

Are integrated access to services a step towards integration in Northern Uganda?



- Objectives and methodology
- Ugandan context
- Refugee integration in Uganda
- Integrating services in policy and in practice
- Settling refugees for integration
- Shared services towards integration
- Recommendations and way forward



Whether, and in what ways, integrated services contribute to better outcomes for refugees who are in a situation of protracted displacement in Northern Uganda

What is the **current policy** in terms of shared services to host and refugee communities in Uganda and to what extent are services for refugees and host communities integrated in practice?

From the perspective of refugees and host populations, **what are the social and economic implications** of shared services? Do they contribute to more positive relations and greater economic engagement?

How have different actors, including aid organizations, approached the **application of integrated services in practice**? To what extent have their approaches been informed by efforts to promote positive community relations?

What are the **longer-term implications** of an integrated refugee-hosting model for Uganda? Does it contribute to more sustainable conditions for refugees? Can any links be made to **local integration**?

What lessons can be drawn from the policy and practice related to integrated services – particularly relating to operational agencies – and what **recommendations** can be drawn for the future?



Research methods

- Qualitative methodology: key informant interviews, focus group discussions, operational workshops & comprehensive literature review



Engagement with host communities

- 12 focus group discussions & numerous KIIs
- Involved host community leaders & members living in the vicinity of Adjumani & Rhino settlements



Research focus and locations

- South Sudanese refugees & their hosts in Adjumani & Rhino settlements.
- Focus on integration of education and livelihoods



Key informant interviews

- 85 key informant interviews & informal discussions
- Involved government representatives from OPM, district leadership in Adjumani & Arua, local leaders in sub-counties hosting refugees, international, national & CBOs, religious & community leaders, community & business groups, donors & researchers



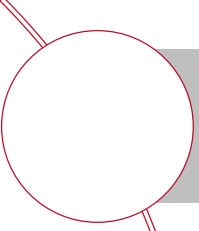
Engagement with refugees

- 12 focus group discussions & numerous key informant interviews
- Involved refugee leaders & members with different ethnicity, age, gender and length of time spent in Uganda

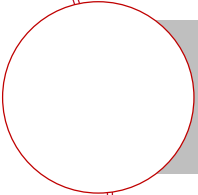


Strong operational focus

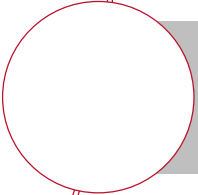
- 4 operational workshops in Kampala, Rhino, Adjumani
- 110 government, donor, research & aid organization representatives



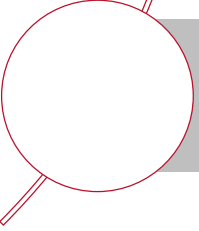
Largely focuses on progress towards socio-economic integration



Time limitations meant that it was not possible to include South Sudanese in urban centres



Perspectives of host communities were largely drawn from those in the immediate vicinity of refugee settlements



The research is primarily field based and as such does not provide an in-depth analysis of all current policy developments

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- ❑ **Number of people affected** – Uganda hosts the highest number of refugees in Africa – over 1.1 million, mainly South Sudanese and Congolese. Many have been displaced since 2013 or before
- ❑ **Uganda's progressive approach being held up as a model:**
 - Refugees can work, access services such as education and health on par with nationals; are not held in camps, but are given plots of land for residence and cultivation
 - The approach is one focussed on self-reliance. Uganda is often presented as a model for other countries – question is whether these policies do result in better outcomes for refugees in terms of integration?
- ❑ **In many ways Uganda is considered as the forerunner and the model for the CRRF**
 - Focus on self-reliance as part of longer term approaches
 - Shared responsibilities between national and international community
- ❑ **Focus on supporting refugees in host community, rather than in camps is an increasing focus**
 - In Northern Uganda where the land is held customarily by communities, host communities have given their land for refugees in the hope that it will lead to increased development
 - The Refugee Response directly reinforce this 'bargain' in 2 ways: integrated services to refugee hosting districts so that they benefit from shared rather than parallel services; and allocating humanitarian assistance in accordance with 70:30

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What is integration?



□ UNHCR definition:

- **Legal process:** refugees attain a wider range of rights in the host state
- **Economic process:** sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living comparable to the host community
- **Social and cultural process of adaptation:** refugees contribute to the social life of the host country and live without fear of discrimination



- Refugee integration is a **gradual process that starts from the point of arrival** and is determined by the conditions and environment in which the settlement of refugees occurs.
- The **identity and social capital** of both refugees and host communities are **key determinants** in their level of integration
- Opportunities for integration depend on a range of factors, including:
 - ✓ **the proximity of refugee settles to host communities;**
 - ✓ **the availability and location of services;**
 - ✓ **the quality and amount of land upon which refugees are settled.**

- ❑ Refugees achieve informal integration in Uganda – but not **legal integration**
- ❑ There are different views on the inter-relationships between a **settlement approach** and the **status of integration**
- ❑ Integrating services linked to **local integration**: see STA, ReHOPE, CRRF and donor policies
- ❑ Refugees are **“agents of development”** so **“refugee asylum space is not only protected but strengthened”**
- ❑ The Ugandan model is **based on an overall assumption of benefit-** equitable access to assistance linked to peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities
- ❑ The bargain, is affected somewhat by **unmet expectations** regarding direct tangible benefits to host community households



- Despite Uganda’s long-standing policy of encouraging refugee self-reliance and its legal stance on integration, refugees who are unregistered and opt out of Uganda’s policy framework are also often those who are the most self-reliant and the most integrated
- Given the complexity of the inter-relationships between **integration, self-reliance and urbanisation**, this is an area that warrants much more research, policy attention and programmatic engagement

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- ❑ The 70:30 principle helps ensure host communities benefit from the overall refugee response, its application is **unclear and inconsistent**, which gives rise to tensions.
 - For example, there are different views about what **constitutes a host community**. NGOs and operational agencies also face challenges in reaching the 30 percent target, which is rarely achieved in practice
- ❑ **Clearer guidance and more coordinated action** on the implementation of the 70:30 principle is required
- ❑ Specific needs of host communities tend to be treated as secondary considerations, with implications for the relevance of the support that is provided. Moreover, host communities themselves are often treated as **secondary at the point of service**
- ❑ Assumed benefit masks considerable costs to some hosts (tensions around land; environmental impact; direct competition for services)



Key assumptions made:

- host communities will automatically benefit from the presence of refugees
- shared services will reinforce asylum space and foster peaceful coexistence
- contribute to peaceful coexistence

In policy:

- ❑ **Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS)** for refugees adopted in 1999- aimed to integrate the services provided to the refugees into regular government structures and policies
- ❑ **Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA)**, linked to **Uganda's National Development Plan II (2015–2020)**- aims at addressing the socio-economic development of refugee-hosting
- ❑ **The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)**- aims to strengthen the integrated delivery of services to host communities and refugees through support for the development of **sector-specific response plans** in refugee-hosting districts

In practice:

- ❑ Uganda currently envisions the integration of services to host and refugee populations in two distinct ways:
 - **Integrated services to refugee-hosting areas are provided** – to the degree possible –that ensures refugees and host communities benefit from shared, rather than parallel, services.
 - Resources are distributed to refugees and their hosts based on quotas- **involves 70:30 principle**
- ❑ **Health and education services** are considered to be the most integrated services
 - Refugee children are allowed to: access government-aided schools; use the Ugandan curriculum; and taught in English as the common language of instruction, from Primary Stage 3 onward
 - Both refugees and Ugandan nationals can access free primary healthcare at health facilities

- ❑ Many of the longer-term objectives featured in Uganda's policies have yet to be achieved in practice. The current approach is characterized by a **short-term emergency focus**
- ❑ Despite a model of integrated services to refugees, **many refugee services sit outside national service delivery structures**- implications for the degree to which they offer a pathway to integration of refugees
- ❑ Current dramatic shifts, evidenced by the **development of sector plans by line ministries and the greater involvement of district local government authorities**
- ❑ The new approaches also require **consistent support from donors with greater, more long-term and more harmonised funding**- need to shift away from humanitarian delivery towards supporting the capacity of government and other national actors
- ❑ Greater attention and focus needs to be given to to urban refugees - research, policy attention and potential support

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- ❑ The **prospects** for, as well as the **quality of**, integration hinge on two key factors:
 - the Ugandan policy environment
 - the receptiveness and attitudes of host communities
- ❑ Where land tenure is customary and held by communities; host communities **are primary stakeholders in refugee hosting**
- ❑ The receptiveness of host communities is also informed by the **shared identities, cultural kinship and common histories** between northern Uganda and South Sudan
- ❑ **Inclusion of host communities in the refugee response** assists with host community acceptance of refugees in the immediate vicinity of refugee settlements. A strategy of inclusion enables continued acceptance of refugee hosting and creating a basis for peaceful coexistence within the vicinity of the settlement



Although **refugee hosting hinges on the goodwill of hosts**, there is an absence of in-depth knowledge about and comprehensive assessments of **the short and long-term impacts** of refugee hosting on host communities

Host communities concerns

- ❑ **Process of securing land and concerns that this is pressurized-** not sufficiently consultative and without due consideration for host community cultural practices
- ❑ Key stakeholders, such as elders, communal land associations and local officials **also report being sidelined in land negotiations**
- ❑ **Unclear and unmet expectations** regarding the granting of land
- ❑ **Growing sense of inequity-** perceptions of inequity on the part of host communities is also a function of continued grievances towards the OPM (that is, broken promises; lack of adequate appreciation for land that is granted)



Possible interventions

- ❑ **Comprehensive analysis of the land issues** that bear on refugee hosting. Such an analysis could be used to inform a strategy on how to more effectively mitigate and manage land conflicts
- ❑ **Land acquisition could be formalized** to facilitate greater security, consistency and uniformity
- ❑ District authorities to **provide customary land rights registration services**, which could offer more secure tenure for landlords. The involvement of government, however, must be acceptable for customary landlords.
- ❑ **An informal system could be established** that entails the witnessing of verbal agreements by mutually agreed, reliable and impartial parties

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Shared services **is a factor** but not key to integration. Shared services between refugees and their hosts provide a platform for the integration of refugees. It remains crucial to consider:

- ❑ **Location of settlements** in under-populated areas - reduced benefits to hosts, reduced opportunities for interaction
- ❑ **Shared services a platform for engagement but other factors such as–** sports, markets, religion – are more significant
- ❑ **When services are stretched, sharing results in conflict.** Health and education services struggle to meet their primary objectives – incorporating integration also difficult.
- ❑ **Settlements often on poor quality, ‘offered’ land, limiting potential for sustainable livelihoods**



Integrated services can offer a **pathway to social and economic integration**. Unless they are planned and executed with integration in mind, however, this will be incidental. The **geographical isolation of refugees in settlements**, where there are low numbers of relatively dispersed Ugandan nationals, **limits the degree** of social and economic integration that results from shared services

Shared education

- ❑ Many refugee children attend community schools in settlements that are often run either by UNHCR or NGOs (not integrated into the national education system)
- ❑ Refugees are entitled to free primary education on par with Ugandan nationals.
- ❑ A **common language and a shared learning environment** enables social integration
- ❑ The significance of education for South Sudanese means that it is a decisive factor in deciding where to flee and settle, and whether to return
- ❑ **Severe underfunding of schools** can limit social cohesion. If implemented, the Education Response Plan has the potential to improve educational outcomes for both refugee and host community children

Shared livelihoods

- ❑ Economic integration involves a process of establishing **sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living** comparable to the host community
- ❑ The refugee settlements are sites of dynamic economies. Recent studies indicate **95% of refugees are engaged in crop production and 22% sell part of their produce**
- ❑ Few South Sudanese have **access to land on a sufficient scale and quality to facilitate this**. Lack of land fundamentally affects prospects for self-reliance
- ❑ There is widespread recognition that refugees face major barriers to self-reliance, which fundamentally undermine prospects for economic integration

Focus on subsistence,
with limited support for
bulk production

Ongoing food security

Issues with
diversification of
livelihoods and matching
skills with markets

Concerns regarding
quality, technical capacity
and development
approaches

Primary barriers to sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance

Livelihoods funding is
primarily single year,
limiting opportunities for
longer-term strategies

Lack of integration into
economies beyond
settlements

- ❑ Integration occurs despite the predominant economic focus of the Ugandan refugee model and many aid agency interventions
- ❑ Different rates of **integration**, but **‘caseload’ approach**
 - Identity and background of South Sudanese often overlooked
 - South Sudanese are not a homogenous group - focus on ‘South Sudanese’ but adaptation at different rates
 - Common ethnicities, language and livelihoods - major impact on prospects for integration
- ❑ Time is significant – younger, long-staying or returning refugees more integrated
- ❑ Operational agencies require **more in-depth understanding** of the diversity of South Sudanese and dynamics of South Sudanese conflict to support peaceful co-existence and integration



Recommendations:

What is the way forward? How can response strategies be adapted?



THE WAY FORWARD

Drive forward, fund and ensure coordinated support for current efforts to integrate and localise the Ugandan refugee response

- Current moves to integrate refugees into the National Development Plan III from 2020 onward are highly welcome, as are the articulation of sector-specific response plans and the recognition of the central role of district local government in refugee governance
- These positive developments should be supported by an **area-based approach** to determining local host and refugee community needs

THE WAY FORWARD

Ensure the Livelihoods & Jobs Response Plan incorporates an achievable strategy of self-reliance for refugees both within and outside settlements that is rooted in the economic development and social integration of refugee-hosting districts

- Livelihoods work should be framed by an overarching strategy that aims to achieve refugee self-reliance
- It should be linked to the economic development of refugee-hosting districts. Livelihoods work should also take into **account the capacities and aspirations** of refugees and host communities

THE WAY FORWARD

Prioritize and fund settlement and site planning so that refugees in settlements have better prospects of self-reliance and land sensitivities are managed more effectively

- Integration and longer-term prospects are determined by decisions taken in relation to **where and how to settle refugees in the first place**
- There should be a greater investment of time and resources in settlement and site planning, including attention to building local capacities to participate more effectively in these processes

Engage host communities in a more systematic way and address the actual financial costs and opportunity costs of refugee hosting

THE WAY FORWARD

- The assumed benefits associated with refugee hosting **underplay the consideration of costs to communities** and individuals in the short and longer term, despite the fact that refugee hosting **hinges on the willingness of host communities** to do so
- Refugee-hosting communities should be better **informed about these costs**, minimizing potential tensions and offering opportunities to collectively address these

THE WAY FORWARD

Recognize and address the diversity of the South Sudanese refugee population and increase capacities for conflict management

- The identity, gender, ethnicity, social networks of refugees and host communities, and their proximity to one other have a major bearing on relations between refugees and hosts, as well as within refugee communities
- These factors also impact the pace of integration and impinge on peaceful coexistence, especially within refugee communities. Often overlooked, much more attention should be given to these issues