

ReDSS brief and talking points

Displacement and early solutions in Uganda

How to collectively build self-reliance of refugees and host communities?

Background on displacement and refugees in Uganda

Since the conflict erupted in South Sudan in December 2013 and famine was declared on 20 February, 2017, [over 1.9 million South Sudanese](#) have been forced to flee, out of which **1,021,903** are hosted in Uganda (86 % of South Sudanese refugees are women and children). **Uganda is now considered Africa's largest refugee hosting country with a total of [1.3 million refugees](#) and ranks among the top three refugee hosting nations in the world.** Last year Uganda welcomed more refugees [than the total number of refugees and migrants](#) crossing the Mediterranean into Europe.

Given the unlikelihood of return any time soon, early solutions is key to support solutions processes in the [early stages of displacement](#). **Early solutions planning and response** encompasses steps to build the self-reliance and resilience of refugees and host communities and to prepare refugees for future durable solutions in the early stages of displacement.

Uganda is considered exemplary for its favorable 'out of camp' policies for refugees, which includes freedom of movement, right to work, land for each refugee family to settle and cultivate, access to public services and access to travel and identity documents. Uganda's inclusive refugee policy anticipates **empowering refugees to become economically self-reliant while granting them many of the same privileges that nationals enjoy.**

While there is no denying that Uganda has been a leader among refugee host nations, it is also critical to continue to support the country to address key challenges especially due to the recent massive South Sudanese refugee influx.

[Current research](#) in Uganda mainly focusses on Nakivale and Kyangwali refugee settlements which represents less than one-fifth of all recognized refugees in Uganda. The use of this data to make statements about the broader Ugandan context which, unfortunately, cannot be sustained, could create the mistaken impression that life for refugees in **Uganda is economically easy, which is far from the case for the majority.**

Key Messages

Support joint planning and develop a comprehensive national Solutions framework with common outcomes for humanitarian and development actors under the leadership of the Ugandan Government

Early solutions planning must be viewed as a collective action rather than mandate driven based on an inclusive, participatory and consensus building approach - our common goal being to give the millions of displaced persons a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance

It requires long-term investments and a multi-sectorial rights and needs based programming approach to work towards prevention and solutions to reduce displacement levels. The CRRF process provide a key opportunity to collectively engage on this.

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 programming.

Uganda's progressive refugee policy and environment should not be allowed to stagnate. It should be built upon to ensure it is truly a model for refugee management not only in Africa but globally.

Strengthen self-reliance and integrated programing for both displaced and host communities factoring in appropriate economic, environmental and social considerations

The international community should 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**.

It is critical to improve the **generation and availability of relevant data and analysis**¹ to better understand displacement affected communities' profiles to operationalize complementary humanitarian and developmental approaches. This will also support local authorities and agencies to **better prepare and forecast population movements**, not only to respond.

At a time when displacement levels continue to rise in the region, there is an urgent need for comprehensive and contextualized analysis of the nuanced and complex interplay between drivers of displacement (environmental, societal, political and economic) and the more immediate triggers such as conflict in order to inform effective strategies in support of durable solutions processes.

We must collectively **invest into capacities to sustain solutions locally and nationally**. Such investments will strengthen national institutions and partnerships that can sustain locally owned solutions

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**.

To conclude, **new approaches are needed for effective humanitarian-development coordination** to find solutions to protracted displacement and give the millions of displaced a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance.

Part of these new approaches is the engagement with private sector in order to stimulate innovative solutions, jobs creation, and public private partnership. The development and business communities must work together to catalyze change that positively impacts both refugees and host communities.

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.

It means investing time and resources in creating jobs, promoting enterprise development, and building the skills of both refugees and the communities in which they live. It means promoting market-oriented solutions in communities affected by the crisis, to ensure the sustainability of these investments, and to ensure that refugees are well-prepared for life after displacement.

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 structures and systems to do more and better together in the search for durable solutions for displacement affected communities² Uganda. This is why the CRRF process is critical to ensure that we address displacement and solutions differently.

¹Skills assessments, DRR/ environmental/ urban assessments, economic and market/ private sector analysis, absorption capacity of different sectors, etc.

² The term 'displacement affected communities' entails all displaced populations and host communities.