



# Securing Durable Solutions for Refugees in Uganda

## Uganda is a co-convenor of the second Global Refugee Forum, 13-15 December 2023.

Learn more: [www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum-2023](http://www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum-2023)

This outcome document summarises the resolutions that resulted from the IGAD-EAC High-level Ministerial Conference on Durable Solutions for Refugees in the East and Horn of Africa, including the prospects for durable solutions in Uganda specifically. The Regional Dialogue co-convened by the Government of Uganda was held in Kampala from 13-16 June. IGAD and EAC and Ministers from the region signed a Ministerial Declaration and adopted a regional GRF multi-stakeholder pledge on durable solutions.

Durable solutions is one of five thematic discussions that have taken place as part of Uganda's preparations for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF). The aim was to assess the current refugee situation, identify the main challenges and opportunities, and provide recommendations on possible new policy pledges.

**UGANDA:  
The World's  
Model for Refugee  
Response**

*Let's make it  
sustainable*

### What are Durable Solutions for Refugees?

Finding long-term solutions is key to sharing the responsibility equally of hosting refugees and helping refugees build better futures. Such solutions may include voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration.

- ◆ **Voluntary repatriation**, whenever feasible, is the most desirable solution to refugee situations. It is when refugees make the decision to return to their home country once conditions have become safe. From Uganda, only a small number of Burundian refugees are voluntarily repatriating with the support of both governments and UNHCR, as conditions in other neighbouring countries are not safe to promote returns. Over 11,000 Burundians have returned since December 2020 until September 2023.
- ◆ **Resettlement** is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State, that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence. The current resettlement submission target for Uganda is 4,400 persons, approximately 0.3% of the overall population. Resettlement in Uganda is implemented on an individual case basis for refugees whose protection needs cannot be met in Uganda, regardless of their nationality, and who cannot avail themselves of voluntary repatriation. Complementary pathways are pursued for refugees in need of family reunification in third countries, while international scholarships and labor mobility opportunities are promoted and facilitated for talented refugees.
- ◆ **Local integration** within the host community is often a complex and gradual process which places considerable demands on both the individual and the receiving society. However, it also has benefits, allowing refugees to contribute socially and economically. A legal study was conducted in 2022<sup>1</sup>, and the findings showed that only 6% of refugees are interested in acquiring Uganda citizenship. Most refugees prefer to return to their countries of origin when peace returns, and they are able to do so in safety and dignity.

<sup>1</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/refugees-generation-generation-preventing-statelessness-advancing-durable-solutions-great-lakes-region>: P.26

## Challenges

Uganda continues to be Africa's largest refugee-hosting country, keeping its borders open to over 1.5 million refugees, and they continue to arrive each day. By the end of September 2023, 72,000 new arrivals were received and 225,000 since 2022. While most refugees have fled violence in South Sudan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the recent conflict in Sudan has resulted in over 5,450 new arrivals from Sudan. As the region remains volatile, options for durable solutions remain limited.

### The factors that have an impact on the voluntary return process to the countries of origin are:

- ◆ Continued insecurity in the countries of origin; the prolonged effects of climate change; poor infrastructure and lack of basic services such as health and education; and limited livelihood opportunities.
- ◆ So far, only a total of 849 Burundian refugees from Uganda have voluntarily returned to Burundi in 2023. The reduction in the number of Burundian refugees opting to return is attributed largely to the challenges in integration upon return and the inadequate reintegration assistance provided.

Across the region, the number of refugees continues to rise at an exceptional rate from 1.8 million in 2012 to **5.5 million** as of September 2023. Of this number, some 2.3 million refugees and asylum seekers are from **South Sudan**. On top of that, about **14.2 million** people are internally displaced in the region mainly because of conflict and drought.

### Although resettlement expectations are high, the gap between those in need and those who are resettled has increased in recent years:

- ◆ The projected resettlement needs for 2024 stand at 44,979 cases of 134,936 person for Uganda. However, the departures are still low with only 1,747 individuals who departed for resettlement in 2022, and 1,592 individuals in 2023.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Processing policies and procedures vary widely by resettlement country and often require significant time, information, and resources. Resettlement processing is further hampered by logistical challenges in the less developed locations of Uganda, especially in the North and West Nile region.

### Alternative legal status for refugees in Uganda to promote local integration, especially for those in a protracted situation, has been difficult because of the political landscape:

- ◆ Both the policy and legal framework (2006 Refugee Act) in Uganda do not support realization of local integration as a durable solution.
- ◆ Uganda is increasingly facing challenges dealing with its own poverty and under-development. Nearly 96% of the entire refugee population, primarily women and children, require uninterrupted access to life-saving protection, assistance, and essential social services. Aid to Uganda has been reduced while the population growth is not matched by tax revenue, contributing to increased fiscal pressures.

### Access to civil registration and documentation:

- ◆ While the Government recognizes the need to provide additional services and logistical support to remote locations, including in refugee-hosting areas, the limited resources and capacity of the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) have led to significant delays in the issuance of birth registration for refugees and hosts. The estimated birth registration backlog is at nearly 188,500.
- ◆ To improve the timeliness of birth registration services, the Government is working to establish links between the medical databases of hospitals registering births and the national NIRA database system. Uganda is also developing a Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) strategy with a view to providing guidelines for the delivery of civil registration services and the production of vital statistics, including for refugees. It is noted that limited birth registration and certification for refugees born in Uganda places them at risk of statelessness.

## Commitments made in the Declaration

The Ministers of Member States of IGAD and partner states of the EAC made declarations in the areas of:<sup>1</sup>

- ◆ **Address the root causes and drivers of forced displacement**, including conflicts and natural disasters, in IGAD and EAC regions.
- ◆ **On protection, maintain asylum space and rights of refugees** as enshrined in international and continental frameworks to be applied in national and regional policy frameworks. This includes maintaining an open-door policy, upholding the humanitarian character of asylum, and protecting asylum seekers from refoulement, ensuring basic services are provided to all refugees without discrimination, and access to birth registration to all refugee children born in the country of asylum to prevent statelessness.

<sup>2</sup> <https://rsq.unhcr.org/>

- ◆ **Undertaking Government-led whole-of-society approaches in refugee management**, by promoting experience sharing between and within IGAD-EAC members states, ensuring participation of refugees and host communities, and advancing the localization agenda by engaging with and increasing budgetary support to local actors.
- ◆ **On socio-economic inclusion**, promote equal access to economic opportunities for refugees through ensuring access to financial services and equitable access to basic social services. Facilitate labor mobility in the IGAD-EAC region and commit to facilitate access to digital Identity Documents recognizable by the region. Create an enabling environment for private sector actors to invest.
- ◆ **Create conditions conducive to safe, dignified, and voluntary returns** as well as to support sustainable reintegration by investing in peace building processes that enable sustainable peace and security, mitigate, and manage insecurity, violence and conflicts.
- ◆ **Increased access to resettlement and other sponsorship pathways** for the admission of refugees and asylum-seekers to third countries as a demonstration of international responsibility-sharing.
- ◆ **Promote local integration** by facilitating access to nationality pathways in host countries particularly for those in protracted situations and those who were born in host countries.
- ◆ **Increased responsibility sharing**, by calling upon the international community to support the IGAD-EAC region through increased responsibility sharing in refugee responses and emergencies, and appeal to ensure adequate and predictable financing to address unmet needs.

## Joint IGAD-EAC Multi-Stakeholder Regional Durable Solutions

- ◆ To **finalize** the adoption of IGAD and EAC Regional Refugee Management Policies, and development of Costed Plans of Actions to ensure harmonised regional approaches that are consistent with international standards, including access to quality asylum procedures, protection and assistance, and durable solutions.
- ◆ To **pursue** a regional approach on economic inclusion, through investment in climate reform, financial inclusion and private sector investments in refugee hosting and return areas.
- ◆ To **develop** joint guidelines on the inclusion of the forcibly displaced and stateless populations, in particular women and youth in humanitarian, peace, and development processes.
- ◆ To **address** state fragility, establish, and monitor regional peace mechanisms, implement democratic electoral processes, promote regional/bilateral mediation and reconciliation processes, and support transitional justice processes in the region.

## Pledge matching

Pledges and contributions are commitments by States and other stakeholders, including organizations, development actors, cities, parliamentarians, businesses, academics, and refugees themselves, to achieve tangible benefits for refugees and host communities. These commitments can be financial, technical or material contributions in nature.

Partners planning to pledge in support of the Uganda refugee response can refer to the pledge development document or reach out to the following contacts:

- Mr. Asiimwe Douglas, Ag. Commissioner for Refugees, Department of Refugees (Office of the Prime Minister) [douglas.asiimwe@opm.go.ug](mailto:douglas.asiimwe@opm.go.ug)
- Ms. Helen Bugaari, Director\_CRRF Secretariat (Office of the Prime Minister) [helen.bugaari@opm.go.ug](mailto:helen.bugaari@opm.go.ug)
- Ms. Carol Sparks, Senior External Engagement Coordinator, UNHCR: [sparks@unhcr.org](mailto:sparks@unhcr.org)

*The Government of Uganda invites partners and stakeholders to match its pledges and create better outcomes for refugees and host communities.*

### Links to further reading

Details on current pledges: [globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions/matching-pledges](https://globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions/matching-pledges)

Infographic on how to match pledges: [globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Matching\\_Infographic\\_v07.pdf](https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Matching_Infographic_v07.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://igad.int/igad-and-eac-member-states-sign-munyonyo-declaration-on-durable-solutions-for-refugees-in-the-east-and-horn-of-africa/>