uganda, under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, developed and launched the Uganda Health Sector Integrated Refugee Response Plan in January 2019. The Plan sets out how to realize a vision where the over 1.3 million refugees and over 7 million host community across refugee hosting districts have access to quality health services. It entails a paradigm shift from a mainly humanitarian focus to developing integrated health services for both refugees and host communities over a five-year period (2019-2024) for long-term sustainability.

The 6th CRRF Steering Group meeting in Arua District. One of the 12 refugee hosting districts in Uganda.

*Photo credits: Office of the Prime Minister*



FACT | 10 |

## Government is leading coordination of refugee matters through the CRRF

Having shaped the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), Uganda was one of the first countries to pilot the implementation of the CRRF in 2017. The CRRF Steering Group, established at the end of 2017, is the main policy and decision-making body for the comprehensive refugee response in Uganda bringing together Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, international bilateral and multilateral partners, international and local NGOs, the private sector, refugees and host communities.



Susan Duku, the Refugee Engagement Forum representative, speaking in the CRRF Steering Group meeting on behalf of refugees in Uganda.  
*Photo credits: Office of the Prime Minister*





**FACT | 11 |**

## Refugees participate in decision-making at the national level

In Uganda, refugees are intentionally included in making decisions that affect them. In October 2018, the Refugee Engagement Forum was constituted from the existing refugee leadership structures at a local level to ensure refugee participation in the decision-making processes in Uganda. The group convenes at the national level four times a year and the elected representatives participate in the high level CRRF Steering Group meetings.

Newly arrived Congolese refugees collect hot meals at UNHCR's Kagoma reception centre in Kyangwali district, Uganda. The reception centre has the capacity to accommodate 2,000 people at a time, but is often overcrowded and congested.

*Photo credits: UNHCR Media*





FACT | 12 |

## Refugee are included in national planning and budgeting frameworks

Uganda is applying an integrated approach, where refugees are included in Uganda's national systems through the second National Development Plan 2015/16 -2019/20 (NDP II) for the period running to 2020 through the Settlement Transformative Agenda. Refugee-hosting districts are now recognized under the vulnerability criteria of Uganda's NDPII, making them a priority for development interventions.



*DRDIP Project Manager (right) Charles Bafaki briefing the Right Honorobale Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda about the various DRDIP Sub projects in Kamwenge District.  
Photo credits: Office of the Prime Minister*

FACT | 13 |

## Refugees and host communities have been empowered through DRDIP

The Government of Uganda with support from the World Bank is implementing the Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP). The Project is intended to improve access to social services, expand economic opportunities and enhance environmental management for host and forcibly displaced households in the refugee hosting districts. The project is empowering communities by establishing community institutions for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and oversight of sub-projects.



UEFA coaches from Italy's Sampdoria club train refugees and host communities in Arua.

**Photo credits: UNHCR Media**



FACT | 14 |

## There is a new way of working within the humanitarian and development nexus of the refugee response

In Uganda, efforts to achieve self-reliance and bring social development to Ugandan nationals in refugee hosting districts dates back to the 1990s, with a major step taken in 2015, when the Government of Uganda introduced the Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA). Efforts to support Uganda's STA were mobilized as early as in 2015, including through a strategic framework called Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE). These foundational building blocks predate and inspired the NY Declaration and its CRRF. The adoption of the CRRF allowed space for both the humanitarian and development partners to work together in a longer-term perspective strengthening the service provision in refugee-hosting districts for the benefit of refugees and host communities.



Waving their forms, recently arrived South Sudanese refugees demands to be registered at Imvepi reception center in Arua district in Northern Uganda near South Sudan 1 May, 2017.

**Photo credits: UNHCR Media**





**FACT | 15 |**

## There is strengthened accountability and a renewed focus on monitoring Uganda's refugee response

To ensure accountability, in 2018, the Office of the Prime Minister, with support from UNHCR and other actors, completed a nationwide verification exercise where the entire refugee population was biometrically enrolled in the Biometric Information Management Systems (BIMS), a robust biometric system that prevents multiple registration, and their data verified in ProGres v4. A framework of collaboration with the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) has been established to ensure the integrity of the refugee database.



## CONCLUSION

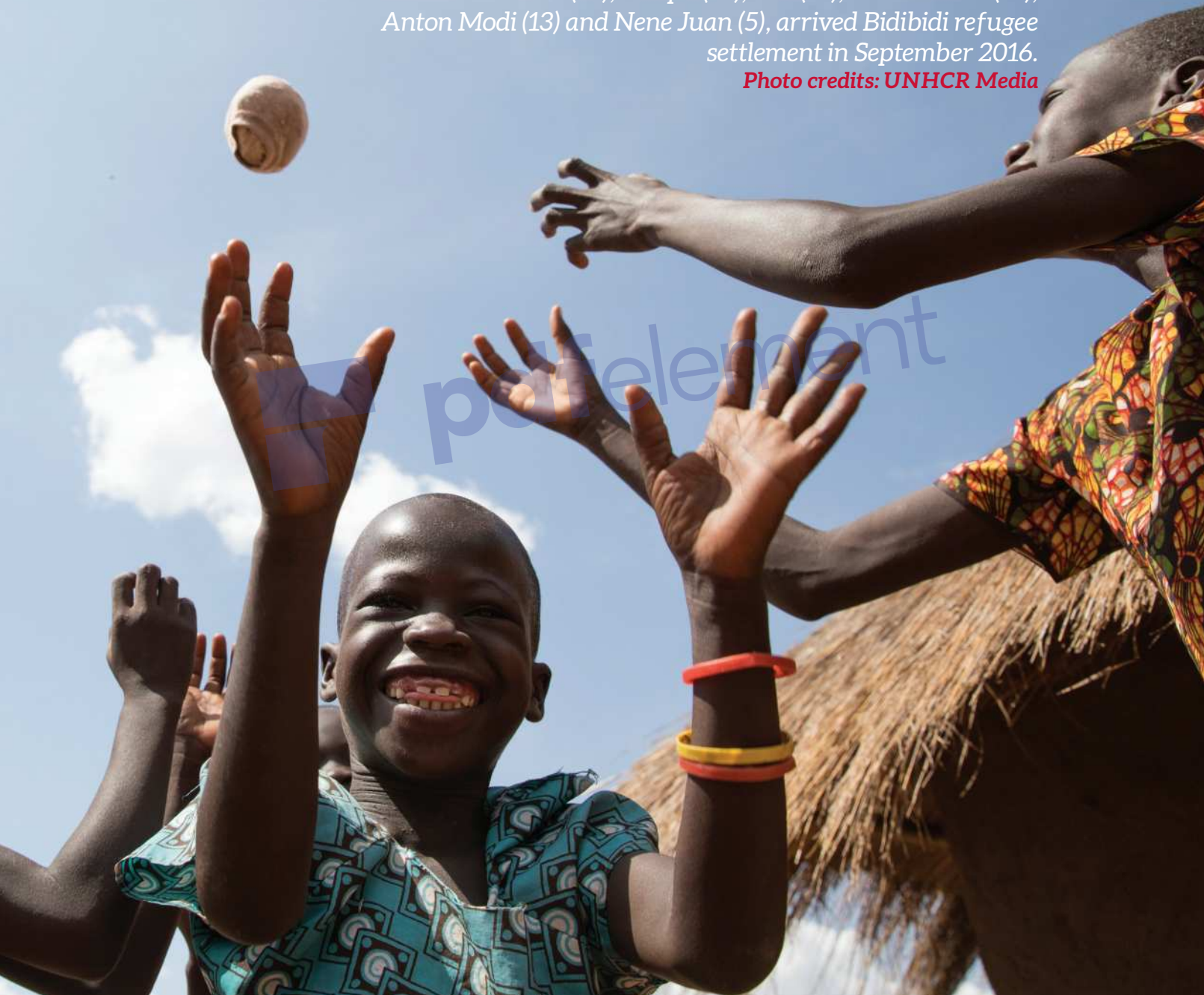
Immense support has been received from partners towards Uganda's refugee response. However, Uganda's response remains chronically underfunded. Without more support from the international community, and investments by existing and new partners including the private sector, Uganda's ability to maintain this model is at risk. Uganda has fulfilled its obligations as a refugee hosting country and equally the international community should meet its obligations. The international community can help by;

- Focusing on addressing root causes of displacement;
- Supporting Uganda's efforts in the implementation of the Global Compact of Refugees and its CRRF - through new funding;
- Aligning of pledges/contributions towards Uganda's costed response plans;
- Increasing investments in countries of origin to make conditions favorable for safe return of refugees.



*Yahaya and Mike's families at Bidibidi refugee settlement. South Sudanese refugee Mike Duke, his wife Kiden Mary and 6 children Hellen (21), Joseph (18), Iddi (15), Wani Moses (15), Anton Modi (13) and Nene Juan (5), arrived Bidibidi refugee settlement in September 2016.*

***Photo credits: UNHCR Media***



For more information please visit:

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Find us at:

6th Floor, OPM Block, Yusuf Lule Road

P.O. Box 341, Kampala. Clement Hill Road

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