

Photo by Camy Watson/CIH/ICM

**Reducing Environmental Degradation (RED) in refugee context in Uganda**  
**Brief Series No. 1**

# Response to increased environmental degradation and promotion of alternative energy sources in refugee hosting districts in Uganda

February 2023



## Background

The refugee response in West Nile region faces the challenges of a rapid population influx, overburdened services and over-exploitation of natural resources including woody biomass for fuel and construction materials. Presence of the refugee community has increased pressure on natural resources which already face risk of degradation from use by the local community. The situation is made complex due to the high refugee population, with numbers almost equalling the size of the host communities. For example, in the Rhino Camp, refugees have been estimated to form 44% of the human population in the area (GFA Consulting Group GmbH 2021).

Between 2014 and 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations reported that 14% of woody biomass had been lost within 5 km of the refugee settlement boundaries, with additional loss and degradation in an extended 15 km buffer. At a national scale, Uganda's forest cover decreased from 24% in 1994 to 9% in 2019. The demand for, and overuse of natural resources, particularly wood, is driven by their use as construction materials and cooking fuel, and the utilization of land traditionally under forest as agricultural land. Over 93% of refugee and host community households are reliant on wood for cooking fuel, leading to calls for innovations on sustainable biomass production and efficient utilization. Consideration of gender equity and social inclusion is key, as women and girls are disproportionately burdened with domestic chores, including collection of firewood, farming and cooking, which often put them at risk of further human rights violations. To effectively include women's needs and their potential in natural resource management, their participation in management structures should be well understood and enhanced.

## About the Reducing Environmental Degradation (RED) project

### Project goal

**Project title:** Response to Increased Environmental Degradation and Promotion of Alternative Energy Sources in Refugee Hosting Districts

**Funding:** EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF).

**Funding:** Gender scientist supported through CIFOR-ICRAF by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project #PEN04724 and Accession #1020895.

**Project time frame:** January 2021 – January 2025.

**Partners:** Save the Children (SC) | Enabel | Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP) |

The project goal is to contribute to increasing environmental protection and forest restoration and to improve sustainable energy and alternative livelihoods for displaced populations and their host communities in the districts of Adjumani, Arua, Kiryandongo and Yumbe.

## Expected outcomes

- Improved access to sufficient, healthier, sustainable alternative sources of energy; increased capacity to construct and maintain these; decreased dependence on energy from unsustainable and unregulated sources for households; and fewer causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities
- Strengthened energy, environment and climate action programming, coordination and capacity at local, district government and sub-county levels.

## Expected outputs

1. Inclusive market systems are assessed for alternative energy sources within and around the target locations to determine trends and gaps in environmental and energy usage (in line with the Water and Environment Sector Refugee Response Plan (WESRRP)).
2. Social Behaviour Change (SBC) strategy is developed that provides information and tailored communication messaging for raising awareness and providing training to target groups in refugee settlements and host communities, including adolescents, youth and women.
3. Alternative green livelihood opportunities are created for refugee and host adolescents, youth and women (in line with WESRRP).
4. Energy-efficient stoves and heat-retaining bags are constructed and/or distributed to households and institutions within refugee settlements and the host community, prioritizing households with vulnerable women and children (in line with WESRRP).
5. Alternative sources of energy are accessed by households and communities.
6. Well-functioning conflict resolution mechanisms are supported and lead to decreased incidences of conflict related to natural resources.
7. Local government has improved long-term capacity to design and implement gender-responsive environment, energy and climate change action programming focused on empowering girls and women.
8. Policy guidelines are developed, tools promoted and long-term capacity to programme and implement community-based natural resource management and renewable energy is developed, and their use promoted.
9. Mechanisms/structures are operationalized that support improved coordination for responsive actions on energy, environmental conservation and climate change at local government level.
10. Participation of women in coordination mechanisms/structures is increased at local government and community levels.



## Target beneficiaries

Direct target beneficiaries are 234,800 refugees and host populations including:

- 3,000 (1,400 males, 1,600 females) adolescents, youth and women to access green income-generating activities;
- 44,000 female-headed households (60%) including young mothers and persons with disabilities – 231,000 people will be identified to receive appropriate energy-efficient technologies;
- 100 local government (LG) employees, 100 personnel from the local environment and energy-centric civil society organizations (CSOs) and 30 private sector companies, thereby strengthening joint action aimed at improving knowledge on the availability of technologies.

Another 2,128,500 refugees and members of the host population are anticipated to be indirect beneficiaries in the selected districts that include local government, the national government, water catchment management zones, children and youth in schools and trading centres.

## Project sites

The project is being implemented in five districts (see Figure 1). Table 1 lists the districts, sub-counties and refugee settlements. These districts host a total of 701,821 refugees, primarily from South Sudan.

**Table 1. Project districts, sub-counties and refugee settlements**

District	Sub-counties	Refugee settlement
Yumbe	Romogi	Bidibidi
	Kululu	
Leju	Bileafe	Imvepi
	Leju Town Council	
Madi Okollo	Pawor	Rhino
Kiryandongo	Kicwabugingo	Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement
	Mutunda	
Adjumani	Ukusijoni	Adjumani Refugee Settlement
	Pachara	
	Ciforo	
	Itirikwa	

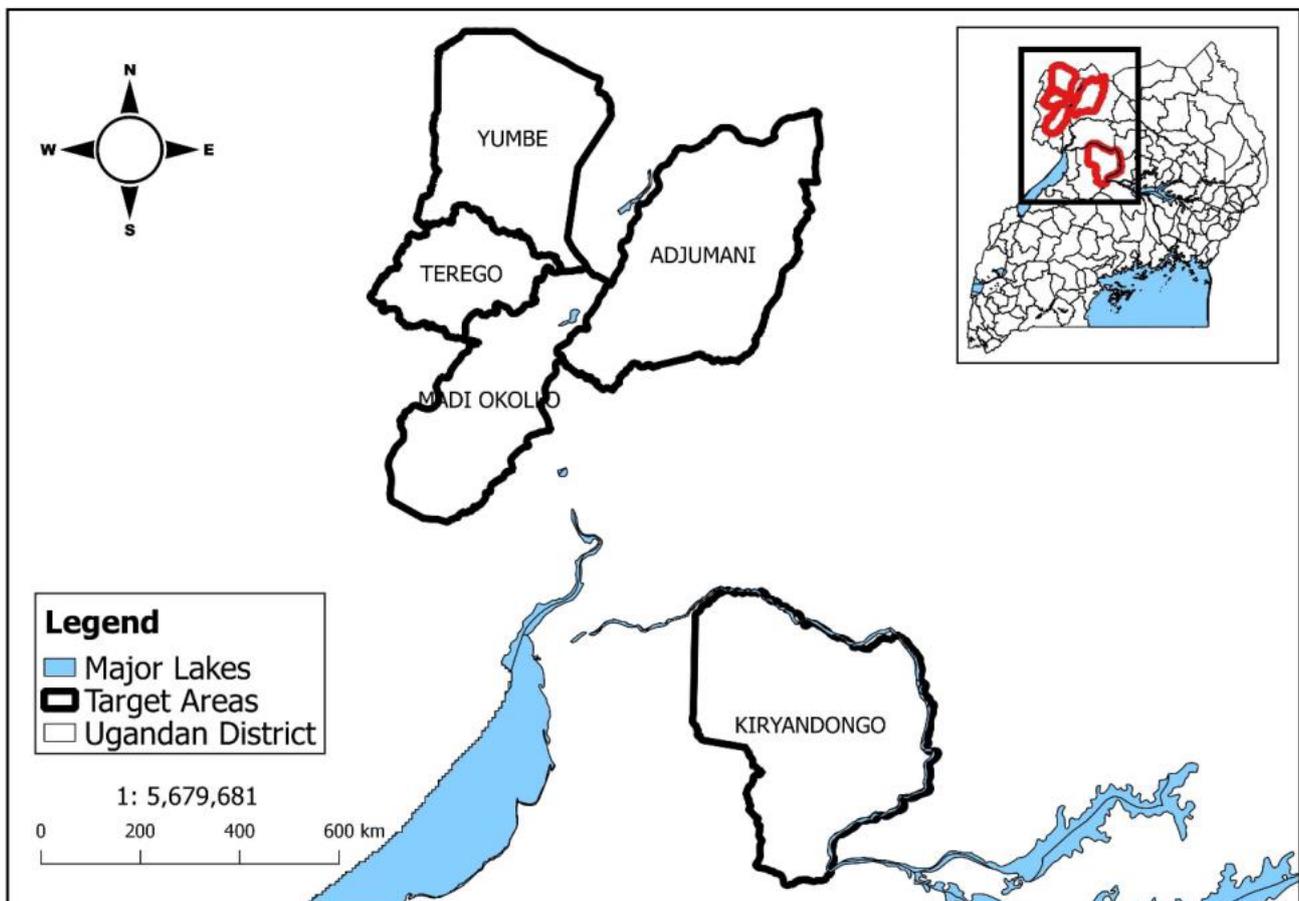


Figure 1. Map showing the project areas



## CIFOR-ICRAF's role in the project

CIFOR-ICRAF leads in the delivery of two main outputs:

- Local governments have improved long-term capacity to design and implement gender-responsive environmental programming focused on empowering girls and women.
- At local government and community levels, there is increased participation of women in coordination mechanisms/structures.

The institution also contributes to the achievement of other outputs.

## What is CIFOR-ICRAF?

World Agroforestry (ICRAF), now operating in a merger with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), is a centre of scientific and development excellence that harnesses the benefits of trees and forests for people and the environment. Specifically, CIFOR-ICRAF delivers actionable evidence and solutions to transform how land and renewable resources are used and how food is produced. These efforts contribute to finding solutions to five key global challenges, namely: deforestation and biodiversity loss; a climate in crisis; transforming food systems; unsustainable supply and value chains; and extreme inequality. Our merged institution (CIFOR-ICRAF) works to deliver transformative science to create a future with healthy, biodiverse and productive landscapes – for the benefit of people and the environment. To learn more about CIFOR-ICRAF, please visit our website: <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/>.

CIFOR-ICRAF is currently implementing the following projects in Uganda:

- Response to Increased Environmental Degradation and Promotion of Alternative Energy Sources in Refugee Hosting Districts (RED Project). <https://www.worldagroforestry.org/project/response-increased-environmental-degradation-and-promotion-alternative-energy-sources> (Ongoing)
- Harnessing the Potential of Trees-on-Farms for Meeting National and Global Biodiversity Targets <https://www.worldagroforestry.org/project/harnessing-potential-trees-farms-meeting-national-and-global-biodiversity-targets> (Ongoing)
- Beyond the Static – Operationalizing Earth Observation Assisted Frameworks for Assessment and Monitoring of Ecosystem Health in IFAD ASAP Project Areas. (Ongoing)
- Agroforestry with Refugees and Hosts in NW Uganda <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/agroforestry-with-refugees-and-hosts-in-nw-uganda/reports/> (Ongoing)
- Gender-Responsive Innovations for Soil Rehabilitation, Alternative Fuel and Agriculture for Resilient Refugee

and Host Community Settlements in East Africa. <https://worldagroforestry.org/project/gender-responsive-innovations-soil-rehabilitation-alternative-fuel-and-agriculture> and <http://rrr-refugee.iwmi.org/> (Ongoing)

- Governing Multifunctional Landscapes (GML). <https://www.cifor.org/gml>
- Guidelines for a Landscape Approach in Displacement Settings (GLADS) in Cameroon, Kenya, and Uganda by CIFOR-ICRAF. US\$600,000, 2021–2022 supported by the European Commission. <https://www.cifor.org/gml/glads/> All these projects fall under the refugee-hosting engagement landscape (EL) initiative of CIFOR-ICRAF (Laird et al. 2022).

## Links to other CIFOR-ICRAF and partner projects

The RED project is linked to the ongoing project on Resource, Recovery and Reuse (RRR) in Refugee Settlements in Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda) and supported by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), Germany. Further support for the gender researcher from Pennsylvania State University is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Hatch Appropriations under Project #PEN04724 and Accession #1020895. The project pilots and scales gender-responsive circular economy solutions for food and energy security and sustainable socio-ecological systems.

The project is also linked with the Agroforestry with Refugees and Hosts in NW Uganda project, which promotes tree growing among refugees and host communities in the Imvepi and Rhino Camps. This project runs the Community Agroforestry Learning Centre in Imvepi sub-county, Terego district. For the past four years, ICRAF Uganda in collaboration with other partners has played a key role in testing the potential of different agroforestry technologies and practices among refugees and host communities in the West Nile region (Table 2).

## ICRAF project team

Mary Njenga – Research Scientist, Bioenergy also supporting gender work, and the project's Principal Investigator (PI); Prossy Kyomuhendo – Scientist and Program Manager; Ruth Mendum – Director for Gender, Energy and Security, Ag Sciences Global, College of Agricultural Sciences, Pennsylvania State University supporting gender integration and funded by USDA NIFA; Harriet Kabasindi – Researcher; Fatimah Kobugabe – Researcher; Erik Francis Acanakwo – Uganda Country Representative; Clement Okia – Associate Scientist in the project; Joel Buyinza – Associate Scientist in the project; and Cathy Watson – Chief of Partnerships and supporting communications.



Table 2. Partners and roles

Partner	Role	Geographical area of operation
Save the Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a comprehensive SBC strategy</li> <li>• Constructing and/or distributing energy-efficient stoves and heat-retaining bags</li> <li>• Creating alternative income-generating opportunities</li> <li>• Ensuring access to alternative sources of energy</li> <li>• Supporting well-functioning conflict-resolution mechanisms</li> </ul>	Terego, Madi Okollo, Kiryandongo and Yumbe
Enabel – the Belgian Development Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carrying out inclusive alternative- energy market systems assessment</li> <li>• Developing policies, tools, guidelines and capacity to implement community-based environmental programming</li> <li>• Operationalizing mechanisms/structures for improved coordination</li> </ul>	Yumbe, Adjumani, Terego, Madi Okollo & Kiryandongo
JEEP – Joint Energy and Environment Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructing and/or distributing energy-efficient stoves and heat-retaining bags</li> <li>• Creating alternative income-generating opportunities</li> <li>• Ensuring access to alternative sources of energy</li> <li>• Supporting well-functioning conflict-resolution mechanisms</li> </ul>	Adjumani

## References

GFA Consulting Group GmbH. 2021. SFD Final Report Rhino Refugee Settlement and Host Community Uganda. Accessed 19 October 2022. <https://www.susana.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources-and-publications/library/details/4401#>

Laird S, Awono A, Okia C, Anaya GA, Ingram V, Sola P, Watson C, Muthuri C, Gilruth P, Mendum R and Njenga M. 2022. Social and environmental transformation of refugee and hosting community landscapes in Central and Eastern Africa. Occasional Paper 229. Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). <https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/8420>



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### Project website:

<https://worldagroforestry.org/project/response-increased-environmental-degradation-and-promotion-alternative-energy-sources>.

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### CIFOR-ICRAF

CIFOR-ICRAF envisions a world in which people enjoy livelihoods supported by healthy, productive landscapes made resilient through the transformative power of forests, trees and agroforestry. CIFOR and ICRAF are CGIAR Research Centers.

