



UGANDA

COUNTRY PROFILE

Development Partners Meeting on the Sudan
Regional Refugee Crisis

September 17, 2024

Country Context

The Sudanese crisis that began in April 2023 has significantly impacted Uganda's refugee situation. By September 2024, Uganda hosted over 1.74 million refugees, with a notable increase in Sudanese arrivals. The number of Sudanese refugees rose from about 15,000 by January 2024 to over 55,000 by September 2024, surpassing predictions and accounting for 40 per cent of new arrivals in Uganda for the year to date.

Kiryandongo refugee settlement, designated as the primary reception and registration point for Sudanese refugees, hosts over 60 per cent of Sudanese refugees, with 25 per cent in Kampala and the remainder (comprising mostly those who entered Uganda before 15 April 2023) in other settlements in the North. Nearly 50 per cent of the refugees are women and girls and 71 per cent are women and children. Refugees who settle in Kiryandongo receive regular refugee response benefits, which include humanitarian assistance such as food, education and health care services and emergency shelter items, while those in Kampala benefit from policy and advocacy support to reduce barriers to accessing jobs and livelihoods as urban refugees are expected to be self-reliant.

Uganda's globally acclaimed refugee policy, underpinned by the Refugees Act (2006) and Regulations (2010), guarantees refugees essential rights, including freedom of movement, employment, and access to national services. This progressive approach, coupled with the explicit inclusion of refugees in Uganda's National Development Plan III, creates an unparalleled environment for development investments.

Evidence Base

Uganda boasts one of the most thorough evidence bases on which to build refugee response and policy. Refugees are included alongside host communities in a number of significant surveys: the [2018 Uganda Bureau of Statistics-World Bank 2018 Refugee and Host Communities Household Survey](#), [C2021 IFC Consumer and Market Study in Southwest and West Nile](#), 2020/21 High Frequency Phone Survey Monitoring Covid Impacts ([First Round](#), [Second Round](#), [Third Round](#)), [2022 Demographic and Health Survey](#), and 2023 Uganda National Household Survey. More than 30 publications on refugees in Uganda are available through the [Joint Data Center Literature Review Database](#). Among other findings, this research demonstrates that inclusive refugee-hosting in Uganda [improves local development and prevents public backlash](#). The presence of refugees [benefits many Ugandan households](#), including those who have shifted from subsistence agriculture into commercial farming and wage employment. At the same time, targeted efforts, such as [providing aid to microentrepreneurs](#), shows promise for reducing tensions and improving attitudes towards refugees. Yet, research also indicates that despite the favorable environment [refugees face challenges securing employment](#), are more likely to accept jobs below their skills levels and are paid less than host community peers for similar jobs., are more likely to accept jobs below their skills levels and are paid less than host community peers for similar jobs.

Ongoing Development Partner Interventions

As part of their overall support to Uganda's refugee response, several development partners are actively responding to the Sudan crisis by addressing the needs of both refugees and host communities, including in Kiryandongo refugee settlement and surrounding areas as well as urban Kampala.

Uganda is working to ensure that provision of basic services such as health, education and water for refugees are integrated into the national systems. With support from development partners such as the World Bank, European Union Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships, Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, UK Foreign, Commonwealth

and Development Office, the Netherlands, Denmark, among others, facilities in the refugee settlements are gradually transitioning to government ownership and management. For instance, 95% of qualifying health facilities and 36% of schools accessed by refugees in settlements are “coded” as government facilities despite 80% of health workers and 65% of school staffing in those facilities are still being covered through humanitarian assistance.

The Government of Uganda is building the capacity of district authorities to manage emergencies including strengthening the role of districts, such as Kiryandongo, as first responders to refugee influxes. For instance, the Displacement Crisis Response Mechanism (DCRM) under the WB-supported Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) phase 1 has been established to support local governments with rapid budget transfers to help them scale up service delivery during emergencies.

Efforts are underway to increase economic opportunities for refugees and host communities, including in Kiryandongo. With support from development partners, Uganda is establishing industrial parks across the country to address high unemployment, some of which are proposed to be located near the settlement areas for the transformation of the local economy. The Government is also engaged with relevant stakeholders to create a business enabling environment in these locations to facilitate and attract private sector investments. The African Development Bank (AfDB) is contributing to this through a regional program on enhancing the investment climate in refugee hosting areas for economic empowerment of the forcibly displaced and their hosts. Additionally, other actors, including foundations, support secondary and tertiary education, and livelihoods activities including job opportunities for skilled refugees.

Recommended Priority Investments

The overarching goal is to advance the inclusion of refugees into national systems. The arrival of Sudanese refugees has increased pressure on already strained basic services in Kiryandongo and other hosting areas, including in urban Kampala. Financial and political investments from government and development partners are required through appropriate development financing mechanisms.

1. **Health:** New arrivals from Sudan, who access national health services on par with nationals, have put additional strain on the already overstretched health care services, which require long-term development investments in support of Uganda’s Government-led Health Sector Integrated Refugee Response Plan (HSIRRP) 2019-2024 to ensure access to quality health services and support the transition of health facilities in Kiryandongo to full government management.
2. **Water and sanitation:** There has been a reduction in the level of services, which can be attributed to the increased number of new arrivals without a match in infrastructure development. The per capita water consumption rate stands at 17 liters per person per day, on average with some pockets of the settlement - especially where new arrivals are settled - receiving as low as 11 liters per person per day. Expanding the infrastructure requires additional investment.
3. **Education:** To include over 12,000 school-age Sudanese children in the national education system and ensure that both host community and refugee children have access to quality education, requires additional development investments in support of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) Second Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP II).

4. **Economic and financial inclusion:** There is an opportunity to support the Government's Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledge to create 300,000 economic opportunities by 2027 by investing in agricultural value chains and agribusinesses and facilitate private sector investments and job creation initiatives for refugees and host communities in Uganda, including in Kiryandongo district. There is also a plan to adopt a 'hub approach' to boost economic transformation in refugee hosting districts by improving access to integrated services within proximity and freeing up more land for pursuing economic activities at scale. The economic hub will entail creation of common user facilities including one stop business facilitation centres, business incubation centres and improve connectivity through infrastructural development (e.g. roads, access to national gridline and off-grid energy sources). This will require additional development investments including socio-economic data analysis and skills profiling to inform livelihoods interventions. Efforts will also need to continue to engage with Government authorities to facilitate the ease of access to work permits by refugees, as well as the interoperability between the refugee ID system and the national systems including the banking system and the Credit Reference Bureau to advance the financial inclusion of refugees in line with Uganda's Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028.
5. **Land use master plans:** Such planning approaches pursued in areas receiving new arrivals will guide systematic plot demarcation and allocation of specific uses such as shelter and kitchen gardens, farming for subsistence and surplus production, woodlots, protected areas, roads, WASH facilities and other physical infrastructure, and are expected to contribute significantly to more efficient and sustainable use of development resources.