

## Time to invest and support Uganda's progressive refugee policy

**(Nairobi, June 21, 2017):** The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), welcomes the Solidarity Summit on Refugees taking place on the 22nd – 23rd June, 2017 in Kampala, Uganda. The Summit is a key opportunity for the international community and partners to support Uganda's tremendous effort in implementing its progressive refugee policy model despite hosting large numbers of refugees.

Uganda is Africa's largest refugee hosting country with a total of over 1.2 million refugees and ranks among the top three refugee hosting nations in the world. Despite the ongoing influx of refugees and more than 2,000 South Sudanese arriving daily, Uganda continues to uphold its out of camps policy, including the provision of freedom of movement and the right to work. However, the massive influx combined with severe humanitarian underfunding puts hundreds of thousands of refugees' lives at risk.

ReDSS calls on the international community to provide adequate long-term and predictable political and financial support to Uganda and its people that have been hosting displaced populations for decades, in such ways that improve inclusive access to services, economic opportunities and infrastructure for all. ReDSS also calls on the international community and IGAD to redouble efforts to address the root causes of displacement and urgently find long-term political solution to the ongoing conflict in South Sudan.

"Given the unlikelihood of return any time soon, early solutions are key to support solutions processes in the early stages of displacement," says Aude Galli, ReDSS Coordinator. "Early solutions planning and response encompass steps to build the self-reliance and resilience of refugees and host communities and to prepare refugees for future durable solutions from the onset of displacement."

Such an approach requires political resolve, long-term investments, a multi-sectorial rights and a needs based programming approach to work towards prevention and solutions to reduce displacement levels.

Uganda's progressive refugee policy and environment should not be put at risk. It should be built upon to ensure it is truly a model for refugee management not only in Africa but globally. Leveraging the expertise of different actors should be the basis for strengthening humanitarian-development linkages in Uganda, focusing on comparative advantages within a common framework. Part of this entails engagement with private sector in order to stimulate innovative solutions, jobs creation and public private partnership.

"This crisis requires much more than an emergency response - donors should increase support through collective funding for humanitarian, development and resilience programmes for Uganda's refugees, with long term funding for education and skills development, preparing refugees for the future," says Gabriella Waaijman, Regional Director for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Development actors should be involved from the onset of the emergency to complement humanitarian interventions by bringing development specialists to support the collective effort and inform medium to longer term solutions programming - our common goal being to give the millions of displaced persons a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance.

"It is essential to adopt a 'displacement affected communities' approach- inclusive of refugees, and host communities – and to place accountability to displaced populations at the centre of our actions

to ensure ownership, local relevance and social cohesion,” says Heather Amstutz, Regional Director for the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

National and district level authorities’ capacity should be enhanced to provide assistance and deliver services to refugees in the same way it does for Uganda citizens. This is in recognition that national, regional and local authorities have the primary responsibility in assisting refugees.

Partners must collectively invest in capacities to sustain solutions locally and nationally. Such investments will strengthen local and national institutions and partnerships helping to sustain locally owned solutions.

‘Investing in youth and education for refugees and host communities should be at the core of a comprehensive and integrated refugee response’, says Brechtje Vanlith, Save the Children’s Uganda Country Director. “Nearly 60 percent of the 1.2 million refugees hosted currently in Uganda are youth and children. Failing the children and youth in Uganda risks creating a lost generation and sets us on a path toward new conflicts and greater displacement in the future.”

This Summit provides a great opportunity for the international community to assist Uganda in translating the New York Declaration commitments into action through the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and to demonstrate solidarity with Uganda through responsibility sharing and increased resettlement quotas for refugees.

A comprehensive refugee response won’t involve a one-size-fits-all solution; it must be a multi-stakeholder approach that improves the business-enabling environment for everyone—refugees and host communities alike. The Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA) and the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) framework which brings refugee assistance into the national development plan are key initiatives to support.

A comprehensive approach recognizing and leveraging the unique insights and contributions of all actors is necessary and private sector solutions are an essential component. “We have a collective responsibility to challenge our structure and system to do more and better together in the search of durable solutions for displacement affected communities in Uganda,” says Aude Galli, ReDSS Coordinator.

The Solidarity Summit and the CRRF process are critical to ensure that we address displacement and solutions differently and more effectively. This change requires political resolve, long-term investments and a multi-sectorial rights and needs based programming approach to work towards prevention and solutions to reduce displacement levels.

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