



Self-reliance and Resilience

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

Learn more: www.unhcr.org/global-refugee-forum-2023

This outcome document summarises the ideas and discussion from the Self-Reliance and Resilience roundtable, including recommendations on pledges that could shape commitments towards refugees and host communities in Uganda for the next four years. The roundtable was held in May 2023 and was chaired by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

The self-reliance and resilience roundtable is one of five thematic discussions that have taken place as part of preparations for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF). The meetings aim to assess the current refugee situation, identify main challenges and opportunities, and outline priority areas for possible new pledges to be made.

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Overview: Livelihoods, Resilience and Self-reliance of refugees in Uganda

Poverty remains widespread and chronic across segments of the overall Ugandan population with the largest shares of persistent poor amongst the heads of households without formal education, unemployed, or out of the labor force.

The same pattern is replicated more specifically in the refugee case where 40% of refugee households heads do not have any formal education and the majority (nearly 6 out of 10) is neither employed nor looking for a job.

Rates for employment and participation in the labour force demonstrates a large discrepancy between refugee and host communities. Even when employed, refugees are prone to less pay than their host counterparts, on average 32% less for comparable education levels, skills, and experience. Part of the wage gaps between refugees and hosts can be explained by a high level of skills mismatch, as many refugees accept employment that is below their skills level, education, and pre-displacement occupation.

Agriculture remains the dominant sector of employment for 88% of both refugees and hosts, driven by the fact that most of the settlements are in rural areas. However, a higher proportion of refugees (50.1%) than the hosts (34%) rely on agriculture for paid employment. A notable aspect is the higher unemployment rate for youth compared to the adult population which can be explained by less interest of youth to engage in agriculture type employment. The percentage of host households (30.9%) that have businesses compared to refugees (16.8%) is significant, mainly driven by a lack of access to wage employment and the need for greater independence.

Access to financial services remains minimal for both refugees and host community members, with bank account ownership and opening low in both communities. Most of the refugees holding bank accounts use them for receiving aid (50%), cash-out (46%), and cash-in (22%) transactions. In comparison, host community members use them most often for cashing out and cashing in (49% each) or saving money (47%).

The level of food security is generally low among refugees, with a growing proportion of 55% of the refugee households falling in the severe or moderately insecure category, while 75% of host households are in the food secure or moderately secure category.

The reduction of food rations by the World Food Programme has had negative effects on most households in West Nile (65.3%) and Southwest (66.7%). These households have resorted to reducing the number of meals a day or portions, which can in turn lead to health complications. The situation is likely to worsen as the prioritization of food support is being introduced. Significant proportions of refugees (between 40% and 80% in certain settlements) face difficulties in accessing livelihood support. The three main barriers to accessing this assistance include lack of information about available job opportunities (47.5%), failure to be chosen to participate in programmes of interest (43.8%) and limited capital to start up a business (38%).



Key Opportunities and Challenges in Resilience and Self-Reliance

Based on the joint situational analysis, the following areas were identified as key strategic intervention areas to support resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities:

- ◆ **Strengthening viable agricultural value chains:** Agricultural value chains involve the full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (pre-harvest, harvesting, processing, and packaging) until delivery to the consumer. Agriculture is the main source of income for both refugees and host communities in Uganda. However, there are general constraints to improving personal food security and profits from the value chains which include limited access to land, limited access to quality inputs, tools, and training, limited access to finance, limited post-harvest techniques and storage, limited market linkages for farmers (including physical transportation networks), and limited negotiating abilities of farmers. Interventions therefore need to focus on addressing barriers and equipping the farmer to achieve sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance through potential value chains.
- ◆ **Focus on Market System Development:** This approach aims to improve the inclusiveness of the markets that matter most to those living in poverty; those systems upon which their livelihoods rely and those that provide access to basic services. Barriers include poor infrastructure such as limited roads in rural areas to transport produce, lack of proper marketplaces with roofs to block from the elements, equipped with sanitation facilities and storage for leftover products. This also includes limited access to financial services, low levels of education and lack of market information. Programmes that connect the farmer to the markets to facilitate stronger and fairer relationships between the farmers and buyers will therefore benefit the self-reliance and resilience of refugees and host communities in Uganda.
- ◆ **Investing in Graduation Approaches:** The Graduation Approach is designed to address the complex nature of extreme poverty. These interventions are adapted to the local context and generally include identifying the most vulnerable households within a community; providing a regular and time-bound cash transfer to enable them to meet basic needs; helping families plan their livelihoods and transfer their productive assets; developing their ability to save money; providing livelihood training; and ensuring the close mentorship of participants throughout the process in a way that develops their self-confidence. Activities that focus on empowering participants to develop sustainable livelihoods that set them on a path of upward economic mobility and self-reliance are therefore recommended.
- ◆ **Engaging the Private Sector:** Focusing on providing support services for business opportunities and job creation in non-farm sectors, as well as addressing administrative and infrastructure barriers for business actors to access refugee-hosting areas can contribute to the livelihoods of refugees and host communities. The private sector can be an important partner in the refugee response.
- ◆ **Promote employment in refugee hosting districts:** This includes the identification of skill gaps and the deployment of all mechanisms and abilities to engage in the job market. It includes also the design of reforms to set the foundation for transforming, improving, and expanding skills development and create a scalable model for high-quality vocational and technical training which is linked to labour market needs for specific sectors. To enhance livelihoods for refugees and host communities, it is recommended to focus on providing skills training to primarily youth and employment promotion services in refugee-hosting areas.

Recommendations for International Partners

The consultation process also generated recommendations for donors and international organisations to support self-reliance and resilience and Government in the shared responsibility of social service delivery for refugees and host communities:

To strengthen agricultural value chains,

- ◆ Support agricultural value chain development through investment in climate-smart infrastructure such as water for production, irrigation systems, post-harvest handling, agro-industrialization, and early warning systems.
- ◆ Support research and development of climate-smart technologies such as drought, pest, and disease tolerant as well as high-yielding and early maturing crop varieties and livestock breeds

To develop market systems,

- ◆ Facilitate access to markets by supporting the development of infrastructure such as roads in remote areas, proper marketplaces for selling produce with storage facilities, and ICT innovations for digital marketing.
- ◆ Establish Market Systems Development Network (MSDN) Community of practice (CoP) and support the implementation capacities of District Local Governments to manage social services.

To invest in the graduation approach,

- ◆ Commit resources to scale up and coordinate Graduation Approach programming in refugee-hosting areas for both refugee and host communities on a 50:50 basis.
- ◆ Support the government to include and sustain refugees in all national statistics and surveys.
- ◆ Commit to 80% of assistance in Refugee Hosting Areas (RHA) to be provided through cash-based interventions.

To engage the private sector,

- ◆ Support the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda (PSFU) to establish a refugee information/opportunity desk to facilitate the creation of jobs in RHAs.
- ◆ Support infrastructure development (roads, energy & electricity, telecommunications, ICT, industrial parks, irrigation schemes, etc.)

To promote employment,

- ◆ Support work with private sector actors to create jobs in RHAs.
- ◆ Support the implementation of emerging good practices in the sector and of sector-prioritized approaches and value chains.

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:

- Ms. Helen Bugaari Director, CRRF Secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister: helen.bugaari@opm.go.ug
- Ms. Carol Sparks, Senior External Engagement Coordinator, UNHCR: 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

Infographic on how to match pledges: globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Matching_Infographic_v07.pdf