



COMPREHENSIVE REFUGEE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK: THE UGANDA MODEL

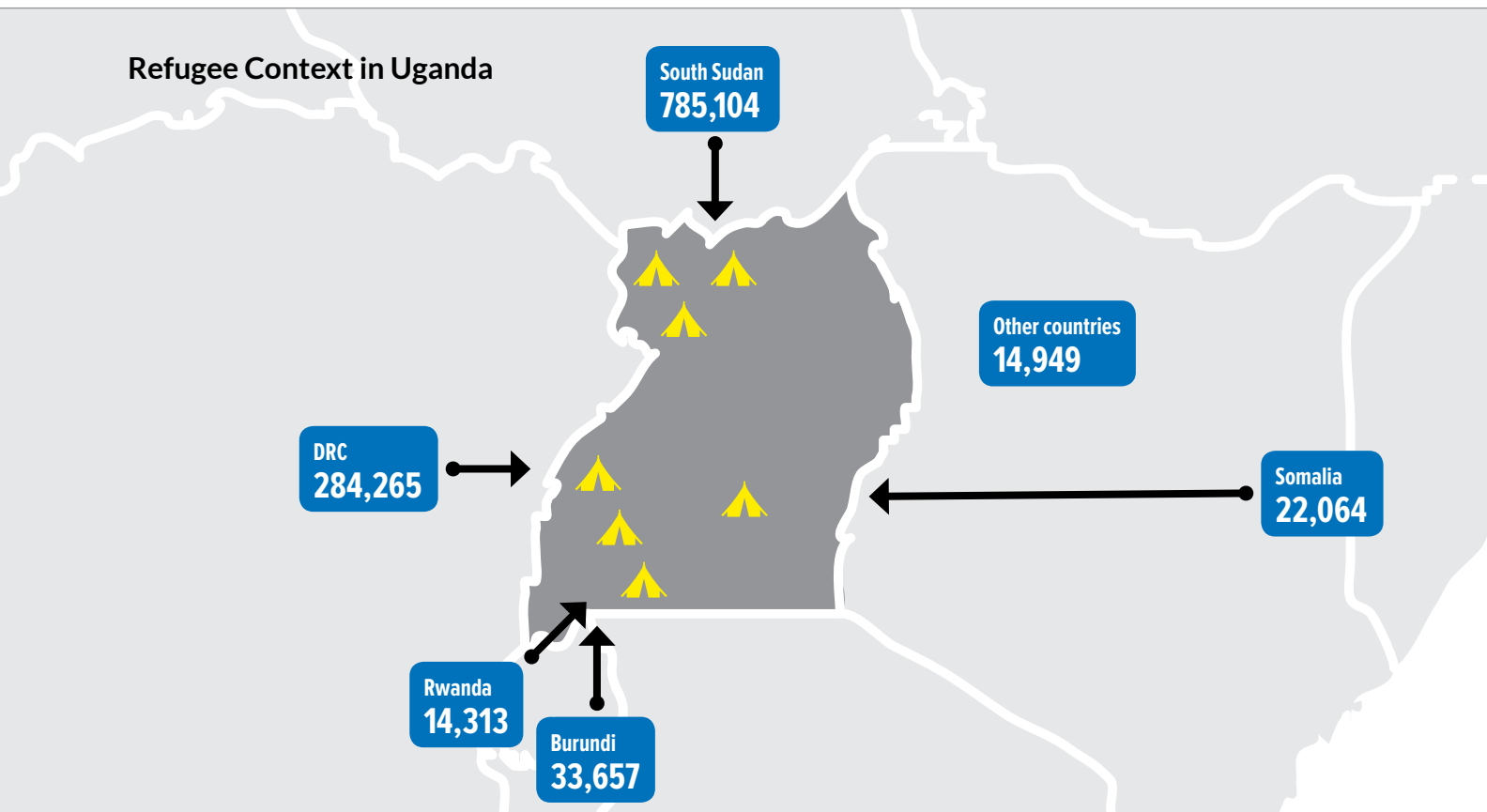
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 Uganda: Refugee children from the Democratic Republic of Congo arrive at Kagoma Reception Centre. © UNHCR/Duniya Aslam Khan



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Refugee Context in Uganda

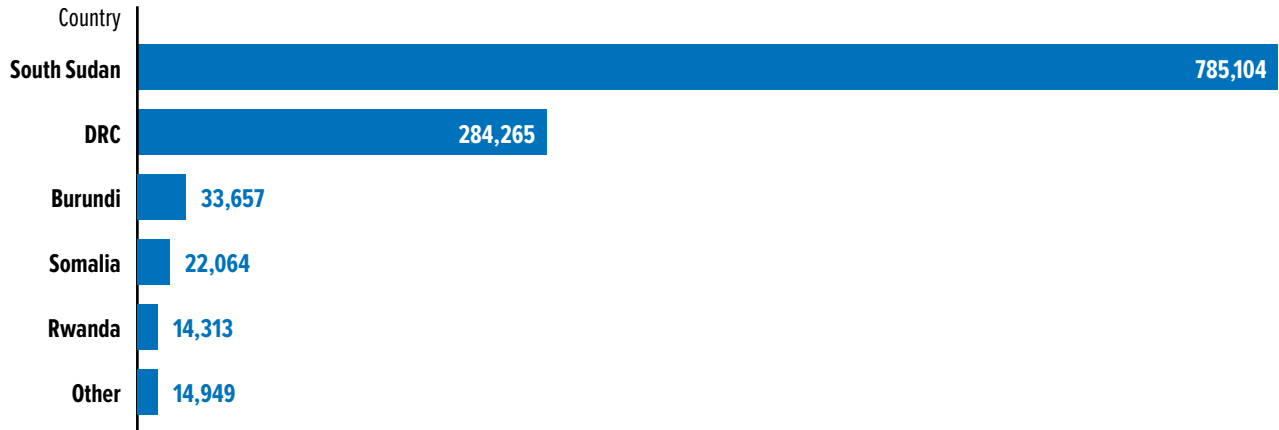
With a long history of hosting refugees and asylum seekers since 1959, Uganda is currently **Africa's largest refugee hosting country**. At the end of October 2018, Uganda was hosting **1,154,352 million refugees and asylum seekers** from over 10 countries: 785,104 from South Sudan, 284,265 from DRC, 33,657 from Burundi, 22,064 from Somalia, 14,313 from Rwanda and 14,949 from other countries.¹ The refugee population in Uganda is diverse and includes 10 nationalities, with over 82 percent being women and children. Currently, there are 30 settlements spread out in 12 districts, including Kampala.² Some of the refugees hosting districts are among the most vulnerable districts in Uganda.

Beginning in mid- 2016, Uganda received three simultaneous large scale refugee influxes with refugees coming primarily from South Sudan, DR Congo and Somalia: between end of June 2016, up to July 2018, Uganda received 958,260 refugees. This is historically the largest influx Uganda has received. Despite the scale of the concurrent emergencies, **Uganda has been able to keep its borders open and maintain its village-style settlements** in a non-camp setting, where refugees live within host communities because of the country's concerted focus on comprehensive approaches to its response.

¹ Office Of The Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, Government of Uganda 31 October 2018

² Adjumani, Arua, Koboko, Hoima, Isingiro, Kampala, Kamwenge, Kiryandongo, Kyegegwa, Lamwo, Moyo, Yumbe

Refugee Context in Uganda

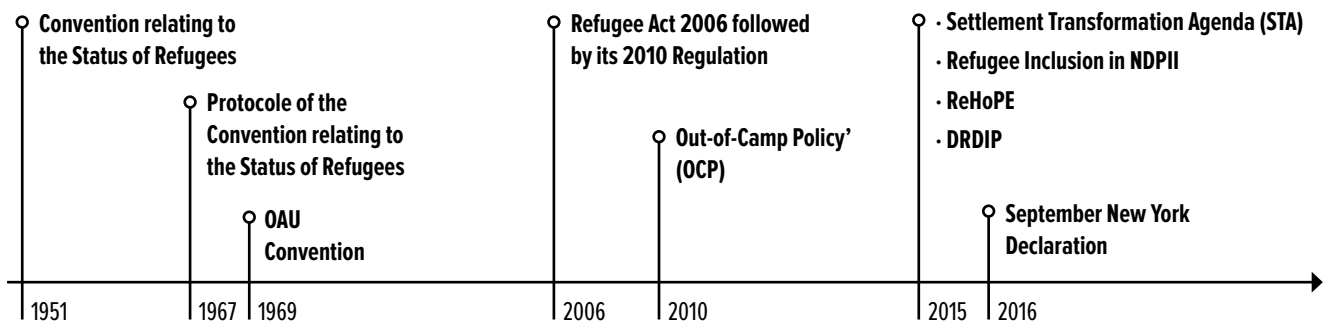


A timeline of Uganda’s progressive refugee legal context and enabling programmes

Uganda’s progressive approach started in **1951** when the Government of Uganda (GoU) signed the **Refugee Convention 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. These Conventions and the open borders policy are crucial for the life and **protection of refugees, ensuring access to the country** and avoiding the risks related to repatriation and refusal of entry.

In 2006 the Parliament passed the **Refugee Act 2006**, followed by its 2010 Regulations. Consistent with the Refugee Convention and Protocol, Uganda’s legal framework avails refugees access to key rights and social services on par with nationals, including **freedom of movement, access to national health and education services**. These are crucial differences with the policies of most neighbouring countries where refugees are typically confined in camps, face very long registration process, are often refused the status of refugees and cannot work and provide for their livelihood, remaining dependant on humanitarian based care and assistance. The Refugee Act unquestionably constitutes the **most progressive refugee law in Africa** and has enabled the Uganda settlement approach, a progressive protection model where refugees are **welcomed, registered, allocated land and provided with documents**.

Refugee Context in Uganda



The GoU formally introduced the **Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA)**³ in 2015, which operationalizes the national legal framework and aims to achieve self-reliance for refugees and bring social development to Ugandan nationals in refugee hosting areas through six main objectives: 1) Land management, 2) Sustainable Livelihoods, 3) Governance and rule of law, 4) Peaceful co-existence, 5) Environmental protection, 6) Community infrastructure. The STA was incorporated into its **National Development Plan II (NDPII)**⁴, thus integrating refugees into national development planning. **Refugee inclusion into NDP II, paved the road for comprehensive responses** to address the needs of both refugees and Ugandan nationals living in host communities and created fundamental entry points for line ministries and development actors into Uganda’s refugee response, which underpin the current model.

Efforts to support Uganda’s STA were quickly mobilized as early as 2015 through a program called Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE).⁵ With a soft loan of USD 50 million from World Bank (WB), the GoU started 5-year Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP) to improve access to social services, expand economic opportunities and enhance environmental management for Ugandan nationals and refugees in refugee hosting areas. In addition, Uganda meets the criteria for soft loans under the World Bank’s IDA 18 sub-window dedicated to support the development of low-income countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Projects to support refugee hosting areas are being developed with the funding from the IDA 18 sub-window.

These foundational building blocks predate and inspired the negotiations for the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (Sept 2016). They also predate the unprecedented influx of South Sudanese that would flee to Uganda for safety, which posed significant challenges to this nascent model, particularly in the emergency response requiring a prioritized focus on life-saving services. It is in this context that Uganda turned to the practical application of the CRRF to sustain and scale up the STA in time of acute influx. The STA is Uganda’s model and program; practical application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is its approach in the face of this unprecedented influx.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in Uganda

Uganda continued to prove a key international player through its active engagement in the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants** and its upcoming **Global Compact for Refugees (GCR)** as well as the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. At the **Leaders’ Summit in September 2016**,⁶ Uganda declared its willingness to **roll-out the CRRF**, and pledged 1) to continue its settlement approach, 2) to provide access to education and formal employment to 120,000 newly arrived refugees, and 3) to sustain **Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE)**.

The influx continued unabated from South Sudan, and as early as March 2017, Uganda was one of the first countries to officially roll-out the comprehensive responses approach building on existing political will, response model and legal context. Uganda also committed to the **Nairobi Declaration** at the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (**IGAD**) **Special Summit**. Its experience in the application of the CRRF in times of emergency in particular, has greatly informed the GCR. After signing the CRRF and making the pledges, **key steps** were taken in the practical roll-out of the CRRF in Uganda, enabling it to effectively respond to an influx of no less than 450,000 new refugees in 2017 alone.

³ The Settlement Transformation Agenda Project 2016 – 2021, Office Of The Prime Minister, 2016

⁴ National Development Plan NDP II 2015/16–2019/20, Office Of The Prime Minister, Refugee Department

⁵ ReHoPE is a joint UN and World Bank strategy to support the STA, which addresses the needs for sustainable livelihoods, infrastructure and integration of social services of both refugees and host communities.

⁶ The Leaders’ summit on Refugees, co-hosted by the US, the UN Secretary General, Ethiopia, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Sweden and Jordan, followed the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants

In June 2017, Uganda held the **Solidarity Summit** which aimed to pave the way for solutions to the influx of refugees in Uganda, while calling for urgent support and a more equitable responsibility sharing. Uganda’s continued commitment to offer protection and develop long-term solutions were reaffirmed with the **Kampala Declaration**.

CRRF Objectives in Uganda	CRRF key features in Uganda
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Support Government policy and protect asylum space 2 Support resilience of refugees and host communities 3 Expand solutions, including third country options 4 Support Uganda’s role in the region and invest in human capital and transferrable skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection-driven: UNHCR has the mandate to initiate and develop the framework • Holistic: local integration, resettlement or voluntary repatriation • A multi-stakeholder approach: comparative advantage of other stakeholders • Human rights oriented: protecting the rights of refugees under international law • Responsibility-sharing: supporting host communities and easing the pressure on the country

Extensive CRRF **stakeholders’ consultations** were conducted in the same month to identify priorities. **Five mutually reinforcing CRRF Pillars** were agreed upon to ensure protection throughout the cycle of displacement.

Uganda also signed the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education in IGAD Member States in December 2017.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Uganda



Cross cutting issues: Gender Equality | Women's Empowerment | Non Discrimination | Accountability to Affected Populations



Safe from conflict, South Sudan's refugees benefit from aid projects in Bidibidi. © UNHCR/Charlotte Allan

National arrangements

Based on political commitment and the **whole of society approach**, the rollout of the CRRF is Government-led, driven by the Office of the Prime Minister, “developed and initiated” by UNHCR, and guided by a wide range of stakeholders who participated in the consultations and are now active partners. **A CRRF Steering Group** was established to ensure efficiency of the CRRF application and coordination of the roll out at national and subnational level. Chaired at the ministerial level by both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), the CRRF Steering Group is a policy and decision making body, which enjoys active participation by **whole of government** representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), all key line ministries, national planning authority, as well as bilateral partners, international financial institutions, UN, national and international NGOs, private sector, local governments and host communities representatives and refugees.

A multi-stakeholder **Secretariat** supports the application of CRRF, under the leadership of the Government. The secretariat has a policy, oversight, coordination, lessons learned, and resource mobilisation mandate to ensure a comprehensive refugee response is delivered. The secretariat comprises of several Ugandan national posts (Director, Sr. Refugee Operations Officer, Sr. Development Economist, M&E Officer, Planning Officer, Engagement Officer, Knowledge Management Officer, and Policy Analyst, and an administrative unit.) These positions are reinforced with international advising secondments in the following functions: protection (UNHCR), knowledge management (BMZ), engagement (DFID), and development policy (INGOs). The secretariat works closely with the Office of the Prime Minister Department of Refugees and UNHCR that co-lead the humanitarian refugee response as well as with the development sector working groups and line ministries.

The CRRF Steering Group finalized its **Uganda CRRF Road Map** in January 2018 to set out the vision of the CRRF and provide strategic implementation guidance through 2020. The Road Map identifies the CRRF pillars of engagement and priority interventions within the humanitarian-development nexus, required to stabilize and recover from the emergency in the current context while simultaneously laying the operational foundation for

inclusion and longer term development engagement. The Road Map aims at **achieving sustainability of Uganda's Settlement Transformative Agenda to ensure the inclusion of refugees into national service delivery through long term development entry points through high level coordination of government, the whole of society, and across the humanitarian and development nexus.**

A **Monitoring and Evaluation framework** and strategy was developed to monitor the change brought by the CRRF in the national context. Regular monitoring is conducted through real-time learning, household surveys, multi-stakeholder reflections, and sector outcome monitoring.

The comprehensive refugee response in Uganda builds on existing practice and on key enablers such as progressive legislation, political willingness, and the settlement approach. While Uganda's refugee response achievements should be attributed to the overall work environment and favourable conditions, a number of significant changes were leveraged by application of the CRRF approach, especially at this time of influx.

Key results along the Uganda CRRF

To sustain its current response model in the face of a mass influx and concurrent emergencies, fast tracking the application of CRRF has proven critical in engaging line ministries and development actors. First of all, the GoU leveraged this moment to transform refugee response into an opportunity to improve the development to refugee hosting areas. Moreover, CRRF created a new platform for development and humanitarian partners, allowing new actors to come together and improve coordination for the support of refugees and the host communities as well.

Momentum continues in Uganda to ease pressure on refugee-hosting districts and to benefit refugees and host communities. The **government led advancements on three key sectors** to enable Uganda to clearly highlight where the international community may usefully channel support for a comprehensive and people-centred response in its refugee hosting districts.

The Ministry of Education and Sports finalized an Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP) in Uganda. This plan was developed by a government led task team, with the support of UNICEF and UNHCR, pulling together development and humanitarian sector experts to support Uganda's education response to the refugee influx and meet the needs of all in the refugee hosting districts. This plan, which is aligned with Uganda's broader education sector strategy, is meant to include refugees into the broader strategy for education for Uganda.

The Ministry of Health is finalizing Uganda's Health Sector Integrated Response Plan, endorsed by the highest levels of the Ministry, to include refugees into the larger development service delivery on health in refugee hosting districts. Recognizing the acute challenges before Ugandan stakeholders to develop the **water and environment response plan** to respond to the needs in refugee hosting districts, the Ministry of Water and Environment presented the challenges ahead to the CRRF Steering Group, proposed the way forward for stakeholders and is actively developing a natural resource management plan with CRRF stakeholders from both humanitarian and development stakeholders to support the Ministry in developing its plan.

In turn, Uganda is well positioned to welcome greater responsibility sharing making clear where concrete contributions are needed to bring these plans to life. The GoU has met its responsibilities as a refugee hosting country clearly articulating plans to include refugees in key service delivery sectors. Uganda is not immune from political pressures domestically and greater responsibility sharing in terms of other nations taking recognizable percentages of refugees in resettlement programs and providing financial support to the county to reduce the burden of hosting large numbers of refugees is critical. In order to sustain current achievements, global support is needed to address the main causes of displacement in the refugees' countries of origin.



Safe from conflict, South Sudan's refugees benefit from aid projects in Bidibidi. © UNHCR/Charlotte Allan

Milestones of progress following the CRRF approach in the Uganda context

The Uganda refugee response model has been sustained even in the face of concurrent emergencies and influx

Emergency needs of refugees have been met, and the hosting communities' access to services has increased. Refugee rights, including the fundamental freedom of movement and access to integrated services remain intact and underpin the response model. While the approach is necessarily evolving to meet the needs of a large number of people, it is because of freedom of movement of refugees that Uganda is able to host such large numbers effectively to date. Invested focus on the practical application of the CRRF allows space for both the humanitarian coordination on life saving assistance while engaging line ministries and other key stakeholders in a longer term perspective on key sectoral challenges underpinning the settlement model. The challenge before all stakeholders is to deliver longer term development outcomes for Ugandan refugee hosting districts as well as refugees and the CRRF platform allows for this critical longer term focus with stakeholders.

Renewed Government ownership of the refugee response at national level

The CRRF has created a momentum for renewed whole of government ownership. Through the Steering Group and partner/sector working groups, the **CRRF provided a novel common platform** for various actors including Government, international partners and donors, local NGOs, the private sector, refugees and host communities. In addition to the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Local Government, several line ministries are now actively engaged in the refugee response. The CRRF application acted as a catalyst for improved coordination and information sharing amongst partners and with district representatives and refugees. Settlement level coordination is one area where refugees are well represented and participating in decisions. Overall, the CRRF application has created new spaces for knowledge and information sharing such as the national NGOs humanitarian platform, joint meetings for development and humanitarian actors, and increased focus on the localization agenda to capacitate national first responders.

Inclusion of refugees into national development plans across key sectors achieved/underway

The application of the CRRF encouraged the mainstreaming/ inclusion of refugees into national planning, empowering different line ministries to develop comprehensive response plans for the different sectors. The NDPII, which was drafted in 2015, did not anticipate a large scale refugee influx. Refugee response is concentrated into a single sector, led by the OPM, and refugees

“ *Refugees are not a separate problem anymore, it belongs to all partners and it covers all sectors.*”

enjoy a mention in the WASH sector as well as inclusion as a vulnerable population. Under this structure, inclusion of refugees into the national service delivery of education or health is not part of the sector strategies. To bridge this gap and to allow the OPM Department of Refugees and its partners to prioritize life-saving assistance in the context of an influx, key line ministries developed sector sub-plans to deliver area based services in the hosting districts to Ugandans and the refugees hosted. The Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP) in Uganda is the exemplary work of multi-stakeholder approach with the Ministry of Education in the lead. With the costing and prioritization of interventions in refugee hosting districts, ERP provides clear entry points for development actors and donors, private sector, and any new actors. The plan was officially launched and the resource mobilization for the inclusion sub-plan is underway through the GoU’s allocations from the Solidarity Summit, and DRDIP as well as from Education Cannot Wait initiative. A comprehensive Health Response plan was also developed by the Ministry of Health. When resourced, the inclusion sub-plan normalizes the health service delivery in the refugee hosting districts to Ugandan citizens and refugees alike. With these key milestones achieved, the CRRF stakeholders began work on natural resource management plans, prioritizing water and the environment which should at the beginning of 2019, and focus is now placed on jobs and livelihoods as a key area of support.

New Ways of Working within the humanitarian and development nexus landed in the refugee response

CRRF is contributing to bringing humanitarian and development partners together for the prioritisation, sequencing and budgeting of interventions. Multiple stakeholders started to work together in joint financing, programming and at different fora and CRRF helped to institutionalize new collaborations. **Working groups of both humanitarian and development sectors have started convening joint work meetings and initiatives.** Humanitarians work with a longer term perspective informed by development needs and priorities of refugee hosting areas and development actors are actively engaged shaping directions and investments.

CRRF in Uganda is catalyzing a paradigm shift in the delivery of humanitarian assistance yielding immediate benefits for Ugandan nationals and refugees alike

Based on current legislation, refugees benefit from a welcoming environment, registration and legal documentation which gives them the right to move freely and to work. The Government of Uganda is allocating land to the refugees⁷ as well as access to its national services, for example, in the Kampala urban settlement. **The settlement approach is intended to facilitate integration with the host community, allocation of land and the possibility to build houses,** and the settlement approach is yielding dividends for Uganda, despite the influx.

⁷ Particularly in the oldest settlements, while in the most recent settlements land was given by host community as well



Single South Sudanese women receiving special protection. © UNHCR/Charlotte Allan

The CRRF gave renewed and more prominent visibility to host communities, catalysing shifts in the geographical focus of Uganda’s refugee response from the settlement location to the area that is hosting them. Only because districts are hosting refugees, Uganda was able to access a soft loan of 50 million USD from the World Bank (WB) over 5 years through its Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP) exclusively to benefit the hosting districts. Greater attention is now placed on the service needs of these districts by development and humanitarian actors alike. Moreover, application of the CRRF created space for local government to position itself vis-à-vis national priorities. There are promising examples of improved access to services through mainstreaming refugee and host communities into local and national service provisions.

Early indicators include improved roads, access to sustainable water systems, infusion of schools, improved health. Rather than erecting temporary structures for services such as education and health in the refugee settlements, resources are allocated to improve existing infrastructure, or when new schools or clinics are necessary, **semi-permanent structures are constructed signalling the humanitarian investment into longer term development initiatives**. Ugandan nationals in the hosting areas enjoy greater access to services from these investments than before the refugees arrived. As the emergency stabilizes, these dividends will grow rapidly. Private firms are providing solar energy in three settlements, and as a matter of principle all projects in refugee hosting districts reserve at least one third of the deliverables to the hosting community, following the ‘30/70 principle’. For water access, a significant shift is taking place from water trucking model to sustainable water systems. Currently, a total of 999,175 people are served through new sustainable water supply systems in refugee hosting districts. By November 2018, 138 water supply systems had been completed and 20 water supply system are still under construction. Water trucking has reduced to 7% and access to water on average is now 18.5 Litres/person/day.⁸

⁸ UNHCR Uganda Operational Update November 2018

Strengthened accountability and renewed focus on monitoring Uganda’s refugee response

Solidarity is premised upon full accountability by stakeholders and data integrity underpins the refugee response. The GoU developed the Refugee Information Management System (RIMS) designed to collect store and produce reliable data on refugees in the country. To ensure accountability, the Office of the Prime Minister, with requested support from UNHCR and various actors, has completed the verification of refugee registration data and is reinforcing safeguards through a Joint Plan of Action, furthering a fundamental milestone of the CRRF Road Map. The Biometric Information Management Systems (BIMS) was introduced to support biometric verification in the all the refugee-hosting district.

The CRRF Secretariat with support from UNHCR, compiled the Uganda CRRF dashboard and its data collection plan. The indicators were selected with close consultations with Uganda Bureau of Statistics and line ministries to ensure the data is currently available or collectible for refugees and host communities in government led or government authorized systems. The Uganda CRRF dashboard relates to the global CRRF dashboard, is built upon the pillars outlined in the Uganda CRRF Roadmap and is a key element in its monitoring and evaluation framework. It will provide a cross-sectoral overview that will allow interested parties to understand the overall direction of progress and achievements, and assess to what degree the CRRF is producing the intended changes outlined in the Roadmap.

These efforts greatly enhance the confidence and active participation of stakeholders and their ability to plan and monitor activities in the refugee response to ensure that the intended targets benefit from interventions and optimize cost effectiveness.

Global CRRF ushered greater focus from development actors in Uganda, stimulating a change in priorities and responsibility sharing in the refugee response

The GoU has brought together the different partners in refugee protections to ensure a comprehensive response, stimulating changes that are not limited to the financial contributions, but also include the engagement of more development actors as key thought partners in the refugee response in Uganda, reorganization of their structures or reprioritization of their projects to target refugees and refugee hosting communities.

Multilateral and bilateral actors had a notable strategic shift to enable transition from humanitarian to development phase. Shifts are underway within Embassies to operationalize the humanitarian-development nexus. For example, the EU held a nexus workshop in Kampala in May 2018. While the strategic planning cycle of development actors is usually 3-5 years, they explored creative ways to accommodate the situation, modifying their programmes within the existing Country Plan to support Uganda, and expanded programmes originally targeted only to Ugandans to now include refugees. For example, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa) was signed in late 2015 but its implementation period and target areas were extended from 3 districts to 4 districts following the refugee influx.

While ReHoPE created entry points for the UN and World Bank, **CRRF creates new entry points in the broader refugee response in Uganda by line ministries and for development partners who have allocated additional funding to respond to refugee influx.** Several tangible examples of broader engagement of less traditional actors have been realized in support of Uganda’s refugees response (STA). While not exhaustive, examples include the EU Trust Fund (EUTF) increasing its funding from 10 million to 20 million Euro after it was signed in late 2015 to respond to refugee influx. The Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU) support development in Northern Uganda through a 150 million Euro programme. World Bank is also providing additional support of 268 Million USD through a new IDA18 sub-window to finance medium- to long-term investments in a combination package of soft loans and grants to support host communities and refugees. Though support to refugee influx was not in the original mandate, Norway put additional funding to UN Women, Caritas to work in Northern Uganda, on empowerment and livelihood and allocated 20 million NOK (Approx. 2M Euro) to a WB Trust Fund to advance CRRF goals in Uganda. Germany is adding 10M Euro for Economic opportunity for refugees and host communities. Ireland maintained their original funding and added an additional 3.2M Euro for 2016-18 for influx response from its development fund.

USAID is engaging in refugee response for the first time in Uganda beyond food security, exploring opportunities for livelihoods programming, education and through its “Power Africa” programme. The Joint Humanitarian Development Framework and DANIDA focuses on resilience of both refugees and host communities. Partners traditionally focusing on issues for Ugandan nationals like FAO have started programmes on agriculture and education for both refugees and host communities. UNICEF programmes are now present in all refugee hosting districts, particularly focusing on education.

Among other efforts in support of CRRF, development actors are working with new actors. The DFID funded programme on sustainable use of natural resources and energy in the refugee context in Uganda include actors that are traditionally not active in emergency response in Uganda, such as GIZ and ICRAF, helping to transition the refugee response over to the development sector for longer-term planning. The UK is also working with diverse new actors particularly to engage the private sector in the refugee response through GiveDirectly for cash-based intervention, NGO consortium, and Smart Communities Coalitions for Public-Private-Partnership.

Lessons learnt from the Uganda context

Preparedness through early development intervention is key for quality and quick response

The latest emergencies in Uganda have clearly shown that flexibility of humanitarian funding and action remains critical to save lives and address immediate needs. However, anticipating emergency needs through **interventions of development actors in districts** likely to host refugees can prove vital and efficient from the outset.

Joint planning supports effective preparedness. For example, in Kyaka District, a **joint humanitarian and development mission to assess needs and opportunities** created a common basis for collaborative humanitarian and development planning and interventions. Building on such collaboration and scaling them up is crucial for comprehensive responses. Early planning and investment can also reduce refugees’ pressure on national services and infrastructures, avoiding tensions within host communities, and also clarify roles and disengagement/engagement entry/exit points of all stakeholders to leverage comparative advantages.

“ If you want to be first, move ahead. If you want to go far, move together.”

Need for sustainable emergency support for national services and environment

There is consensus that without more **comprehensive responses, the current refugee model in Uganda is not sustainable in the face of growing displacement**. The influx puts a significant strain on the already **overloaded national systems**, particularly on admission and reception capacities and education and health services.

New refugee transit and reception centres and new settlements had to be opened, and old settlements had to be expanded, and the host community offered additional private land for settlement of new arrivals.

“ CRRF is a great opportunity for a spill over of long term sustainable development”

Early Childhood Development (ECD)Centres are overcrowded, average ranging from 70 children per classroom for higher primary and 120 children per classroom for lower primary. Currently, 58% of refugee children have enrolled in ECD, primary and secondary school, out of a cohort of 593,262.⁹ Only 46% of refugee children have access to formal and informal education with a significant gender gap against girls.¹⁰

⁹ Road Map For The Implementation Of The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework In Uganda 2018-2020, CRRF Secretariat

¹⁰ Ibidem



📷 South Sudanese refugees build new lives across the border. © UNHCR/Duniya Aslam Khan

Health centres frequently operate beyond capacity, with shortage of staff as well as shortage of medical equipment and supplies, putting both refugees and the host community at heightened risk.¹¹ Insufficient transport facilities and overstretched police services are also among the key challenges reported by community and district/police officials in the settlements.¹²

The increasing number of refugees and the growing population has an **adverse impact on land, resources and environment** – including cutting of trees for firewood and construction, lack of sustainable water supply, congestion at water points, inappropriate wastewater treatment systems, extensive water extraction. Although at central level the water, sanitation and environment working groups are planning for sustainable solutions, the settlements still rely heavily on water trucking, incurring high running costs and deterioration of existing roads.¹³ **An emergency contingency fund for hosting countries, which can be accessed upon objective criteria to implement a comprehensive contingency plan specific to a settlement, non-camp response model, at the outset of a significant influx would prove critical for hosting countries to develop their own capacities as the appropriate first responders.**

“ Land is the issue.
Land is not expanding”

¹¹ Ibidem

¹² As reported by district officers and other stakeholders

¹³ Road Map For The Implementation Of The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework In Uganda 2018-2020, CRRF Secretariat

Need for financial sustainability and long term solutions

The rights that have been provided for in the law are far from being fully achieved because of the specific context of Uganda as a hosting country. The level of poverty in Uganda remains high with 27% of the population living below the poverty line.¹⁴ Host communities, especially in rural areas, face similar challenges to those of refugees in terms of livelihoods and access to quality services. For example, in one of Kiryandongo's health facilities 80% of nutrition related diseases patients came from the host community.¹⁵ According to a recent report, close to 70% of refugees are living below the national poverty standard and experience severe food insecurity in the month preceding the survey.

It is in this spirit to maintain focus on longer term solutions under its unique model of refugee response that the President of the Republic of Uganda and the UN Secretary-General hosted the Solidarity Summit in June 2017. It called upon the international community for greater responsibility sharing. In the year following the Solidarity Summit, resources were disproportionately allocated to the humanitarian imperatives over the longer term needs.¹⁶

From the conference, the Government of Uganda received 1.5 million USD that it will invest into its Education Response plan in refugee hosting districts. To achieve self-reliance, and to be able to continue ensuring comprehensive refugee response in the Settlement model, the Government of Uganda calls on the international community for both technical financial support against its sub-sector plans which address the area based needs of Ugandan nationals and the refugees they host.

The Solidarity Summit proved critical to mobilize much needed resources to meet humanitarian needs in Uganda for refugees and Ugandans in the hosting areas. Yet, to optimize focus on longer term resilience goals, refugee inclusion into national development plans in anticipation of inevitable large scale emergencies from the region would greatly help hosting countries a) optimize opportunities to mobilize adequate resources from efforts like the Solidarity Summit, and b) prioritize, coordinate and track resources and contributions from the international community within the hosting country.

“ Some humanitarian agencies kept working like in a camp setting”

Mind-set shift of all actors at all levels is key to the evolution of the response, particularly through active participation and effective communication

Sustaining and protecting the unique Uganda model require continued efforts for **changing mind-sets as well as reaching clarity on partners' roles and responsibility.**

Active participation of the affected communities emerged as a key component of comprehensive responses. The increasing number of refugees entering Uganda is inevitably causing frictions not only between refugee communities, but also between host communities and refugees. There is a perception that refugees are taking over land and resources. These perceptions are amplified by a narrative, and sometimes reality, that some refugees are better off than some locals given the context. A comprehensive and effective public information and communication campaign could help reduce the risk of tension. **Transparent financial tracking mechanisms which make clear where resources are allocated to the benefit of both Ugandan nationals and refugees are a critical step to expectation management.** In addition, **increased community involvement and participation is crucial** to enhance refugee-host dialogue and peaceful co-existence.

“ CRRF is a win-win. For the Government, for donors, for districts, for refugees and for host community”

¹⁴ Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) 2016/17 report, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, September 2017

¹⁵ Kiryandongo health facility records

¹⁶ ReHoPE stocktaking report

Greater support for central and local Government to exercise its leadership

With the introduction of CRRF, local district governments have been empowered to claim their role in the refugee response. However, capacity of Local Governments to coordinate, plan, implement and monitor services for refugees and host communities remains inadequate¹⁷.

“ If we engage district authorities and services early on, they can manage”

Insufficient funding and local Government capacity to influence resource allocation and relocation in case of emergencies is limited. Very few development donors provide direct budget support to District Local Governments or Line Ministries; most implement development support through contractors, bilateral development agencies, UN or NGOs. District budgets are based on populations' census that does not take into account new refugee population influx¹⁸ and there is little integration of refugee population in determination of district indicative planning figures. **To sustain a non-camp, settlement model like the one in Uganda, requires concerted collaboration and focus on area based response and programming in contingency plans and activation as early as possible in an emergency.**

Greater support to allow local Government to actively lead a timely response in emergencies is crucial for successful comprehensive responses. This can be done by supporting district planning and budgeting for refugee response through **funded contingency and emergency plans** and enabling district authorities to manage and incorporate refugees into the regular delivery of services in the short term and capacitated national first responders in the longer term.

District and local government capacity is being reinforced through programmes such as the JICA Project for Capacity Development of Local Government for Strengthening Community Resilience and the Governance Accountability Participation and Performance (GAPP), an existing governance programme, funded by DFID and USAID, working with district local governments (DLGs) and communities which was reoriented to include activities and outcomes specific to the refugee response in seven refugee hosting districts.

Emergency response to new influx stalls focused efforts on durable solutions, including peace building efforts in countries of origin

In the mid- to long-term success depends on the resolution of protracted conflicts in the region. The GoU through the African Union, IGAD and EAC have contributed to efforts for sorting root causes of displacement in South Sudan, Somalia and Burundi.

While pillar 4 on durable solutions is very crucial for the success of the Uganda model it is not within the control of Uganda alone, and is dependent on the political and economic situation of neighbouring countries as well as on global level dynamics and political choices. In the spirit of burden sharing, The GoU requests the international community to look into expanding the program and encouraging the non-traditional resettlement countries to take on the program.

Additionally, more needs to be done around **pillar 5**, to prevent future refugee influx and invest in peacebuilding and longer term solutions for refugees who cannot go back to their countries, given that **voluntary returns under current conditions will only be possible for a very limited number of people.**

¹⁷ Strengthening district coordination, Issue Paper #1, CRRF Secretariat, April 2018

¹⁸ As reported by district officers and other stakeholders



📷 Growing numbers of Congolese refugees seek safety. © UNHCR/Michele Sibiloni

Opportunities and way forward

Sustaining Uganda’s open-door asylum policy and progressive development-oriented model presents a challenge, requiring additional international support. The unprecedented surge in refugee numbers and the protracted stay of refugees in Uganda is imposing excessive pressure on overstretched state and host community resources. Humanitarian appeals are chronically and severely underfunded, further compounding risks and vulnerabilities of refugees, as well as pressures on domestic resources. Refugees and host communities are susceptible to underlying poverty and vulnerabilities exacerbated by limited basic social services delivery, poor infrastructure, and limited market opportunities. The magnitude and challenges of the refugee situation call for a multifaceted comprehensive refugee response using a **whole of society approach** to strengthen prevention, address root causes, provide protection and pursue lasting solutions.

With a long term focus targeting refugees and their hosts, CRRF has the potential to boost the general development for Uganda’s refugee hosting districts while shifting the refugee response paradigm from one of care and maintenance to self-reliance and resilience. Refugee response with a CRRF mind-set represents an additional entry point for infrastructure and service improvement as well as market and income increase. Below is a number of steps that the refugee response in Uganda is trying to invest in for successful comprehensive responses.

Strengthen multilateral funding mechanisms and modalities for sustained financial support

Ways to overcome short-funding cycles and to diversify funding modalities of all actors need to be explored, for example by **providing flexible funding scheme and predictable funding, and committing for a longer-term and disbursing annually**. As these regulations are not alterable at country-level, the actors in CRRF need to further study the limitations of each states and conduct a global level advocacy to influence the donor states’ aid policy.

As the support and pressure from headquarters strongly influence the donors' engagement at the country level, further engagement at headquarters is necessary¹⁹.

GoU to have a clear prioritization and to engage Ministry of Finance further to facilitate the resource allocation, so that the development actors and donors know where to channel the resources. The sector development plans will be a great tool to advocate for additional funding and align all the actors for the necessary interventions. Modalities to provide more funding to the GoU need to be identified, such as the establishment of multi-donor CRRF trust²⁰.

Continue advocacy for global support to the GoU and for effective responsibility sharing need to be conducted for the successful implementation of the comprehensive response.

Standardize the refugee response for application in different types of emergencies

Efforts to **standardise the refugee response** should continue to ensure that all interventions, including humanitarian interventions, are guided by GoU service delivery standards. CRRF actors should adjust the STA to ensure best use of land and optimize social service delivery where the current model is facing strain given the high influx. A comprehensive **Settlement Master Approach**, as outlined in the Uganda roadmap, will improve emergency preparedness in existing and potential refugee hosting districts and **clarify and harmonise standard procedures**, role and responsibilities. As part of this Master Plan, a **Handbook for settlement establishment** is planned to be developed, outlining all steps that need to be taken to standardize a refugee response in this unique non-camp context.

Deeper engagement with the Private sector

In line with the CRRF approach, private companies and businesses should continue to be engaged in the process. The CRRF secretariat has started the **development of the brief and a practical private sector strategy**. The strategy can help select key private actors from the sectors of banking, agriculture, communication and oil & gas, building on what has already been started in some districts, for example some initial steps are underway for **CRRF Private Sector Engagement in Midwest region of Hoima** to enable refugees and their hosts to contribute to and benefit from an upcoming gas project in the region.

*"The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is not a solution in itself but a platform for stakeholders to come together and find common solutions. This Framework needs to be supported by all to demonstrate how sustainable and inclusive investments in social services and in human capital among refugees and host communities can help break the cycle of conflict, cement peaceful co-existence and with time, as refugees return, help rebuild their countries of origin."*²¹

¹⁹ Strengthening district coordination, Issue Paper #1, CRRF Secretariat, 2018

²⁰ Ibidem

²¹ Statement of Uganda's Prime Minister included in "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: The Way Forward" found at <https://bit.ly/2z4kOaM>