



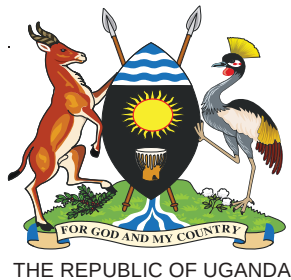
THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
DEPARTMENT OF REFUGEE MANAGEMENT
ANNUAL REPORT
2025



Office of the Prime Minister
Department of Refugees Management
P.O. Box 341, Kampala-Uganda
Sir Apollo Kaggwa Road - Old Kampala



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

DEPARTMENT OF REFUGEE MANAGEMENT

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STATEMENT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES MANAGEMENT



*Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner
for Refugees Management in the
Office of the Prime Minister*

The Department of Refugees, on behalf of the Office of the Prime Minister in executing its functions, ensures that Uganda's commitments under national legislation, regional frameworks, and international refugee protection instruments are upheld. The Annual Report, provided for under Section 9(5) of the Refugees Act, 2006, serves as a key instrument of accountability.

In this regard, I wish to register my sincere appreciation to the Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees and the Minister of State for Refugees, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees for their leadership and sustained political support to the refugee response, and to the Permanent Secretary for his supervision and technical leadership of the refugee response.

I also appreciate all OPM leadership for their strategic guidance, as well as commend the dedication of the staff of the Department of Refugees who continue to advance Uganda's refugee response amidst growing demands.

Special appreciation is extended to UNHCR as co-principal protection partner; the refugee-hosting District Local Governments; and all line Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies for their complementary role in refugee response. I also recognize the valuable contributions of the CRRF Secretariat, donor community, development partners and implementing agencies, whose contributions strengthen the Department of Refugees' efforts.

We salute regional and international networks, particularly IGAD, the East African Community, the United Nations system, and foreign governments, for standing with Uganda in refugee protection and solutions.

Uganda remains committed to its Open-Door Policy; however, persistent declining humanitarian financing threatens this commitment. The Government annually contributes over USD 700 million in-kind, through shared services and national systems, including health, education, infrastructure, security, environmental management, and administrative functions, benefiting refugees and the hosting populations, yet international support for Government coordination

continuously dwindles every year, placing the burden ought for international community instead on the Government.

Uganda's refugee response model, anchored in self-reliance, has enabled the country to sustainably host millions of refugees. Reforms within the Department have strengthened transparency, accountability and service delivery, and operational integrity has improved significantly.

Going forward, the Department of Refugees will continue to strengthen coordination, accountability, reinforce partnerships, modernize data and digital systems, and promote durable solutions while maintaining the central role of Government leadership.

I call for increased and sustained support for refugee response, including flexible and multi-year financing, investments in resilience and durable solutions, sustainable government coordination and enhanced development-humanitarian-peace nexus programming.

I urge all partners to continue collaborating closely with the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure an efficient, principled, and accountable refugee response that protects the dignity and rights of refugees while advancing the development of hosting districts. The Department remains committed and ready to work with all stakeholders to uphold international protection standards and sustain one of the most progressive refugee responses in the world.



Patrick Okello

COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda has a long and distinguished record as a country of asylum, hosting refugees since the 1940s and institutionalizing its progressive, settlement-based approach in 1958 with the establishment of Nakivale Refugee Settlement. Grounded in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* and reinforced by strong constitutional, legal, and policy frameworks, Uganda's Open-Door Policy remains one of the most inclusive refugee protection models globally. As of 2025, Uganda hosted over 1.97 million refugees and asylum seekers from more than 34 countries, residing in 13 refugee settlements and urban areas, with the majority originating from South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan.

The refugee response is centrally coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) through the Department of Refugees, in accordance with the 1995 Constitution, the Refugees Act (Cap. 312), and international refugee instruments, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention. The Department is mandated to oversee refugee admission, registration, documentation, settlement management, and coordination of services delivered by government entities, UNHCR, District Local Governments, and humanitarian and development partners. Operationally, the Department of Refugees functions through a multi-tiered structure comprising Headquarters in Kampala, Regional Desk Offices, and Settlement-based Offices. This structure enables decentralized coordination, oversight, and service delivery across refugee-hosting districts.

Uganda's refugee protection cycle begins at border entry points and transit centres, where asylum seekers undergo security, health, and protection screening prior to registration. Nationals from designated countries are granted *prima facie* refugee status, while others undergo Refugee Status Determination (RSD) through the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC). In 2025, the REC convened 13 sessions, adjudicating 10,543 household applications covering 18,585 individuals, and granted refugee status to 16,420 individuals. The Refugee Appeals Board (RAB) reviewed 59 appeals involving 361 individuals during the reporting period.

Registration and documentation remained central to protection and inclusion. In 2025, OPM issued 82,369 Refugee Identity Cards, 118,319 family attestation forms, 4,717 Asylum Seeker Certificates, and 7,859 Refugee Convention Travel Documents, enabling lawful stay, freedom of movement, access to services and livelihoods, and international travel where applicable.

Recognized refugees are settled under Uganda's settlement-based model, which allocates land for shelter and subsistence farming while promoting coexistence with host communities.

Settlements are established on both government-owned and community-owned land, with OPM serving as custodian. In 2025, land acquisition and settlement planning efforts resulted in the acquisition of 150 additional acres and the demarcation of 1,400 plots in Rhino Camp. Nonetheless, land scarcity, population growth, limited compensation mechanisms, and environmental pressures continue to pose sustainability challenges.

Refugees and host communities accessed a wide range of services across key sectors. Protection and legal services supported individual case management, detention monitoring, mobile courts, child protection, and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response. Community Services strengthened psychosocial support, social inclusion, referrals, and peaceful coexistence, managing over 14,850 individual protection cases, with women and children—who constitute over 52% of the refugee population—remaining the most affected.

Access to basic services remained relatively strong but uneven. In health, over 98% of refugees accessed services through the national health system, supported by coded facilities, Village Health Teams, and emergency outbreak response mechanisms. In water and sanitation, approximately 95% of refugees and host communities accessed improved water sources; however, per capita availability remained below Sphere standards in several settlements due to climate variability and infrastructure constraints. In education, enrolment reached 717,685 learners, exceeding targets; however, the anticipated withdrawal of Education Cannot Wait (ECW) funding is projected to create a teacher deficit exceeding 2,000, placing education access for nearly 400,000 learners at risk.

Livelihoods and food security remained among the most critical challenges. Despite Uganda's progressive legal framework granting refugees the right to work, move freely, and access land, an estimated 48% of refugees experienced acute food insecurity in 2025, driven by declining humanitarian assistance and severe funding gaps. Food assistance coverage fell sharply, with only 22% of the Refugee Response Plan funding requirements secured. Government-led initiatives—including block farming, climate-smart agriculture, market-based livelihoods, financial inclusion, and the rollout of the Uganda Self-Reliance Index (UG SRI)—represent important steps toward advancing refugee and host community self-reliance.

Durable solutions efforts continued, though at limited scale. Voluntary repatriation remained constrained by insecurity in countries of origin, with 844 refugees repatriated over the past three years and planning underway for potential Sudanese returns in 2026. Resettlement remained a critical yet limited pathway: while an estimated 160,300 refugees required resettlement in 2025,

only 939 individuals were resettled, reflecting global capacity constraints and policy shifts in traditional resettlement countries. Local integration remained the cornerstone of Uganda's response, with approximately 98% of refugees accessing national education, health, and livelihood systems on par with nationals, and eligible refugees able to pursue pathways toward naturalization.

Coordination and oversight of the refugee response were strengthened through robust national, regional, and settlement-level mechanisms. In 2025, OPM convened monthly national interagency meetings, 20 regional coordination meetings, and over 156 settlement-level meetings. The rollout of the Partnership Coordination and Monitoring System (PCMS) modernized partner registration, MoU management, project profiling, financing tracking, and reporting, significantly enhancing government oversight, transparency, and alignment with national priorities.

At the policy development level, the National Refugee Policy underwent further review in response to evolving global displacement dynamics and declining international solidarity. While OPM did not directly implement projects in 2025, it successfully mobilized financing for major initiatives—including the World Bank-supported Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) and the China Humanitarian Assistance Project (CHAP)—both scheduled for implementation in 2026.

Overall, Uganda's refugee response in 2025 reflects a resilient, rights-based, and development-oriented system that continues to deliver protection and services at scale despite severe financial, environmental, and operational constraints. Sustaining this globally recognized model will require predictable and long-term international financing, strengthened land and environmental management, sustained investment in education and livelihoods, enhanced data-driven planning, and deeper integration of refugee response within national systems. Without renewed international responsibility-sharing, Uganda's ability to maintain its open and inclusive refugee protection framework will face increasing strain.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	:	African Union
BIMS	:	Biometric Identity Management System
Cap.	:	Chapter
CMI	:	Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence
CHAP	:	China Humanitarian Assistance Project
COI	:	Country of Origin Information
CRRF	:	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DLG	:	District Local Government
DOR	:	Department of Refugees
DRC	:	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRDIP	:	Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project
EAC	:	East African Community
GBV	:	Gender Based Violence
GCM	:	Global Compact on Migration
GRF	:	Global Refugee Forum
GROW	:	Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises
HIV/AIDS	:	Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IACG	:	Inter-Agency Coordination Group meetings
ID	:	Identity Card
IGAD	:	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IOM	:	International Organization on Migration
IRC	:	International Rescue Committee
ISO	:	Internal Security Organization
M&E	:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAAIF	:	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MDAs	:	Ministries, Departments, Agencies
MOFA	:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoLG	:	Ministry of Local Government
MOSRDPR	:	Minister of State for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees
MRDPR	:	Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees
NCIPs	:	Northern Corridor Integration Projects

NDP	:	National Development Plan
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organisations
NITA-U	:	National Information Technology Authority - Uganda
NRC	:	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAU	:	Organization for African Unity
OPM	:	Office of the Prime Minister
PSN	:	Persons with Special Needs
RAB	:	Refugee Appeals Board
REC	:	Refugee Eligibility Committee
RIA	:	Regulatory Impact Assessment
RS	:	Refugee Settlements
SRH	:	Sexual Reproductive Health
UDAP	:	Uganda Digital Acceleration Project
UN	:	United Nations
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	:	United High Commissioner for Refugee
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPF	:	Uganda Police Force
URRI	:	Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative
URRMS	:	Uganda Refugee Response Monitoring System
USA	:	United States of America
WASH	:	Water, and Sanitation, Hygiene
WFP	:	World Food Programme
WHO	:	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter explores Uganda's long-standing history as a host country for refugees, highlights trends in refugee inflows overtime, the context of the Uganda Open Door Policy and examines the legal framework and the coordination and Operational Structure of the Department of Refugees

1.1 Historical Context of Hosting Refugees in Uganda

Uganda has hosted refugees and asylum seekers even before gaining independence, when in the early 1940s, over 7,000 Polish refugees fleeing Europe during World War II were hosted in camps around the present-day Mukono and Masindi districts, before later being resettled back to Europe. From 1958, Uganda adopted a settlement approach, beginning with the hosting of Rwandese refugees in Nakivale Refugee Settlement. Over the past decade, the country has experienced large-scale refugee influxes, currently with over 1.97 million individuals arriving from more than 34 countries and settled across 13 refugee settlements.

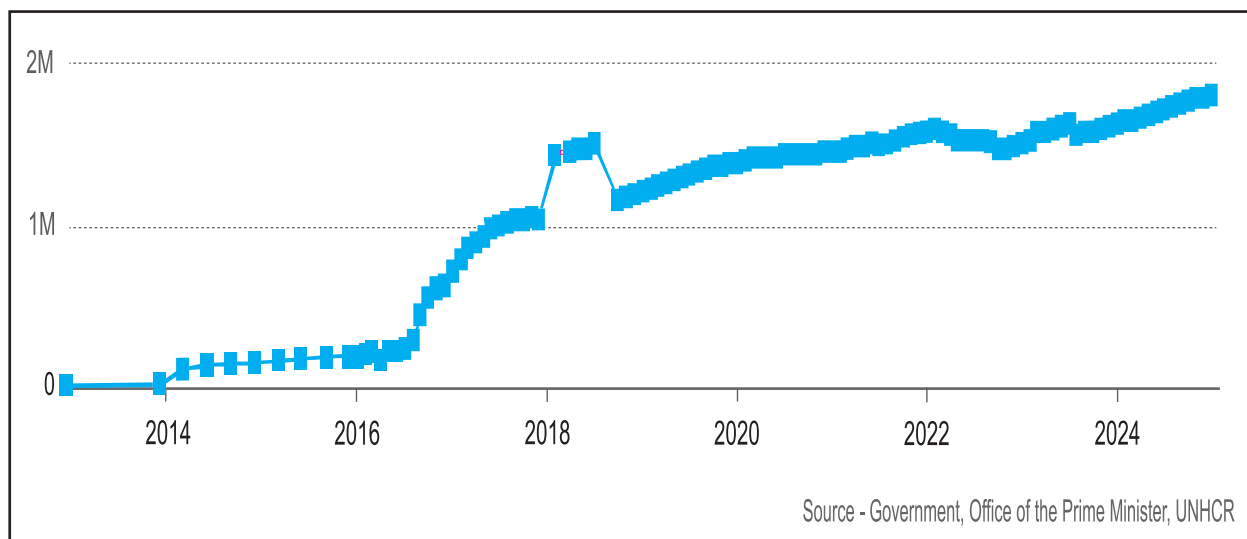


Figure 1: Showing total refugees & asylum seekers in Uganda 2014-February 2025

Refugees hosted in Uganda come from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Pakistan, Kenya, Turkey, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syrian, Congo Republic of the Brazzaville, Central African Republic, United Republic United Republic of Tanzania, Egypt, Cameroon, Chad, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Iran, Palestine, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, India, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria and Uzbekistan.

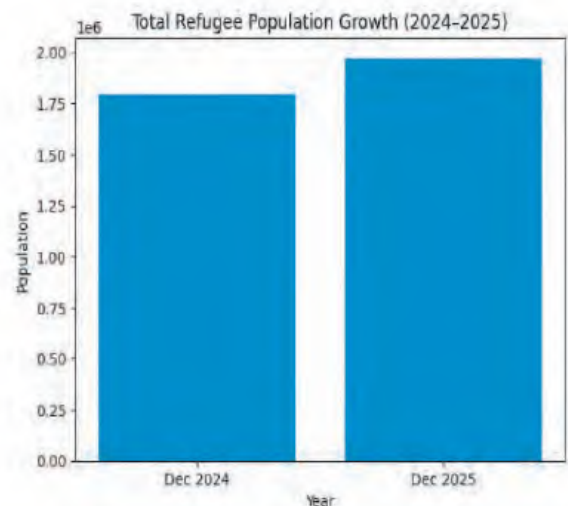
1.2 Refugee Statistics in 2025

Infographics showing Uganda Refugee Population Snapshot — 2025

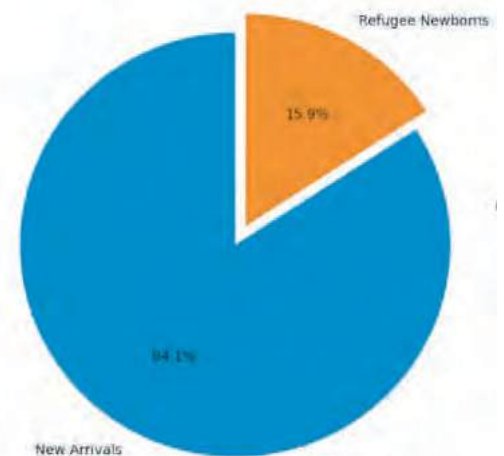
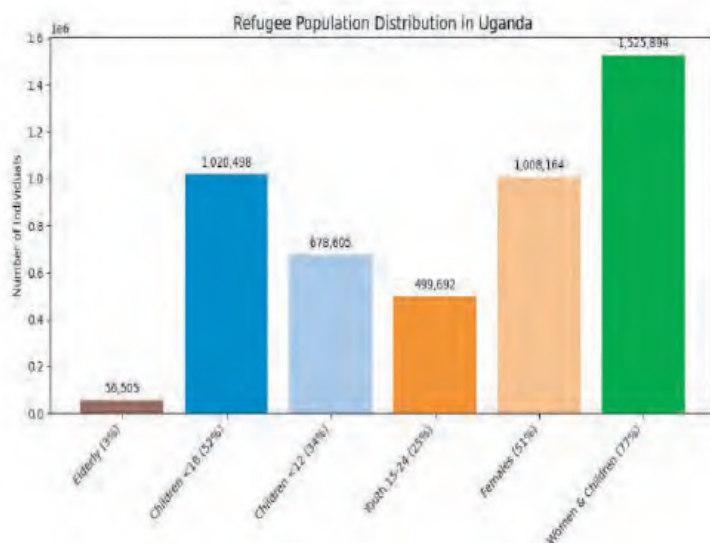
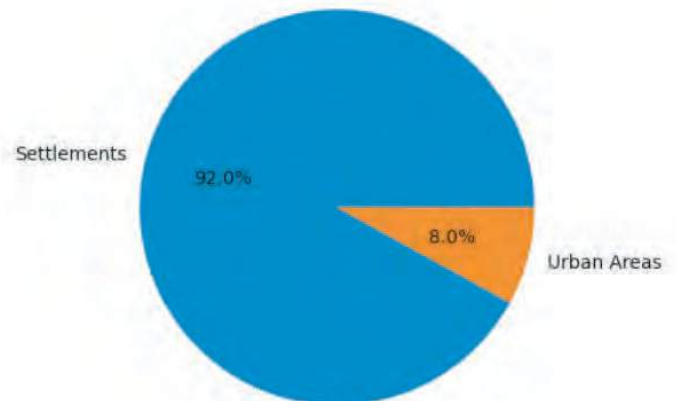
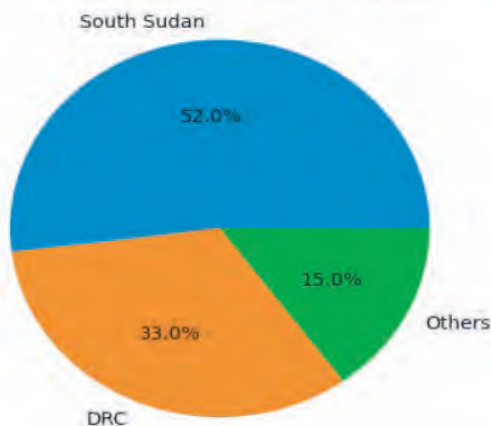
Total Refugee Population Growth (2024–2025)

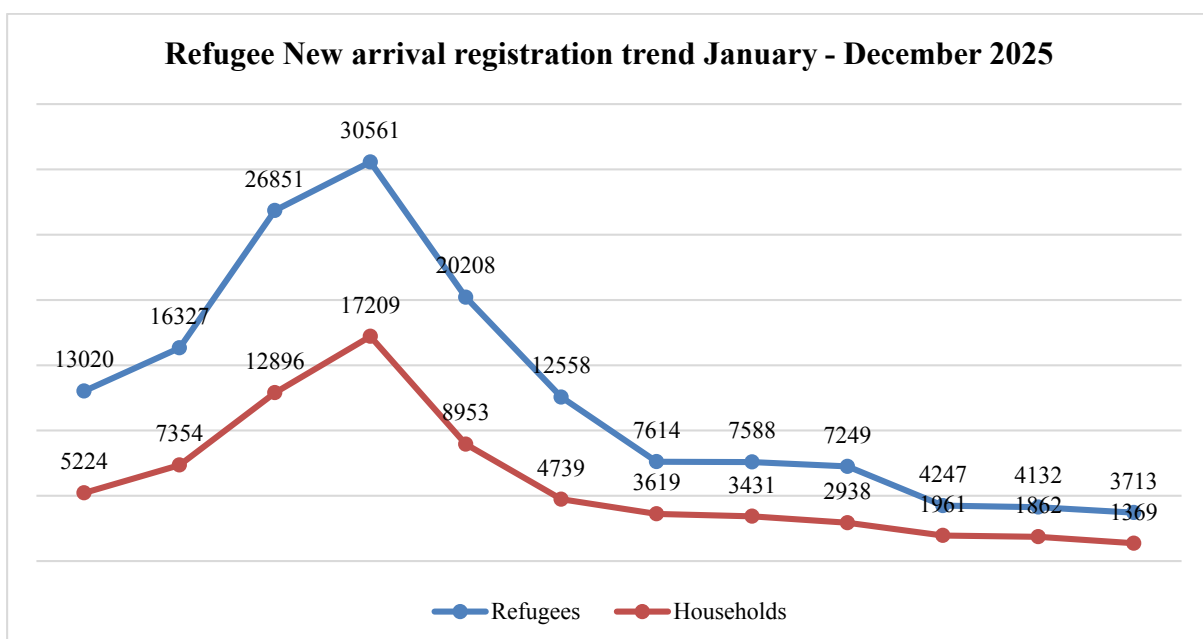
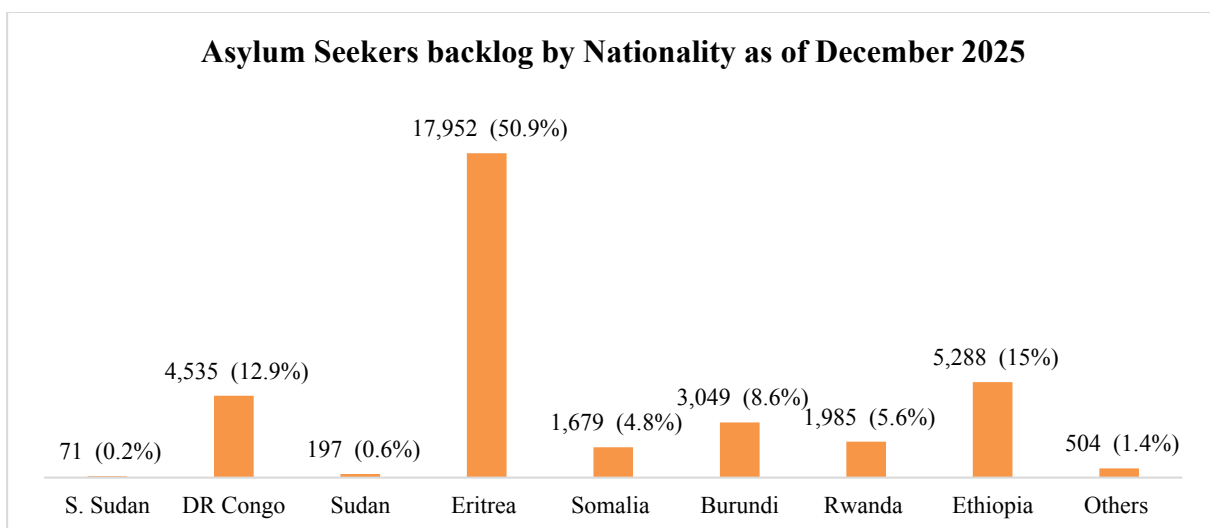
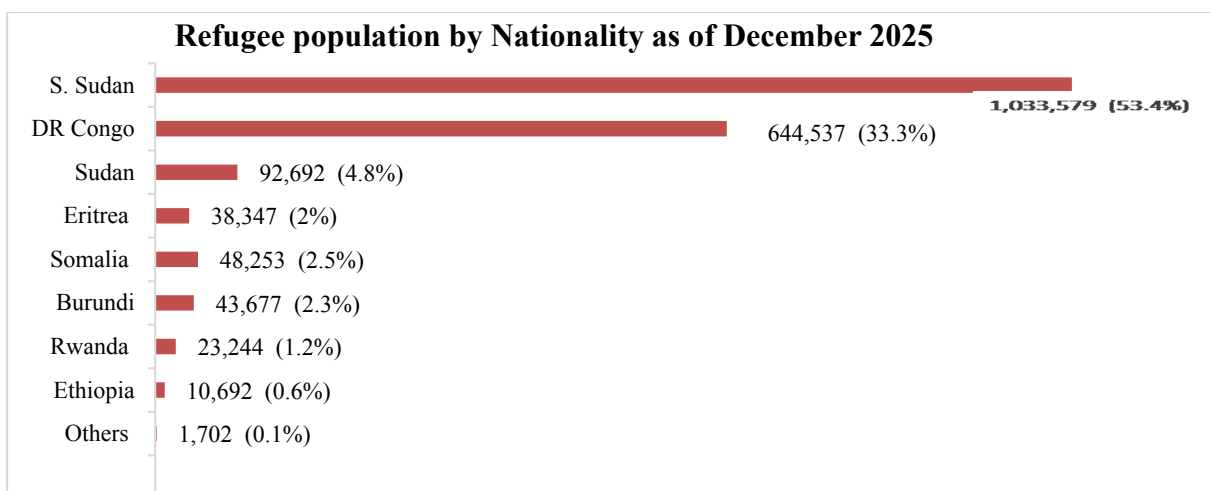
Uganda received 175,374 new refugees in 2025 representing 8.9% annual increase.

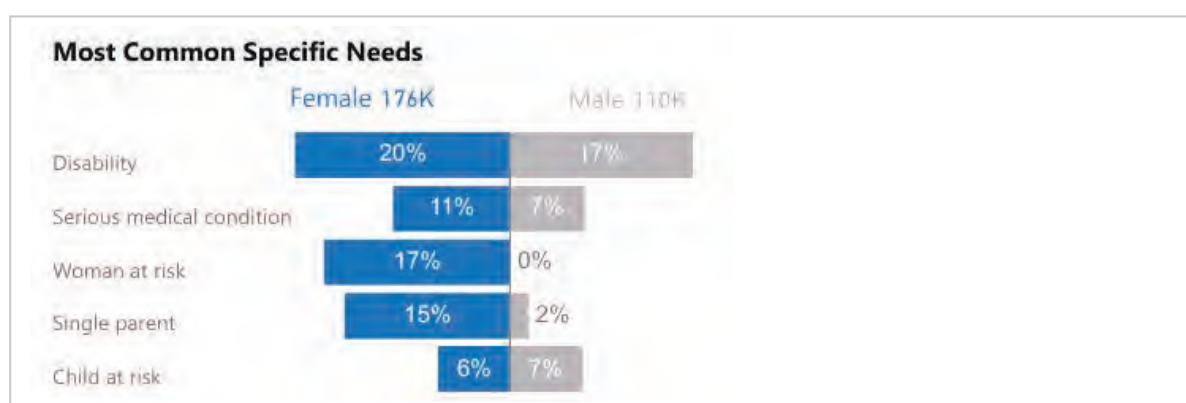
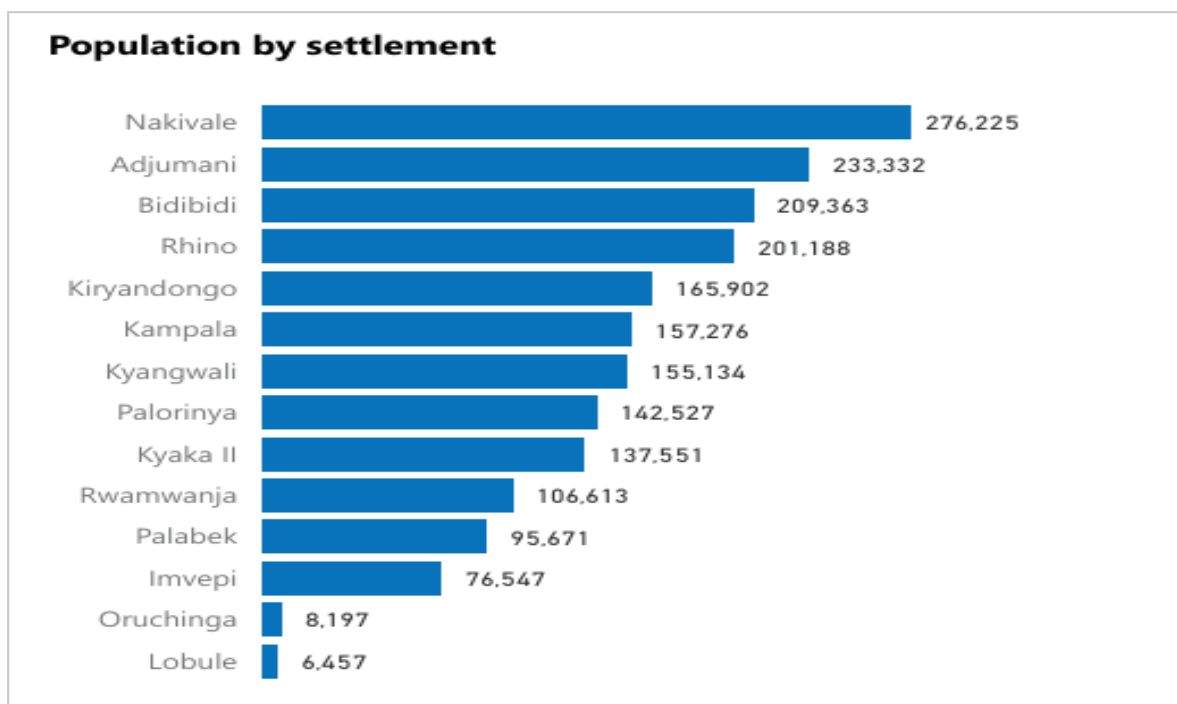
- **December 2024:** 1,796,609 refugees
- **December 2025:** 1,971,983 refugees
- **Monthly average:** 14,615 arrivals/month
- **Daily average:** 480 arrivals/day



Country of Origin Breakdown, 2025







1.3 Context of the Uganda Open Door Approach

Uganda has a long and distinguished history of hosting refugees, dating back to the 1940s when it welcomed Polish refugees. However, the foundation of Uganda's modern Open-Door Approach is generally traced to 1958, with the establishment of the Nakivale Refugee Settlement, the first refugee settlement in the country.

The Approach is deeply rooted in the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasizes humanity, solidarity, and the moral responsibility to care for others. This philosophy, passed down through generations, has instilled in Ugandans a belief that refugees are to be treated as brothers and sisters. It has fostered harmonious relationships between host communities and refugees, even at high economic cost, host communities often demonstrate extraordinary generosity, offering land to the government for refugee settlement.

Uganda's Open-Door Approach represents a humanitarian approach to asylum, welcoming individuals fleeing conflict. The government establishes settlements where refugees can live safely, access land, engage in livelihood activities, and coexist peacefully with local populations. The approach emphasizes self-reliance by facilitating access to land, work, health and education, free movement across the country and ensures that refugees benefit from all other national social and economic services alongside Ugandans.

Beyond providing safety and opportunity, the government actively promotes protection, dignity, and the sustainable development of both refugee settlements and host communities. Refugee affairs are integrated into broader national development plans, and Uganda supports durable solutions, including local integration, voluntary repatriation, and third-country resettlement.

1.4 Legal Framework for Refugee Management in Uganda

Uganda's obligation to host refugees is premised on its commitments to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol of 1967, as well as the 1969 OAU Convention. Uganda has also ratified other International Legal Instruments relating to Fundamental Human Rights.

The 1995 Uganda Constitution puts Human Rights, including those of Refugees, at the center of our democratic principles. Article 189 (1) Sixth Schedule, Item 5 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda as amended, centralized refugee management and currently the function is placed under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

The Refugees Act, Cap.312, Section 7, establishes the Department of Refugees as the Government office for Refugees. Under Section 8 (1), the Department is mandated to handle all administrative matters concerning refugees in Uganda, including receiving, registering, documenting and processing their status, as well as facilitating their settlement. It is also responsible for coordinating refugee services by non-government actors and line ministries, in liaison with UNHCR and local authorities, to ensure an effective refugee response.

1.4.1 Functions of the Department of Refugees Management as outlined in Section 8 of the Refugees Act, Cap.312

- (1) Responsible for all administrative matters related to refugees in Uganda, and coordinates refugee-related activities and programs for government ministries and with non-governmental partners
- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1):-
 - (a) Is the Secretariat of the Eligibility Committee (REC);
 - (b) Advise the Government and the Eligibility Committee on policy and other matters relating to refugees;
 - (c) Advise the Government on international and regional conventions and Government's obligations relating to refugees;
 - (d) Protect refugees and coordinate the provision of services for their welfare;
 - (e) Identify and initiate projects for refugees and refugee-affected areas;
 - (f) Advise and work in liaison with the UNHCR and other organisations on refugee programmes and their implementation;
 - (g) Implement national and regional development plans relating to refugees, in line with current international refugee practices;
 - (h) Promote and participate in inter-state and regional initiatives for voluntary repatriation of refugees;
 - (i) Promote Uganda's regional and international cooperation on refugee matters with other countries and international organisations;
 - (j) Obtain country of origin information about applications of asylum seekers;
 - (k) Custodian of government properties in refugee settlements;
 - (l) Issue identity cards and recommendations for travel documents to refugees; and
 - (m) Ensure the maintenance of law and order in refugee settlements.

1.4.2 Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives for the Department of Refugee

Vision



To find durable solutions to refugee problems by addressing refugee issues within the broad framework of Government policy and to promote self-reliance and local integration of refugees in the communities through social development initiatives in hosting areas.

Mission



To manage the response of refugees in Uganda by ensuring their welfare and protection within the framework of national policy, international laws and standards while safeguarding the Local and National interests.

Strategic Objective *To Enhance the National Response Capacity to Refugee Management in Line with National, Regional, and International Frameworks.*



1.4.3 Coordination of the Uganda Refugee Response by OPM (Department of Refugees)

Resolution 428(V) of the 1950 Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) explicitly mandates UNHCR to coordinate international refugee protection. This includes facilitating durable solutions, coordinating global efforts, promoting the rights of refugees, collecting relevant information, and advocating on behalf of refugees worldwide. Essentially, the statute ensures that both states and the international community fulfill their responsibilities toward refugees and stateless persons.

OPM (Department of Refugees) is responsible for coordinating refugee protection within Uganda in collaboration with UNHCR. This mandate involves receiving refugees in accordance with international protocols, registering and documenting their status, facilitating settlement by coordinating relevant services with stakeholders, and supporting durable solutions in line with the National Refugee Frameworks.

The efforts of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in refugee response are complemented not only by UNHCR, but also by Refugee-supporting partners, District Local Governments

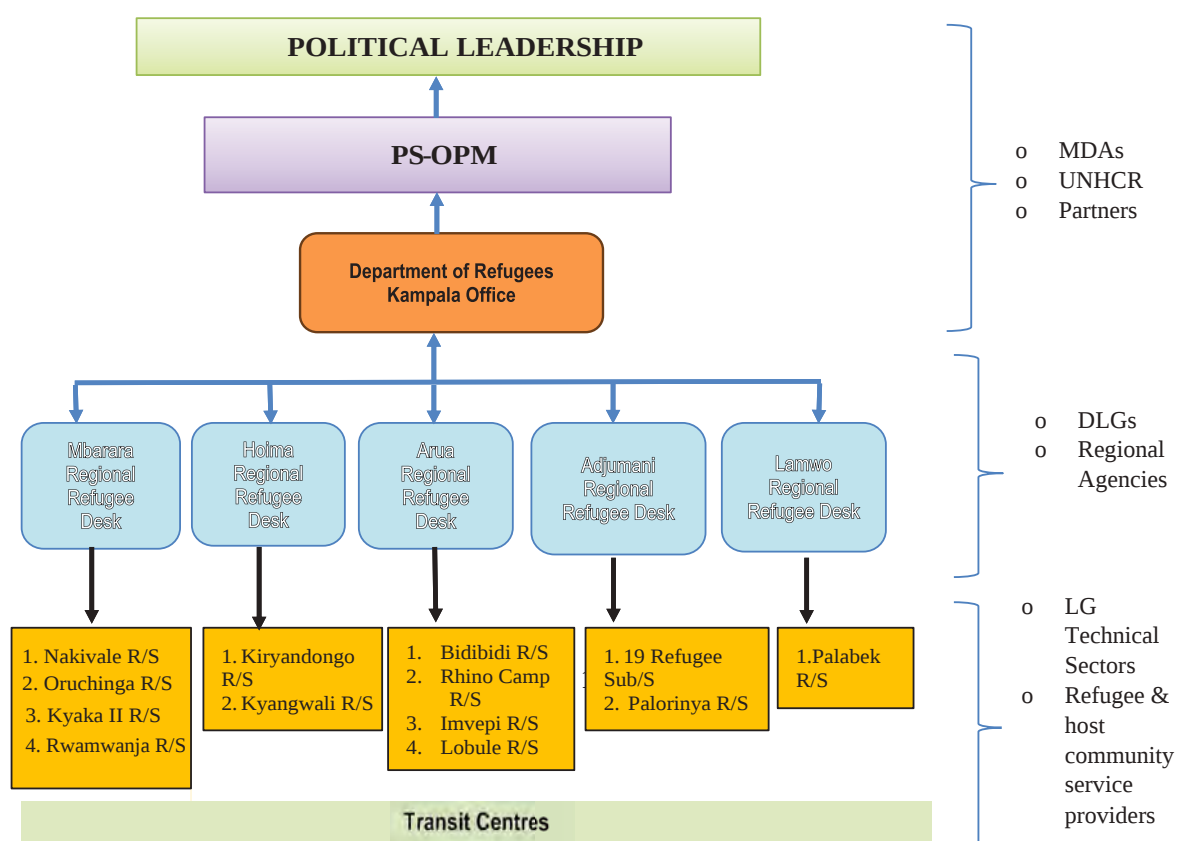
(DLGs), and relevant line Ministries. These partners, coordinated by OPM, deliver services that extend beyond Government capacities. DLGs host refugees within their jurisdictions, where refugees share services with host communities, while line Ministries continue to guide national policies and frameworks relevant to refugee management.

Following the September 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) was established by the UN General Assembly. Uganda was among the first countries to adopt the CRRF in 2017. The CRRF Secretariat was formed to coordinate CRRF activities, complementing the Government's previous, ongoing and new refugee response efforts.

1.4.4 Operational Administrative Structure of the Department of Refugees Management

The Department of Refugees is structured within the Office of the Prime Minister, with political oversight provided by a Cabinet Minister and a Minister of State. The Permanent Secretary is the overall technocratic head, supported by the Commissioner for Refugee Management, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the department.

The Department has its headquarters in Kampala that overseeing clusters of 13 refugee settlements and the urban refugees, located in 12 Refugee Hosting District Local Governments.



Organogram showing the Administrative Structure of the Department of Refugees

The Department of Refugees is structured to coordinate and deliver refugee response services at national, regional, and settlement levels. It is staffed across its organizational structures to ensure effective coverage and responsiveness to the needs of refugees and stakeholders. Through its multi-tiered structure—Headquarters, Regional Desk Offices, and Settlement Offices—the Department coordinates a complex refugee response involving a large refugee population and multiple stakeholders, enabling effective collaboration, oversight, and service delivery at all levels.

At Headquarters in Kampala, the Department comprises specialized Sections and Units, including Protection, Registration, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Programme - Finance, Integration and Community Services. Each Section is headed by a designated Section Head who oversees technical and operational staff responsible for policy guidance, coordination, oversight, and service delivery across the refugee response.

At the regional level, the Department operates through Regional Desk Offices headed by Desk Officers and supported by regional staff. The Desks provide supervision and coordination oversight for the refugee settlements within their respective regions, and they serve as a critical link between Headquarters and the field.

At the settlement level where refugees are settled, Department staff are deployed directly within refugee settlements to support day-to-day implementation, service delivery, and coordination with partners. Settlement-based staff work closely with Regional Desk Offices, Headquarters, and a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that refugee services are delivered efficiently and in line with national policies.



Mr. Alex Kakooza, the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister during a meeting with the staff of the Department of Refugees Management

CHAPTER TWO

1.0. Introduction

The section outlines the refugee protection cycle in Uganda from initial reception to durable solutions. Upon arrival, persons fleeing conflict or persecution are screened for security, health, and vulnerabilities, and their basic demographic and background data are collected before lawful entry. Asylum seekers are issued temporary documentation and registered, with their biodata captured for the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process. Those from designated situations are granted prima facie refugee status, while others undergo case-by-case assessment by the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC).

Recognized refugees are allocated to settlements and provided access to services coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR, alongside government MDAs, UN agencies, NGOs, and other partners. Throughout the settlement, stakeholders pursue durable solutions, including voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement

Illustration of Refugee Protection Cycle in Uganda



2.1 Receiving Refugees

Uganda has long been recognized for its open-door policy toward refugees, providing safe haven to those fleeing conflict, persecution, or hardship in neighboring countries. Uganda continued to grant prima facie refugee status to asylum seekers originating from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and Sudan, particularly those entering through designated and recognized transit centers.

2.2 Transit Centres

The majority of asylum seekers entered Uganda through land borders from conflict-affected neighboring countries, often arriving in large influxes. They are received at transit centres, where initial screening was conducted by government agencies, including security personnel, the Ministry of Health, and OPM protection officers. Manual registration was carried out by OPM in collaboration with UNHCR. At these transit centres, essential services such as hot meals, water, medical care, and temporary shelter are provided. The key entry transit centres include:

1. Elegu Transit Center – Located in Amuru District, near the Uganda-South Sudan border, it primarily receives refugees from South Sudan.
2. Nyumanzi Transit Centre - Located in Adjumani receives refugees from South Sudan.
3. Kuluba Transit Centre – Located in Koboko receives refugees from South Sudan.
4. Nyakabande Transit Center – Located in Kisoro District, near the Uganda-DRC border, it mainly receives refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
5. Matanda Transit Center – Located in Kanungu District, it also receives refugees from DRC, especially those entering Uganda through southwestern border points.
6. Bubukwanga Transit Center – Located in Bundibugyo District, receives Congolese refugees



Section of the asylum seekers influx received at Nyakabande Transit Center in Kisoro



The RDO Adjumani Desk Office, Ms. Abina Polyne (Blue cap), briefing the ECHO delegation, UNHCR and Partners at the refugee collection point at Elegu Border



EU, OPM, and UNHCR officials visit Oraba - Kaya border to assess humanitarian cooperation prospects



Mr. John Bosco Ssentamu, Emergency Coordinator at OPM's Department of Refugees, overseeing the reception and transporting of refugees at Bunagana Border enroute to Nyakabande Transit Centre during the early 2025 Congolese emergency.

2.3 Reception Processes

After being received from the transit centres, asylum seekers continued to be transported to the Reception Centres. The active Reception Centres in 2025 include:

1. Sebagoro Reception/Transit Point – Located in Kikuube District, near Lake Albert, it serves Congolese refugees arriving by boat.
2. Lokung Reception Center – Located in Lamwo District, primary receives South Sudanese refugees.
3. Bunagana Border Point – While not a formal transit center, it serves as a major entry and temporary holding point for DRC refugees before relocation.
4. Nimule/Elegu Collection Point – Another key reception area for South Sudanese refugees before they are moved to settlements.



New arrivals are received at a Reception Center being relocated to the refugee settlement

Upon arrival at the Reception Centres, asylum seekers undergo a structured reception process that includes screening, profiling, sensitisation, and registration. Individuals who meet the

required criteria are granted prima facie refugee status and are subsequently transferred to designated refugee settlements.

2.4 Screening and Profiling

Screening at the Reception Centres is conducted in accordance with established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The process covers several key components:

- **Nationality Verification:** to confirm the declared country of origin and prevent entry by individuals posing under false identities.
- **Security Checks:** to maintain the safety and integrity of the settlement and surrounding host communities.
- **Protection Needs Assessment:** conducted by OPM protection officers to identify persons with heightened vulnerabilities, including unaccompanied or separated children, persons with disabilities without caregivers, elderly persons living alone, survivors of torture or severe trauma, and other individuals requiring special protection measures.

Screening was carried out by a multi-agency committee composed of the Settlement Commandant (Chairperson), the Deputy Commandant from the Office of the President (Vice Chairperson), the Assistant Protection Officer, representatives from the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (UPDF), Community Services, and UNHCR.

During screening and profiling, key biodata and reasons for flight are recorded using standard profiling forms. This information is forwarded to the Registration Unit for biometric enrolment and verification in proGres v4.



Screening for new arrivals being conducted in Rhino camp-Ocea reception center

2.5 Support at Reception Centres

While at the Reception Centres, asylum seekers receive immediate humanitarian assistance. Services typically provided include hot meals, potable water, temporary shelter, and basic medical support. Sensitisation sessions are also conducted to orient new arrivals on settlement life, rights and responsibilities, and available services. Prior to relocation to settlements, asylum seekers are issued attestations, and SIM cards are provided to facilitate food and cash transfer assistance in addition to non-food items (NFIs), which are sometimes distributed in cash and sometimes in kind.



New arrivals being prepared for relocation to the Refugee Settlement



New arrivals receiving Non-Food Items e.g. blankets at the Reception Center

2.6 Registration of New Asylum Seekers

Registration of new arrivals is routinely conducted by the Office of the Prime Minister using proGres IV, a registration system managed by UNHCR. Registration is carried out at the Reception Centres. All asylum seekers arriving from identified routes and countries whose nationals are granted prima facie refugee status are formally registered, attain refugee status upon completion of the registration process, and are issued attestation forms that include all family members. For those aged 16 and above, individual Refugee IDs are also issued in addition to the family attestation.

Asylum seekers who walk into settlements outside the designated influx routes and do not automatically qualify for prima facie refugee status are registered at the respective settlement offices or at the Kampala desk and offered an asylum seeker certificate as an identification document. These cases undergo the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) process, which is conducted both centrally in Kampala and through field visits to settlements.

Settlement and desk offices are also responsible for updating refugee data, including new births, changes in household composition, and other demographic updates.



Entry of Kabazana Reception Center in Nakivale Refugee Settlement



New arrivals being served with Hot meals at the Reception Center



Community sensitisation for new arrivals is conducted at the Reception Centres by refugee response partners.



New Asylum seeker being registered by OPM Staff



Registration of refugees in Rhino Camp settlement



Registration being done at the OPM - Kampala office with a help of an interpreter

2.7 Documentation for Refugees

Individuals receive different documents depending on their status to confirm legal stay, enable access to services and assistance, and support freedom of movement and livelihood opportunities. Documentation is therefore central to refugee protection and inclusion.

2.7.1 Issuance of Refugee Identity Cards (IDs)

Refugees who are 16 years and older and have attained refugee status are issued individual Refugee IDs. The card is valid for a limited time and can be renewed with re-verification of the refugee status. These ID cards are crucial for accessing services such as healthcare, education, and employment, and any other services that require valid identification. A total of 82,369 refugees were issued with IDs in 2025



2.7.2 Issuance of Attestation forms

Attestation forms serve as official proof of refugee status for individuals and their families during the initial registration process. They record the names and details of all family members, date of arrival, and the basis of refugee status (prima facie or following eligibility determination). These forms are issued to all registered refugees, including those under 16 years who are not eligible for individual Refugee Ids. Attestation forms are used to access services, humanitarian assistance, and to facilitate relocation to settlements. They are prepared and issued by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in collaboration with UNHCR during registration at Reception Centres or settlement offices. During the reporting period, a total of 118,319 refugee households were issued Family Attestation Cards.

The form is titled 'REFUGEE FAMILY ATTESTATION' and is issued by the 'OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER' in Kampala, Uganda. It includes the following details:

- Date of Issue:** 04-Feb-2025
- Place of Issue:** Kampala Capital City
- Individual No:** HHS-0000111
- Group No:** HHS-00-0000
- Name:** JANE DOE
- Date of Birth:** 01-Jan-1994
- Nationality:** Somali
- Date of Expiry:** 04-Feb-2028
- Level 1:** Central
- Level 2:** Kampala Capital City
- Level 3:** Kampala
- Level 4:** Kampala Central
- Level 5:** Kampala
- Sex:** Female

The form also features a barcode and a silhouette of a person. At the bottom, there are three smaller silhouettes of people, each with a corresponding QR code.

2.7.3 Issuance of Asylum Seeker Certificates

Asylum Seeker Certificates, renewable after 3 months, are issued to individuals who have applied for asylum and are awaiting the completion of their refugee status determination. They serve as official proof of registration as an asylum seeker and allow access to limited humanitarian assistance and basic services while claims are being processed. All new arrivals who have not yet been granted prima facie or full refugee status receive these certificates. They are prepared and issued by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in collaboration with UNHCR, usually at Reception Centres or settlement offices. During the reporting period, a total of 4,717 asylum seekers were issued Asylum Seeker Certificates.

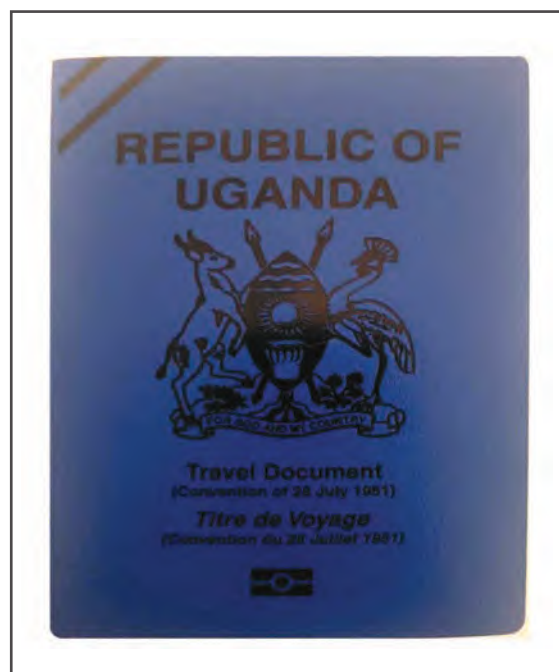
The form is titled 'Asylum Seeker Certificate' and is issued by the 'OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER' in Kampala, Uganda. It includes the following details:

- Date of Issue:** 08-Feb-2025
- Expiry Date:** 06-May-2025
- Place of Issue:** Kampala
- Group No:** HHS-25-0000000
- Individual No:** HHS-11937287
- Government No:** 25/0141/231232
- Name:** JANE DOE
- Date of Birth:** 28-Jul-1982
- Sex:** Female
- Level 1:** Central
- Level 2:** Kampala Capital City
- Level 3:** Kampala
- Level 4:** Kampala Central

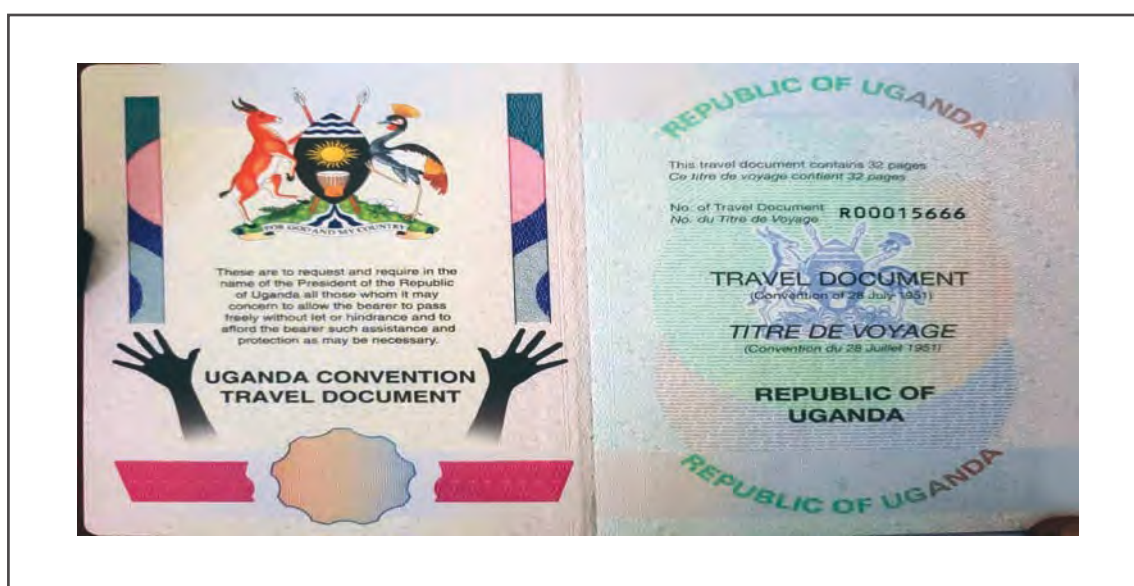
The form also features a barcode and a silhouette of a person. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN' which states: 'The above mentioned is an asylum seeker from Ethiopia; whose case is under consideration by the Refugee Eligibility Committee. While the case awaits the Refugee Eligibility Committee decision, this letter serves as temporary Identification Document and it expires three months from the date of issue. This document is renewable if the asylum process is not complete. Holder is accompanied by no member.'

2.7.4 Issuance of Refugee Conventional Travel Documents (CTDs)

Refugee Conventional Travel Documents are issued to recognized refugees in Uganda to facilitate international travel, particularly for those without a national passport. They serve as legal travel documents under the 1951 Refugee Convention, allowing refugees to cross borders, apply for visas, and conduct other travel-related activities. CTDs are granted to refugees with full recognition and registration, rather than asylum seekers. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) facilitates the application process, while the documents are officially issued by the



Ministry of Internal Affairs, Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC). CTDs are usually valid for one to five years and can be renewed upon expiry. They enable refugees to travel for resettlement, education, employment, family visits, and other purposes, ensuring legal recognition abroad. During the reporting period, a total of 7,859 refugees received Refugee Conventional Travel Documents.



2.8 Refugee Status Determination

2.8.1 The Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC)

The Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) is an inter-ministerial body established under Section 11 of the Refugees Act, 2006, mandated to examine and decide on applications for refugee status in Uganda.

The Office of the Prime Minister serves as the Secretariat to the REC, which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of OPM or his representative. Membership comprises Permanent Secretaries or their representatives from key ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Local Government, the External Security Organization, the Internal Security Organization, and the Uganda Police Force. UNHCR takes part in REC deliberations in an observer capacity.

In 2025, the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) conducted 13 sessions, adjudicating a total of 10,543 household applications covering 18,585 individuals. Compared to 2024, when the REC assessed 24,162 applications for 34,105 individuals, this represents a 56% decrease. This reduction is mainly attributed to resource constraints to undertake continuous REC activities.

The REC granted refugee status to 16,420 individual asylum seekers. In addition to granting status, the REC deferred 13 cases and rejected 1,812 cases. Rejected cases may be appealed before the Refugee Appeals Board (RAB) while dismissed cases are referred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for further management under migration laws.





A Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) session being conducted at Matanda Transit Center





A Refuge Eligibility Committee (REC) session being conducted at DOR -Kampala

2.8.2 The Refugee Appeals

Refugees whose applications are rejected may appeal to the Refugee Appeals Board (RAB), established under Section 16 of the Refugee Act, 2006, with appellate functions and powers within the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures as provided in Section 17 of the same Act and Regulation 37 of the Refugee Regulations, 2010.

The RAB consists of five board members appointed by the Ministry of Relief, Disaster Preparedness, and Refugees, and is supported by two Secretariat staff from the Department of Refugees.



A Refugee Appeals Board (RAB) session being conducted in Nakivale Refugee Settlement

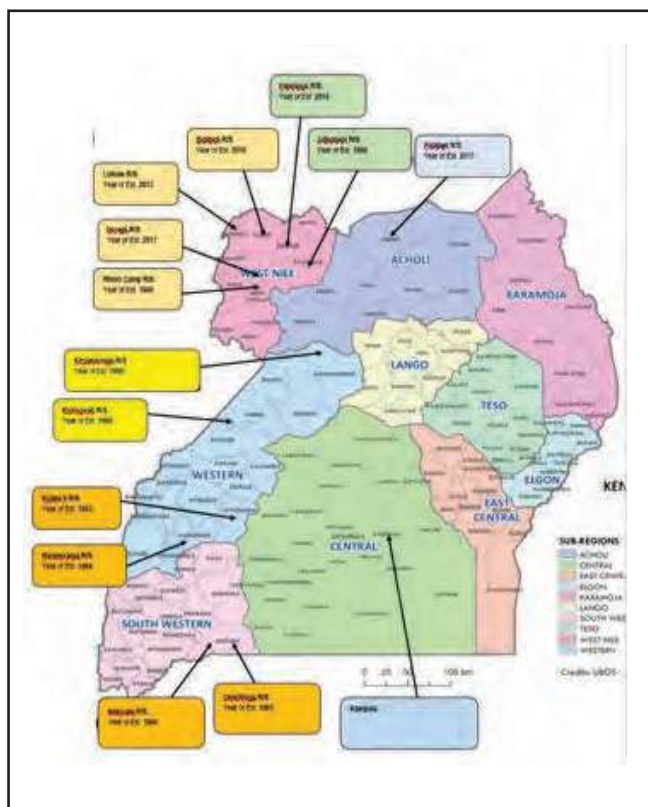
During the period, the Refugee Appeal Board (RAB) reviewed 59 appeal applications involving 361 individuals. of these, 86 individual decisions were confirmed for dismissal, while 19 others had their decisions set aside. The remaining 256 individuals were referred to REC for a re-hearing.

2.9 Settling of Refugees in Uganda

From the reception centers, refugees are relocated to designated refugee settlements, where each household is allocated land for shelter and livelihood activities.

Uganda implements a settlement-based refugee protection model, rather than establishing traditional refugee camps. Under this approach, refugee households are allocated approximately 30 × 30 meter plots for shelter and subsistence farming.

Uganda's model is internationally recognized for being progressive, development-oriented, and conducive to local integration, enabling them to live alongside host communities and granting them freedom of movement and access to documentation and services similar to nationals.



Refugee settlements in Uganda are established on both government-owned and community-owned land under the stewardship of the Office of the Prime Minister, which serves as the custodian of all settlement lands.

In Southwestern Uganda, settlements are located on government-owned land covering approximately 451.98 square miles, including:

1. Nakivale Refugee Settlement
2. Oruchinga Refugee Settlement
3. Kyaka II Refugee Settlement
4. Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement
5. Kyangwali Refugee Settlement
6. Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement

In West Nile and Northern Uganda, settlements are situated on community-owned land spanning approximately 605.009 square miles, including:

1. Adjumani Refugee Settlement
2. Palorinya Refugee Settlement
3. Palabek Refugee Settlement
4. Lobule Refugee Settlement
5. Bidibidi Refugee Settlement
6. Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement
7. Imvepi Refugee Settlement

Community land acquisition is facilitated through negotiations involving district leadership, sub-county authorities, and private landowners, after which formal agreements are signed and certified by the relevant local authorities.

In 2025, meetings on land-related matters were held across several refugee settlements to address land challenges and advocate for additional land allocation. For instance, nine meetings were conducted with stakeholders and landlords in the combined settlements of Bidibidi, Rhino Camp, Lobule, and Imvepi, resulting in the successful acquisition of 150 additional acres for refugee settlement and block farming.



*Commissioner for Refugees Management at
Imvepi Refugee Settlement*

Lobule, and Imvepi, resulting in the successful acquisition of 150 additional acres for refugee settlement and block farming.



Commissioner for Refugees Management with some staff of Imvepi Refugee Settlement

Land verification, demarcation, and allocation were carried out with the support of partners, including CEFORD and NRC. Notably, a total of 1,400 plots were successfully demarcated and allocated to newly arrived households in Zone 8 of Rhino Camp Settlement. These interventions

were critical in ensuring access to adequate living space, promoting the dignity and safety of refugees, and supporting orderly settlement planning.



Land verification exercise with landlords in Bidibidi



Land assessment and verification with landlords in Rhino Camp, Zone 8

To maintain strong relations with landlords, OPM conducts periodic consultative engagements to address concerns related to land use and compensation. However, limited support to landlords has created pressure on land access and contributed to tensions, with some landowners threatening to reclaim land for livelihood purposes.



OPM staff led by the Senior Settlement Commandant, Mr. Mugabe Geoffrey, together with UNHCR during a plot demarcation exercise in Palorinya Refugee Settlement.

OPM in collaboration with district authorities, host communities, and partners will need to strengthen sustainable land management strategies, investment in settlement expansion, and

long-term planning to prevent overcrowding and to ensure continued support, safety, and integration opportunities for refugees and host communities.

2.10 Activities and Services for Refugees and Host Communities

2.10.1 Refugee Legal Protection Services by OPM

During the reporting period, the Protection Legal unit implemented comprehensive interventions to safeguard the rights, safety, and dignity of refugees and asylum seekers. Key focus areas included coordination and partnerships, case management and individual support, detention and field monitoring, and capacity building. These activities were carried out in close collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, government institutions, and protection partners.

1. Refugees received legal aid, mediation, and court representation in matters such as disputes, gender-based violence, and child protection. Through community outreach, the unit educated refugees on their rights, responsibilities, and legal procedures in Uganda. This legal support strengthened refugee integration, facilitated access to essential services, and ensured protection within Uganda's legal framework. The following efforts were undertaken during the year: Protection Legal staff actively participated in national, regional, and thematic coordination forums to strengthen inter-agency collaboration and streamline protection service delivery. This year, several key engagements were held, and these included:
 - i. **Review of Regional Gender Analysis on the dynamics of forced displacement in the IGAD region.** (Entebbe, Uganda) Engaged in active participation to share insights on the gender dimensions of displacement, collaboratively identifying gaps at the member state level within the gender analysis, and highlighting areas that require attention or improvement.
 - ii. **Access to Justice Coordination Meeting (UNHCR):** Participated in discussions on legal aid provision, updates on ongoing activities, challenges in service delivery, and strategies to improve access to justice for refugees and asylum seekers.
 - iii. **Livelihood Coordination Meetings (IRC):** Participated in meetings focused on integrating protection considerations into livelihood programming and promoting refugee self-reliance.
 - iv. **IGAD Thematic Roundtable (Nairobi, Kenya):** Engaged with regional stakeholders to review refugee protection frameworks, documentation processes, and inclusion initiatives, alongside the Commissioner and Head of Registration.

- v. **Regional Conference on Refugee Documentation (Protea Hotel):** Actively participated in discussions on EAC and national documentation frameworks, digital registration systems, cross-border recognition, and mitigation of bureaucratic challenges.
- vi. **Police Training on Refugee Protection and Access to Justice for displacement-affected persons OPM, UNHCR, and NRC:** Participated in a three-day training for law enforcement officers in the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area to enhance understanding of refugee rights, applicable legal frameworks, and coordination mechanisms.



Police training session at Silver Springs Hotel, Kampala

- vii. **National Coordination Mechanism Workshop:** The workshop engaged key national and international stakeholders to endorse the Terms of Reference, develop a five-year workplan, and establish Uganda's GCM Voluntary National Review (VNR) roadmap.
- viii. **Case Management and Individual Protection Interventions:** Significant effort was dedicated to individual case follow-up and protection interventions, including:
 - ix. **Immigration Detention Case:** Continuously engaged with relevant authorities and UNHCR to advocate for the release of a refugee detained for over six months despite a valid court order and approval from the Permanent Secretary.
 - x. **Protection Relocation:** Recommended for the relocation of refugees facing protection risk to a protection village due to credible threats to life, ensuring safety and access to essential services.
 - xi. **Verification-Related Follow-Up:** Assessed and reviewed cases of refugees who missed verification exercises due to COVID-19, Ebola, or administrative challenges. Decisions were made through approval, rejection, or deferral for further consultation, ensuring fairness and due process. Refugees who missed verification exercises due to health

emergencies or earlier administrative inconsistencies required extensive follow-up, placing additional strain on protection and registration systems.

2. The OPM Refugee Protection/Litigation Desk, in liaison with UNHCR, handled complex and sensitive cases within the urban caseload, including:
 - Separated and Unaccompanied Children
 - Persons with legal and physical protection risks
 - Persons of undetermined nationality referred to the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC)
 - Household merge and split requests assessed in line with best interest and protection principles
3. In 2025, mobile court sessions were conducted in several refugee settlements to enhance access to justice. For example, in Imvepi Settlement, a total of 10 cases were handled: 3 resulted in convictions, 2 were settled out of court, 1 was scheduled for judgment, 1 hearing was conducted, and 3 cases were adjourned with new dates set for continuation. These sessions have played a key role in ensuring timely resolution of disputes and reinforcing the rule of law within refugee communities.
4. The Refugee Protection team conducted joint assessments, facilitated referrals for persons with specific needs requiring specialized protection services, and carried out in-depth evaluations of complex cases to inform final recommendations on registration eligibility and related decisions
5. In partnership with the Uganda Human Rights Commission, two legal sessions were held in Imvepi settlement with 108 participants (57 men and 51 women). The sessions addressed Ugandan laws and penalties, human rights and refugee rights, and the legal frameworks underpinning them, including the Constitution of Uganda, the 2010 Refugee Act, and the Penal Code Act.
6. **Detention Monitoring and Field Visits:** Detention monitoring remained a core protection activity throughout the year. OPM in conjunction with UNHCR, NRC and other partners conducted at Luzira Prison Complex (Remand, Women, Upper Prison, and Murchison Bay), Kitalya Mini Max and Farm Prisons, Jinja Maximum Prison, Kigo Men and Women Prisons, Mukono Prison, and Nakasongola Men and Women Prisons.

Detention visits were conducted to assess detention conditions, identify protection gaps, and support refugees and asylum seekers in custody. The visits also aimed to identify individuals in need of legal representation, track the progress of cases under legal aid, provide basic

counselling and material support, and identify detained persons without family or community support.

It was noted that some refugees and asylum seekers remained in detention for extended periods despite court orders or administrative approvals, largely due to procedural delays and coordination gaps among responsible institutions.



The Litigation Desk is conducting interviews with refugees who missed their verification appointments.

7. **Border Monitoring conducted by OPM:** Following renewed conflict between M23 and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, an influx of refugees prompted an emergency response at Nyakabande Transit Centre and Nakivale Refugee Settlement. The protection team conducted monitoring activities to assess the overall emergency response and identify critical protection needs.

Despite notable achievements, Protection Legal faced several operational and systemic challenges during the reporting period:

- **High Caseloads and Limited Resources:** Increasing urban caseloads, coupled with limited staffing and financial resources, constrained the timely handling of complex protection and litigation cases.
- **Security and Protection Risks:** Some refugees faced ongoing security threats, necessitating relocation or intensive monitoring, which required significant logistical and financial support.

- **Limited Awareness Among Frontline Actors:** Gaps in knowledge of refugee protection frameworks among some law enforcement and local actors continued to affect access to justice, despite ongoing training efforts.

2.11 Refugee Community Services offered by OPM

The Community Services Unit at the Department of Refugees plays a critical role in enhancing access to essential services for refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda. It coordinates with partners and government institutions to provide psychosocial support, conduct outreach activities, and facilitate peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities. The unit addresses critical issues such as gender-based violence, health service transitions, and child protection through case management and awareness sessions. It also manages referrals to settlements, organizes commemorations of key international days, and educates refugees on their rights and obligations. These efforts contribute to promoting resilience, safety, and harmonious integration within host communities.

During the year, the Community Services Unit made notable progress in supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

1. Child Protection Services by OPM

During the reporting period, the Community Services Unit provided child protection and community-based support to refugees across all 12 refugee settlements and to urban refugees in Kampala. Children constitute approximately 52% of Uganda's refugee population, placing them at increased risk of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and family separation. In response, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, and child protection partners prioritized child protection case management, outreach, family tracing, psychosocial support, and coordination with national systems to safeguard the well-being of refugee children, through the following activities:

- a) **Best Interest Assessments:** Newly arrived refugee children underwent Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) to identify protection needs, assess vulnerabilities, and establish linkages to appropriate services, including family tracing, psychosocial support, education, and alternative care. In Kampala alone, 117 refugee children received BIAs during the reporting period.
- b) **Best Interest Determinations:** For complex cases requiring formal protection decisions, OPM, together with UNHCR and specialized child protection partners, conducted Best Interest Determinations (BIDs) to guide interventions such as family reunification, long-term

care arrangements, alternative care placement, and other durable solutions. Two (2) BIDs were conducted in Kampala in collaboration with UNHCR, NRC, and Save the Children, focusing specifically on durable solutions for unaccompanied and separated children. These mechanisms are central to ensuring that decisions affecting refugee children are guided by their best interests and aligned with international child protection standards.

2. **Awareness, Prevention, and Community Engagement:** Prevention and awareness activities formed a core component of community-based protection. Awareness sessions on gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, and refugee rights were delivered across all settlements and to urban refugees, increasing knowledge of risks, reporting mechanisms, and available services. Community dialogues and outreach efforts promoted peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities and strengthened community participation in child protection and GBV prevention.

3. **Psychosocial Support and Specialized Referrals:** Through Community Services interventions, 1,296 refugee individuals of whom 1,025 were females and 271 were males received psychosocial support addressing GBV-related trauma, family distress, and medication adherence for chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS. In Kampala alone, the unit managed 370 complex protection cases through joint case management involving OPM, UNHCR, and partners. Referrals remained a key pillar of integrated service delivery. A total of 732 refugees of whom 529 were females and 203 males were referred from Kampala to settlements for continued assistance, including those who fail to cope up with urban challenges and now prefer settlement life, while 345 individual refugees were recommended for civil marriage, enabling legal recognition of family units and improved child protection outcomes.
 - **Case Management:** A total of 14,850 individual cases were managed, including cases of family splits, asylum extensions, mergers, and separations.
 - **Marriage Clearance:** 345 marriage applications were assessed by OPM and submitted to NIRA for civil registration, facilitating legal recognition of refugee family units

4. **System Strengthening and Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** OPM participated in joint monitoring missions and coordination platforms to support:
 - phased transition of services into government structures,
 - alignment with national child protection systems,
 - visibility and accountability through commemoration of international protection days.

These interventions improved:

- coordinated child case management,
- Access to psychosocial and legal support,
- Family and community-based care options,
- Durable solutions and family reunification,
- Integration with national systems.

Collectively, they contributed to strengthened child safeguarding, resilience, and community cohesion across refugee settlements and urban settings

5. Gender Based Violence (GBV), Prevention and Response

GBV remains a persistent human rights violation worse still under reported with women and girls being more susceptible. During the period under review, 153 cases were reported between January and October, 98% of the cases were female survivors, with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) being the most predominant. With support from partners, OPM was able to offer preventive interventions through community awareness sessions and leverage the referral pathway to offer comprehensive case management support. The community is now increasingly aware of this vice and the need to report.

- 03 consultative meetings on the review of the National GBV shelter guidelines were attended. These were conducted in Kampala, Imvepi Refugee Settlement and Nakivale. Stakeholders were consulted including partner staff, district official, UNHCR staff and OPM. Their views about the GBV shelter guidelines were captured and the guidelines are still under review.
- Participated in 01 training of partner staff in Kyaka II refugee settlement organized by UN Women. The training brought together humanitarian actors operating in Kyaka II to build practical skills in applying the GIHA framework, enhance coordination across sectors and promote accountability to affected population. The training brought together humanitarian actors operating in Kyaka II to build practical skills in applying the GIHA framework, enhance coordination across sectors and promote accountability to affected population.
- Attended 01 workshop / seminar on Protecting the Dignity of Refugees in Uganda: Responding to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence as a Human Rights Violation and Public Health Problem, organized by the School of Public Health at Makerere University, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, African Humanitarian Action (AHA), Emesco Development, Foundation, and Farmamundi, the event aimed to

foster dialogue and collaboration between research, policy, and practice. It was aimed at Promoting a multi-actor reflection on SGBV and SRHR in refugee contexts.

6. Community Engagement and Social Inclusion

Community engagement initiatives continued to foster inclusion, cultural understanding, and peaceful coexistence among refugees and host communities, and create positive change. The following community engagement were undertaken:

- a) **Commemorate the International World Refugee Day:** Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate the International World Refugee Day on June 20, 2025. The event was celebrated in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement (Panyadoli Secondary School) under the theme “Solidarity with Refugees”. Key activities included exhibitions, cultural performances, awareness campaigns, media engagements, and policy dialogues. Partners highlight Uganda’s refugee model, advocate for durable solutions, and promote peaceful coexistence with host communities. Refugee stakeholders, including the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, NGO partners, and local governments, actively participated in commemoration of key international days to raise awareness, promote refugee rights, and foster inclusion.



Hon. Minister Lillian Aber with the OPM Permanent Secretary upon arrival at the World Refugee Day commemoration



Chief Guest, Hon. Lillian Aber, Minister of State for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, at the World Refugee Day Commemoration in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, accompanied by the OPM Permanent Secretary, the UNHCR Country Representative, other Government officials, and partners.”

- b) **International Women’s Day (March 8th):** Uganda joined the rest of the world in celebrating the achievements of refugee women and girls while advocating for gender equality and protection from GBV. The day was observed under the theme “For ALL Women and Girls: Rights, Equality, Empowerment.” Partners organized women-led dialogues, skills development sessions, and awareness campaigns on women’s rights, reinforcing the role of women in community leadership and resilience-building within refugee settings.
- c) **Day of the African Child (June 16th):** Focuses on child rights and protection, particularly for refugee children facing vulnerabilities. Activities included children’s forums, education-focused discussions, advocacy campaigns and recreational events. The event highlighted issues such as child labour, reinforced commitments to improving the welfare of refugee children through policy and programmatic interventions.

Additional engagements to highlight Uganda’s refugee policy model, promote rights awareness, and strengthen community participation in the response included:



The Regional Desk Officer (RDO) of the Adjumani Refugee Desk, Ms. Abina Polyne, addressing participants during the launch of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence at Majji II Secondary School in Adjumani District.

- a) **A clean-up campaign**, such as at Gaba market, to promote coexistence and visibility of refugees, which targeted the refugees and the host community to create awareness about the existence of refugees in urban areas and promote peaceful co-existence.
- b) **Consultative Meetings with Refugee Leaders**: Engaged refugee leaders to identify and discuss emerging issues affecting their communities, enhancing understanding of local challenges and informing targeted interventions.
- c) **Peaceful Co-Existence and Conflict Mitigation** : Dialogue platforms played a critical role in preventing inter-community tensions arising from resource pressures, cultural differences, and social interactions. These meetings brought together refugees, host communities, and local leaders to address disputes, promote mutual understanding, and strengthen social cohesion. They provided opportunities for open discussion, trust-building, collaboration, and education on rights, responsibilities, and the benefits of peaceful coexistence. By supporting traditional and local leadership structures, these platforms contributed significantly to conflict prevention, unity, and harmonious relations in refugee-hosting areas. For instance, in Kampala, two (2) community dialogues on peaceful coexistence supported by Enabel reached 481 individual who are refugees and nationals, raising awareness and promoting the community policing model, while nine (9) additional meetings with Eritrean, Ethiopian, Congolese, Burundian,

Pakistani, Rwandan, Afghan, Sudanese, and South Sudanese communities were conducted to further foster and strengthen peaceful coexistence.



Refugee leaders, refugees and host communities attending one the peaceful coexistence dialogues at Kabuusu Access Center in Kampala



The Commissioner for Refugees Management, Mr. Patrick Okello together with urban refugees during community dialogues on peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities in Kampala

2.12 Refugee Settlement Security and Community Policing

The deployment of police personnel within refugee settlements in Uganda is a critical component of ensuring law and order, protecting refugees, and promoting peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.

Uganda has established a robust framework for refugee protection, with security playing a central role in the response. The Police in settlements are responsible for ensuring public safety within refugee settlements, preventing and addressing any criminal activities.

Police deploy over 509 personnel in refugee settlements, where they work closely with other security agencies such as the Internal Security Organization (ISO), and the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence, among others, to provide security.

Police adopt community policing strategies to build trust with refugees and host communities, which is essential for effective law enforcement and conflict resolution

2.13 Water and Sanitation access by Refugees and Host Communities

Coverage and Service Levels: Humanitarian and development partners have substantially invested in improving water infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas. According to the 2024 Annual Results Report for Uganda, approximately 95% of both refugees and host community members accessed water through systems supported by UNHCR and partners, although the average daily water available was about 16 litres per person per day (lpd)—below the Sphere humanitarian standard of 20 lpd recommended for basic needs (drinking, cooking, and hygiene).

In practice, water access varies significantly by location due to population pressure, infrastructure capacity, and environmental conditions.

Water Availability: In many settlements, per capita water availability is below international standards. For example, in some settlements, refugees have reported accessing as little as 10–13 litres per person per day, well under the minimum threshold for the humanitarian standard of 15–20 l/p/d minimum.

Distribution Inequalities: Coverage differs across settlements; in some areas like Imvepi Refugee Settlement, individuals can access up to 27 lpd, but storage limitations (e.g., lack of jerrycans) restrict the effective use and household availability. In contrast, settlements like Kyaka II have average distribution significantly below minimum standards.

Distance to Water Points: The average distance to the farthest water point in many settings is 782 metres, slightly within national planning standards but still presenting a daily burden, especially for women, girls, and elderly household members.

Sources of Water and Infrastructure Investments: Refugee settlements are primarily served by boreholes, motorized piped schemes, and hybrid systems. Across Uganda's settlements, over 223 functional motorized water systems and more than 1,168 hand pumps support water access, with about 77% of motorized systems using renewable energy (solar and grid) to sustain pumping operations.

Resource Strain and Conflict: In some locations like Nakivale and Oruchinga settlements, water scarcity has contributed to tensions between refugee and host communities due to competition over limited water points and poorly coordinated infrastructure planning. Shared water sources, particularly when also used by livestock, have raised hygiene concerns and conflict risks.

Environmental and Climate Pressures: Low water tables during dry seasons and environmental degradation exacerbate scarcity, forcing households to travel long distances or rely on unsafe river and swamp sources for daily needs.

Cost and Access Barriers: During dry seasons, water collection costs can rise sharply (e.g., jerrycans costing multiple thousands of Uganda shillings), placing a disproportionate burden on poorer households and limiting routine hygiene practices, particularly hand washing crucial for disease prevention.

Host Community Comparisons: Refugees generally enjoy relatively high access to improved water compared with host communities in some regions, partly due to humanitarian WASH investments; for example, World Bank analysis indicates about 95% of refugees and 66% of host community residents access improved water, emphasizing the importance of scaling integrated WASH development programming to avoid service imbalances.



OPM and KfW conducted a joint field inspection of a water facility established with KfW financing in Rhino Camp, Madi Okollo District. Front row (left to right): Ms. Rebecca Nanjala and Ms. Eva Niepagenkemper (KfW); Ms. Jolly Kebirungi, Regional Desk Officer – Arua (OPM); and Mr. Nelson Balyeku, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (OPM). Through KfW support (2017-2024), OPM has established water sources benefiting over 45,000 refugees and host community members, constructed 197 latrine stances, and procured a cesspool emptier to improve sanitation services

2.14 Education

Education is a fundamental human right and a critical tool for restoring dignity, hope, and opportunity among refugees. For individuals forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, or disasters, access to education provides stability and a pathway to rebuild their lives.

In refugee-hosting communities such as those in Uganda education plays an essential role in supporting protection, self-reliance, and long-term development.

- There are 331 primary level schools in the settlements of which 41%(135) schools are currently granted aided.
- At the end of 2025, a total of 717,685 learners, comprising 424,474 (51% male) refugee and 293,211(53% male) national learners were enrolled at pre-primary, primary, secondary schools, tertiary and other non-formal and skills training institutions in Term III 2025, representing 106.3 % of the targeted 674,895 learners.
- 29,256(15,791 male and 14,161 female) learners with disabilities have been enrolled in term III compared to 28,341 in term I. However, only 3.8% (1147) received assistive

devices to support their learning. In addition, 11,718(9,518 refugees and 2,195 nationals) overaged and out of school learners accessed learning through Accelerated Education Programme (AEP), including 7,920 in primary and 3,790 in secondary.

- UNHCR indicated that currently, 4,132 teachers serve in primary and secondary schools: 2,540 supported directly by partners (including ECW) 1,256 on the government payroll, 336 supported by PTAs, of these, salaries for 1,993 teachers (48%) are financed through ECW funding, which is set to end in December 2025.
- It was projected that 2026 only 526 teachers will remain supported by partners, and 1,256 will continue under the government payroll. This leaves a deficit of 2,014 teachers compared to current levels. Without alternative funding, this gap will severely affect service delivery, reducing access and quality of education for an estimated 392,732 (92,838 nationals and 299,894 refugee learners) in 291 primary schools and 40 secondary schools in refugee-hosting districts.



Overcrowding of classrooms in one of the schools in Kiyandongo refugee settlement

2.15 Livelihoods and Food Security

The Government of Uganda, through OPM, continues to advance its refugee self-reliance strategy, focusing on strengthening the enabling environment, policy advocacy, and partnerships with development partners, private sector actors, international and local NGOs, and ministries and agencies to promote sustainable economic inclusion for refugees and host communities.

Uganda's progressive refugee policy, enshrined in the Refugee Act 2006 and its regulations, grants refugees rights to work, freedom of movement, and access to land and services, creating a unique foundation for self-reliance in Africa.

Food Security Situation: As of late 2025, an estimated about 48 % of refugees in settlement contexts approximately 920,000 people were experiencing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), with households reliant on crisis and emergency coping strategies due to limited agricultural production, land access challenges, and reduced humanitarian support.

Food Assistance Reductions: Persistent global funding shortfalls forced the World Food Programme (WFP) to significantly scale down food assistance. In May 2025, the number of refugees receiving food aid dropped from planned support for roughly 1.6 million to about 662,000 individuals, with lower ration levels for the most vulnerable groups and phased reductions for others. These reductions have exacerbated hunger, increased vulnerability, and constrained coping strategies, especially for households without livelihoods to bridge the gap.

Funding Gaps in Food Assistance: UN agencies cautioned that refugee operations risked running out of funds in 2025 without new contributions, threatening the continuity of food, protection, and livelihood support. In mid-2025, funding for the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan remained severely underfunded, with only around 22 % of the required budget secured, leaving substantial gaps across food security, protection, health, and livelihoods programs. While some partners, such as the Lisa Supporting and Sustaining Lives (LSSL), supported by Muslim Charity, have provided complementary food assistance to over 300 families covering over 5,000 Sudanese refugees living in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, these interventions have been occasional and insufficient to cover needs, leaving refugees without food for substantial periods.



*A section of Sudanese Refugees receiving food items from LSSL,
donated by Muslim Charity Organisation*

2.16 Access to Land and Production Agricultural Access

According to the 2024 Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (FSNA), the latest official national assessment covering food security and nutrition, 61 % of refugees reported having access to arable land for crop production. This figure reflects efforts by the Government, UNHCR, and partners to allocate land plots and support agricultural activities, up from lower

access rates in previous years. However, 2025-specific figures are pending publication and the 2024 FSNA remains the most recent baseline used for monitoring.

A separate IPC analysis (covering April 2025–Feb 2026) indicates that 82 % of refugees reported access to land—either government-allocated plots, leased land, or borrowed land from host communities, although access to productive farmland suitable for sustained cultivation remains uneven across settlements.

2.17 Host Community Dynamics and Integrated Programming

The Government and partners increasingly recognize that host communities face similar food security and economic challenges due to climate shocks, market instability, and limited access to livelihood resources. While specific quantitative comparisons at the settlement level are less publicly disseminated than refugee statistics, integrated approaches aim to strengthen services, markets, and opportunities for both populations rather than treating refugees in isolation.

Key initiatives include market-oriented support that integrates refugees and host communities, with approximately 30–50 % of host households benefiting from livelihood projects, income-generating activities, and engagement in agricultural markets alongside refugee interventions.



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees in the Office of the Prime Minister engaging with refugee community in Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement.

2.18 Livelihoods, Access to Financial Services, and Skills Development

Focus has expanded to identifying and empowering qualified actors, including refugee-led organizations, private sector participants, and community enterprises, to access resources, credit,

and technical support for sustainable livelihoods. This includes efforts to create pathways for refugees and host individuals to engage in agriculture, trade, and services linked to local markets.

To enhance financial inclusion, the Government, through Uganda's inclusive financial strategy and collaboration with the Central Bank and OPM, supports efforts to ensure refugees and host communities can access basic financial services, such as mobile money, savings groups, and microfinance, which are critical for building resilience and business activities.

Several partners are supporting livelihood activities in Uganda, with AVSI Foundation playing a notable role, particularly in emergency settlements. AVSI works with vulnerable families to enhance food security, nutrition, and economic resilience through initiatives such as the graduation approach, which combines consumption support, livelihoods training, financial inclusion, and social empowerment to help families move from extreme poverty to self-reliance. Their projects focus on improving market access, promoting climate-smart agriculture, and providing vocational training to empower youth and women. To date, AVSI's work has reached over 240,000 people, with a goal of supporting 1,000 households in achieving improved living conditions and self-sufficiency.

Block Farming: The Government of Uganda, through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), is promoting block farming in refugee settlements as a key initiative to enhance agricultural productivity and self-reliance among refugees, while fostering economies of scale and collective management to improve food security and household incomes. The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Fisheries has already launched the World Bank-funded Climate Smart Agriculture for Transformation (CSAT) project to pilot this block farming approach.

Uganda Self -Reliance Index (UG -SRI): Recognizing the need for quality measurement tools, the Uganda Self-Reliance Index (UG-SRI) was launched in November 2025 by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This tool aims to systematically track self-reliance progress across food security, household income, education, health, and other socioeconomic dimensions for both refugees and host communities, enabling better planning, coordination, and policy articulation.



A section of staff of AVSI foundation, one of the implementing partners supporting the Relf reliance approaches for refugees and host communities in Uganda.

2.19 Health (Mental health, Primary Care, Vaccination).

In 2025, over 98 % of the refugee population accessed health services on par with Ugandan nationals through the national health system. Health services for refugee response were continued to be coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, with active participation from over 50 partners in the Health and Nutrition Sector, including district local governments and settlement-based health facilities.

Primary Care and Health Infrastructure: The health service network for refugees in settlements comprised 89 health facilities, including health posts, of which 76 facilities (92 %) were coded and receiving support from the Government of Uganda (GoU) and District Local Governments (DLGs). The remaining 7 facilities (4 in Bidibidi, 2 in Rhino Camp, and 1 in Imvepi) had been slated to be coded shortly.

The refugee community was supported by approximately 2,600 Village Health Teams (VHTs), maintaining a current ratio of 1 VHT per 670 persons, fully funded by UNHCR in 2025. Health workforce staffing totaled 2,506 personnel, with UNHCR supporting 1,766 (70 %), other partners contributing 117 (5 %), and DLGs providing 623 (25 %). Medicines and medical supplies for 76 facilities were delivered through the National Medical Stores (NMS).

Vaccination and Outbreak Response: Despite strong primary care coverage, measles outbreaks were reported in Kyangwali, Palorinya, Rhino Camp, Kiryandongo, and Nakivale refugee settlements. These outbreaks were promptly contained, with no mortality recorded, reflecting the resilience of the vaccination and emergency response systems.

Mental Health Services: Mental health support continued to be integrated into primary health care, with services provided at settlement health facilities and through community-based VHTs. Psychosocial support programs targeted both refugees and host communities, addressing the ongoing effects of displacement, trauma, and stress.

2.20 Refugee Durable Solutions Efforts and Achievements

Refugee durable solutions refer to the long-term and sustainable approaches that end a refugee's state of displacement by providing them with a situation where they can live safely, rebuild their lives, and enjoy full rights without fear of persecution.

In international refugee protection, there are three recognized durable solutions:

1. Voluntary Repatriation – Returning to one's country of origin voluntarily and in safety and dignity.
2. Resettlement to a Third Country – Transfer to another country that offers permanent protection and residence when return or local integration are not viable options.
3. Local Integration – Remaining in the host country and being formally integrated legally, socially, and economically.

Durable solutions aim to end protracted displacement, restore rights and dignity, promote long-term well-being, protection, and self-reliance and reduce humanitarian dependence. OPM, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNHCR, and partners, has been instrumental in advancing these efforts.

2.201. Voluntary Repatriations

By the end of 2025, 844 refugees of whom 843 were of Burundian nationality and one DRC nationality have returned to their home country over the past three years under voluntary repatriation programs. Of the total number repatriated in 2025, 416 were females and 428 were males. In addition, over 2,000 Sudanese refugees have expressed their readiness to return, with

plans in place to facilitate their repatriation in 2026, following perceived improvements in security and stability in parts of Sudan.

Despite these efforts, voluntary returns remain limited, accounting for less than 1% of the total refugee population. Decisions to return are primarily influenced by peace processes in countries of origin, improved security conditions, family reunification prospects, and personal choice after prolonged displacement.

However, broader voluntary repatriation has been constrained by several factors, including incomplete or fragile peace processes, ongoing conflict risks in countries of origin, economic insecurity, and limited reintegration support, which collectively discourage many refugees from pursuing return. Strengthening peace, ensuring safety, and providing adequate reintegration assistance are critical to supporting sustainable voluntary returns in the future



Regional Desk Officer, Mr. Titus Jogo, hands over Burundian refugees to Government of Burundi officials at Kinazi Transit Center, Musinga, Burundi.

2.20.2 Spontaneous Departures and Complementary Pathways

Spontaneous returns refer to refugees leaving Uganda outside formal planned return or resettlement programs, often crossing borders without organized assistance or protection support.

According to ProGresIV records maintained by OPM and UNHCR, a total of 2,860 refugees of whom 1,062 were males and 1,798 were females have been cancelled from registration as they

could no longer be traced in Uganda and are considered to have departed through complementary pathways and spontaneous returns. The upcoming refugee verification exercise, scheduled for early 2026, aims to confirm the actual number of refugees who have left in this manner.

Many of these spontaneous departures are driven by deteriorating conditions in settlements, funding shortages, and restricted access to services, prompting refugees to move onward or return to their countries of origin, even in the absence of structured support.

Such departures pose significant protection risks, including exposure to refoulement, exploitation, and dangerous border crossings. In addition, spontaneous departures can distort official refugee statistics, as some refugees later reappear or return, complicating accurate planning and resource allocation.

2.20.3 Refugee Resettlements.

According to UNHCR's Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2025 report, approximately 160,300 refugees in Uganda were identified as needing resettlement in 2025 due to vulnerabilities, including severe protection risks, lack of local integration opportunities, or limited prospects for self-reliance within the country.

Despite this significant need, the total number of refugees resettled in 2025 was 939 of whom 388 were males and 551 were females, representing a small fraction of those eligible. This marks a decline compared to 2024, which is largely attributed to policy changes in key resettlement countries, particularly the United States, historically the largest destination for Ugandan refugees. Additional factors influencing the reduction include shifting priorities of other resettlement states and global resettlement capacity constraints.

Resettlement remains a critical durable solution for refugees in Uganda, offering protection, family reunification, and opportunities for long-term integration in third countries. The Government of Uganda, together with UNHCR and partner organizations, continues to facilitate resettlement processing, including identification, verification, and referral of the most vulnerable refugees.



OPM Permanent Secretary, Mr. Alex Kakooza (3rd from Right) listens to IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage on arrival at the IOM Uganda Transit Centre in Nakasero for a guided tour.



OPM Permanent Secretary, Mr. Alex Kakooza (7th from Left) and other OPM officials in a group photo with IOM officials after a guided tour of the IOM Uganda Transit Centre in Nakasero. 8th from Left is IOM Deputy Regional Director for East and Horn of Africa Nihan Erdogan and 4th from Right is IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage.



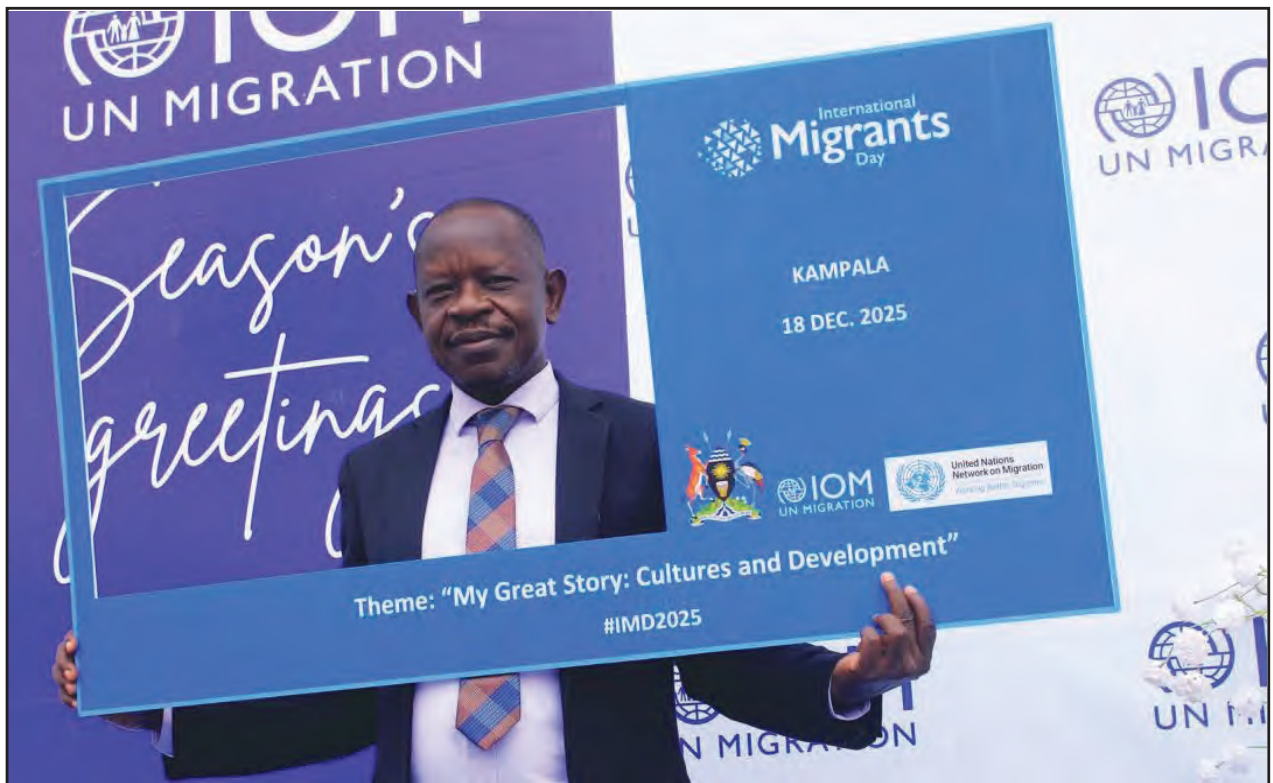
Refugees line up at the Immigration desk at Entebbe International airport before being flown out of Uganda to Canada by IOM

2.21.1 Local Integration

In Uganda, local integration is recognized as one of the durable solutions for refugees. Under the draft National Refugee Policy, local integration means that refugees enjoy access to services and rights similar to those of Ugandan citizens, as provided under the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, with the exception of voting and standing for elective office. Through local integration, refugees become legally, economically, and socially part of the host communities while retaining their refugee status under Ugandan law.

As of 2025, all the 1,936,723 registered refugees (figure excludes asylum seekers), representing 98% of the refugee population in Uganda, have been locally integrated and are accessing services on par with nationals. This includes education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities, reflecting Uganda's progressive approach to refugee protection and inclusion.

Local integration in Uganda also offers pathways to naturalization, allowing refugees who meet legal requirements to apply for citizenship, further strengthening their ability to contribute to the social and economic development of host communities. This approach underscores Uganda's commitment to durable solutions that promote self-reliance, protection, and long-term stability for refugees.



*Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees Management
at the International Migration 2025.*

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Introduction

The section outlines Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) coordinates refugee services, partnerships, and the monitoring of assistance for both refugees and host communities. OPM carries out its coordination role in line with national legal frameworks, in collaboration with UNHCR, the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), the CRRF Secretariat, relevant MDAs, and other partners. Coordination and monitoring are conducted through both digital and physical platforms, as well as inter-agency engagements. OPM also networks with various forums that bring together local and international agencies, as well as refugee leadership structures, to ensure effective planning, oversight, and service delivery.

3.1 Coordination of Refugee Services and Partnerships

Section 8 of the Refugees Act 2006 mandates OPM (Department of Refugees) to coordinate all inter-ministerial and non-governmental activities and programs related to refugees. Specifically, Section 8(2)(d) and (e) tasks the Department with coordinating the provision of refugee services to ensure the welfare of refugees; Identifying and initiating projects that benefit both refugees and host communities; and Liaising with UNHCR and other partner organizations to implement programs that address the needs and protection of refugees in Uganda.

This legal framework establishes the Department of Refugees as the central coordinating body for refugee management, ensuring collaboration across government ministries, development partners, and humanitarian organizations. The Coordination arrangements by the OPM (Department of Refugees) undertaken in 2025 are as follows:

3.1.1 The National Interagency Coordination Mechanism

The Uganda Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism serves as a key platform for coordinating the refugee response in the country. The forum is co-chaired by OPM(DoR), UNHCR, and the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG). It brings together key government ministries and agencies, UN partners, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, refugee leadership structures, development partners, and other stakeholders engaged in humanitarian and development actions.

The Interagency mechanism plays a central role in fostering collective accountability, harmonizing multi-sectoral efforts, and ensuring that planning, implementation, and resource

allocation are aligned with international and national refugee policy frameworks. It facilitates inclusive information exchange, analysis of response trends, and joint planning across sectors and partners. The forum maximizes synergies in service delivery, minimizes duplication of efforts, enhances complementarities among humanitarian and development actors, and promotes transparency in the use of resources.

Throughout 2025, the Interagency mechanism convened monthly plenary sessions and regular technical working group meetings. Key thematic areas discussed included:

- Response financing and resource mobilization for the Refugee Response Plan (RRP), including identification of funding gaps and strategic engagement with donors to ensure sustained resource flows.
- Assessment of refugee population trends and analysis of emerging needs.
- Access to services for both refugees and host communities, ensuring equitable service delivery.
- Emergency preparedness and response, focusing on strengthening readiness for sudden refugee influxes and other contingencies.



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees, delivering his remarks during the 17th meeting of the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration.

3.1.2 Collaboration with Line Ministries

In 2025, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)/Department of Refugees maintained active collaboration with various line ministries to strengthen the refugee response and support projects benefiting both refugees and host communities. OPM regularly held meetings with individual ministries to discuss resource mobilization, program support, and implementation of sector-specific initiatives.

Through these engagements, OPM received policy guidance, technical references, and strategic inputs from line ministries, which informed planning, project design, and operational decisions. Additionally, the Department participated in inter-ministerial and sectoral meetings on refugee and host community responses, fostering coordination and harmonization of interventions.

OPM (Department of Refugees) chaired National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) meetings, launched Uganda's Global Compact on Migration (GCM) National Implementation Plan.



Mr. Douglas Asiimwe, the Assistant Commissioner for Refugees in a meeting with IOM and NCM members on migration coordination as a whole of Government and society approach

Contributed to the validation of the Refugee Value Chain Implementation Strategy for the Climate Smart Agricultural Transformation Project under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries.

Engaged in stakeholder consultations on Uganda Digital Acceleration Project (UDAP) executed by NITA-U.

These collaborations demonstrate OPM's central role in aligning refugee response initiatives with national priorities, ensuring that interventions are integrated, sustainable, and benefit both refugees and host populations.



Hon. Lilian Aber, the Minister of State for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees with the Parliamentarian Forum and other key refugee stakeholders during the localisation consultations at Protea Hotel.

3.1.3 Collaboration with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

OPM (Department of Refugees) actively collaborates with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in coordinating Uganda's refugee response. In 2025, the Department participated in a range of CRRF-led activities, including QCRRF Steering Committee Meetings, District Engagement Forums, and Refugee Engagement Forums.

Beyond these, the Department also engages in other CRRF-organized activities to which it is invited, ensuring continuous involvement in planning and coordination of refugee response initiatives that benefit both refugees and host communities.



Mr. Alex Kakooza, Permanent Secretary OPM, together with the Permanent Secretaries from other MDAs and the Hon. Ministers, Senior Government officials and the UNHCR Representative as well as the CRRF-Steering Group members during a CRRF-SG meeting held in August 2025 in Kampala.



At a CRRF Sector coordination engagement meeting with representation from the Department of Refugees, CRRF Secretariat, MoLG, MoWE, MoGLSD, MoAAF, MoES, MoH, MEMD, among others

3.1.4 Regional and Settlement Interagency Coordination Mechanism

The regional inter-agency coordination meetings replicate the structure of the national Inter-Agency Coordination Forum; these are held quarterly. They are co-chaired by OPM, UNHCR, and the District Local Government (DLG) hosting the meeting, with participation from relevant partners. These meetings are organized and facilitated by OPM regional desk offices in collaboration with UNHCR across all five regional refugee desk offices. In 2025, a total of 20 regional inter-agency coordination meetings were conducted.



Inter-agency coordination meeting for Koboko, Madi Okollo and Terego districts@ Desert Breeze hotel- Arua city



A section of the Interagency Coordination Meeting in Hoima District held on 13/11/2025



OPM, Adjumani DGL, UNHCR, and partners pose for a group photo following an inter-agency meeting held at the OPM Adjumani Refugee Desk Office

At the settlement level, inter-agency meetings are held monthly and are complemented by sector-specific meetings. These are co-chaired by the OPM Settlement Commandants, UNHCR Sector Heads, Sector Partner Leads, and the DLG Sector Focal Officers. Partners participate at both the sector and settlement levels. Across all 13 settlements, over 156 settlement-level meetings were held in 2025.

These meetings provide essential platforms for coordinating and managing refugee assistance at the regional and local level. They bring together all key stakeholders involved in service delivery within refugee settlements, including Regional Desk Officers, OPM Settlement Commandants, Partner Sector Leads, UNHCR field staff, Local Government representatives, implementing partners, and sector working group representatives from health, education, protection, livelihoods, WASH and other sectors.

Through these forums, refugee response interventions are coordinated, community-centered, and aligned with Uganda's refugee policies and international standards, promoting efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness in service delivery.



A section of settlement interagency coordination meeting held in Bidibidi- Zone 1

3.1.5 Refugee Welfare Councils (RWCs)

The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) coordinates refugee communities primarily through RWCs, which consist of leaders elected by the refugee communities themselves. In collaboration with UNHCR, Uganda Police and partner organizations, OPM organizes RWC elections, ensuring a transparent and participatory process. Following the elections, newly elected

committee members undergo refresher training, designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively execute their roles and responsibilities, including community representation, protection advocacy, and coordination of settlement-level initiatives. RWC elections took place in various refugee settlements.



OPM, UNHCR, HADS and Uganda Police conducting refresher training for RWCs in Lobule

3.1.6 Urban Refugee Protection Working Group Meetings

OPM (Department of Refugees) successfully coordinated monthly Urban Protection Working Group meetings under the urban refugee program, which were co-chaired by OPM and UNHCR. These meetings brought together various partners to ensure a coordinated approach to protection assistance for urban Kampala metropolitan refugees.



OPM and UNHCR conducting the urban protection working group meeting at UNHCR with partners in the urban refugee programme

3.1.7 OPM Coordination and Monitoring of Partnerships in Service Delivery

Voluntary organisations, including International NGOs, National NGOs, and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), play an indispensable role in Uganda's refugee response architecture. These actors contribute to the protection, relief, and socio-economic well-being of refugees and host communities by Providing relief and development services, Mobilizing financial and technical resources to sustain refugee-focused programmes; and Supporting national NGOs and community-based delivery efforts.

3.1.7.1 Legal and Institutional Framework for Coordination

The engagement of voluntary organisations within the refugee response is governed by the Section 8 of the Refugees Act, 2006 and its Regulations, 2010. Regulation 63 mandates the registration, publication, and gazettment of voluntary organisations by OPM and restricts unregistered entities from providing refugee assistance.

To operationalize these requirements, OPM has instituted mechanisms to ensure that all organisations participating in service delivery obtain formal registration and sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with OPM. MoUs are project-specific and authorise only the activities explicitly outlined therein. Projects not included in the MoU are not eligible for implementation within settlements. However, MoUs for non-implementation purposes may be requested and are considered by OPM on a case-by-case basis.

3.1.7.2 Digitalisation through the Partnership Coordination and Monitoring System (PCMS)

To enhance compliance, streamline processes, and modernize oversight, OPM in 2025 initiated an e-registration platform known as the Partnership Coordination and Monitoring System (PCMS).

The PCMS serves multiple functions:

- Facilitates online registration of Partners/voluntary organisations;
- Supports MoU application, review, documentation, and renewal processes;
- Enables project profiling and updating of organisational information;
- Provides a secure interface for periodic reporting by partners as a measure of accountability for resources and results.

PCMS further incorporates modules for

- Partnership mapping and alignment, ensuring coherence with national priorities and settlement-specific needs;

- Financing tracking, enabling Government visibility over inflows from diverse donors;
- Strategic analytics and reporting, contributing to evidence-based planning and national monitoring.

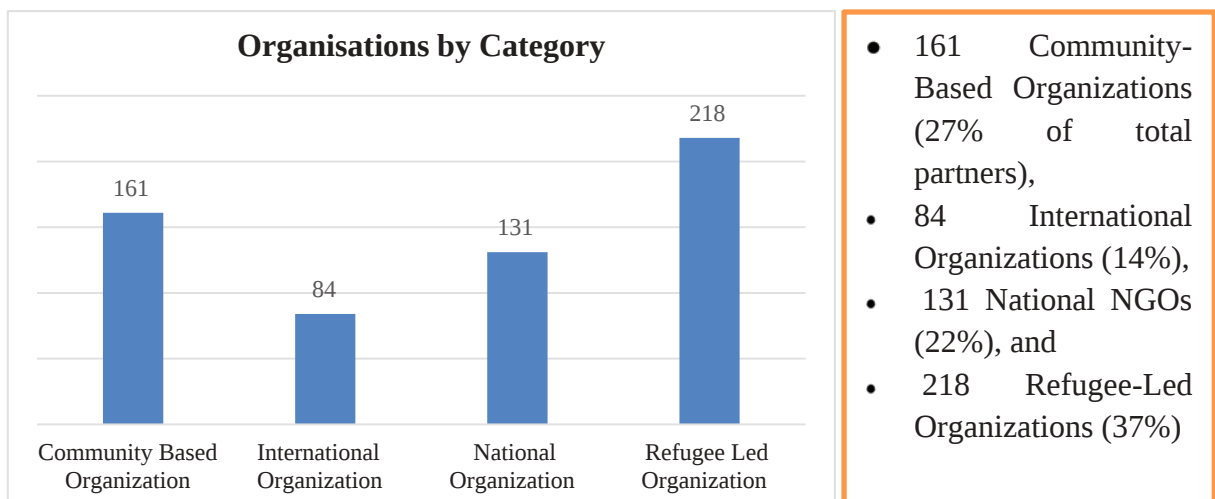
These innovations strengthen government oversight and promote harmonization of interventions by the humanitarian and development partners.

3.1.7.3 Status of Voluntary Organisations Engaged in the Refugee Response

In early 2025, the Department of Refugees conducted a survey to validate the landscape of actors engaged in refugee service delivery, irrespective of their MoU status, legal registration, or formal authorization. The survey received responses from 590 entities identifying themselves as active in the refugee response. It is likely that some organisations accessed and completed the survey tool without actually delivering activities, underscoring the need for measures to prevent unauthorized actors from entering the refugee response space.

While most international and national NGOs possess formal legal documentation, the survey revealed that many refugee-led CBOs remain unregistered, with several transitioning from informal livelihood groups and positioning them as organisations. This trend highlights the need for capacity development, legal formalisation, and structured pathways that enable community-based actors to participate in service delivery in a lawful, coordinated, and effective manner

Number of Partners by Category of the Organization within refugee response.



OPM is currently pursuing efforts to streamline the voluntary organisation/Partners landscape through strengthening registration processes, verification mechanisms, and digital systems under PCMS.



Mr. Patrick Okello with one of the Implementing Partners supporting service delivery in the environment and energy subsectors.

3.1.7.4 Government Multi-Agency Collaboration in Coordination of Partners

Recognising the centrality of partner coordination in achieving durable humanitarian and development outcomes, OPM continues to strengthen inter-agency collaboration. In 2025, OPM has initiated a collaborative networking with a range of Government institutions including: the NGO Bureau, Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), NIRAS, Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), National Planning Authority (NPA), MoLG and others.

In addition to serving refugee-related programmes, these partnerships support broader national efforts to enhance coordination, compliance, and accountability of voluntary organisations across Uganda.

3.1.7.5 Strengthening Monitoring and Accountability

Beyond registration and MoU administration, OPM has expanded its monitoring mandate to include oversight of activities and services provided by partners in the refugee settlements. Through PCMS and joint monitoring frameworks, OPM ensures that:

- Services align with national priorities and settlement development plans;
- Resources mobilised are accounted for;
- Implementing actors report performance against planned results;
- Avoidable duplication and fragmentation of interventions is reduced.

These measures contribute directly to transparency, efficiency, and improved delivery of essential services to refugees and host communities.

3.1.7.6 Field Support Supervision Missions

In addition to digitalising monitoring through the Partnership Coordination and Monitoring System, OPM conducted political field missions and technical support supervisions in collaboration with line ministries, District Local Governments, and partners. Line ministries and Agencies such as MoGLSD, MoFPED and NITA-U have also incorporated OPM into their respective field monitoring exercises. Despite limited field supervision and monitoring budgets from UNHCR some partners, including WFP, Enabal and AVSI have supported OPM through joint monitoring activities.

OPM monitored and supervised partners' activities across key sectors, including protection, health, education, WASH, food and nutrition, livelihoods, and shelter/site management. This oversight ensured effective service delivery, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of refugees and host communities.



Joint monitoring and supervision of livelihood intervention by livelihood partners



The M&E Officer, Mr. Nelson Balyeku, is addressing a section of partners Kyangwali Refugee Settlement scheduled for monitoring.

Both technical monitoring, conducted by OPM staff, and political monitoring, undertaken by Honourable Ministers, are carried out to oversee the refugee response. In addition, the Commissioner for Refugees and other OPM staff conduct monitoring visits to assess implementation on the ground. OPM also undertakes border monitoring missions to assess new arrival trends and patterns of spontaneous movement.



Hon. Eng. Hilary Onek, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, together with the Hon. Musa Ecweru, Minsiter of State for Works and World Bank team during a field trip on monitoring and supervision of refugee roads in West Nile



Hon. Eng. Hilary Onek, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, together with the Hon. Musa Ecweru, Minsiter of State for Works, the LCV Chairperson – Yumbe District and World Bank team holding discussions during a field trip on monitoring and supervision of refugee roads in West Nile



Hon. Lillian Aber, Minister of State for Relief and Disaster Preparedness, at the Arua Regional Refugee Desk to kickstart a monitoring exercise of the refugee response in the West Nile region



OPM team, together with the police team at Lokung reception holding discussions on the new arrival from South Sudan



OPM team together with Immigration Officers at Elegu Border post on a visit to assess the new arrival trends and spontaneous movements



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees Management together with OPM staff of Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement during a working field visit



Joint border monitoring visit by OPM and MoLG at the tripoint border of South Sudan, DRC, and Uganda in Koboko District (the three-country border is marked symbolically by the tree in the background)

3.1.7.7 Partner's support in strengthening the Capacity of OPM's Department of Refugees in Refugee Coordination

In addition to UNHCR, several partners have committed to supporting the OPM Department of Refugees' coordination and protection efforts through direct funding or donations. Notably, Enabel strengthened its partnership with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) through Memoranda of Understanding and joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions. In 2025, Enabel worked closely with OPM to enhance refugee registration, particularly for department of refugees Kampala, through the procurement of chairs, tents, and tablets. OPM and Enabel also promoted peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities by organizing joint dialogue sessions in Kampala, while simultaneously strengthening the capacities of Refugee Welfare Committee (RWC) leaders in refugee settlements to support inclusive local leadership thereby improving service delivery to refugees. Enabel continued to organise joint monitoring events to assess service delivery in schools and health centres all aimed at addressing the critical barriers affecting service delivery.



Enabel and OPM Department of Refugees officials, during the donation of computers, chairs, and tents, donated to support refugee coordination activities

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), through its international cooperation framework, supports the Department by seconding a Refugee Technical Adviser. In 2025, JICA, through the Refugee Technical Adviser, supported the Department with a Regional Leadership Workshop and the HDP Nexus Forum.

1. **Regional Leadership Workshop:** The workshop was held from 17–19 March 2025 at the Silver Spring Hotel in Kampala, with participation from senior DoR officers and regional Refugee Desk Officers (RDOs). The JICA Refugee Response Advisor planned and facilitated the workshop. Its objectives were to enhance the capacity of regional refugee managers, improve understanding of national and international refugee response policies, and strengthen recognition of the roles of RDOs and Settlement Commandants (SCs).

The workshop included lectures and discussions on management, coordination, policy, and international trends, as well as field visits and action plan development. As a result, participants strengthened their practical and policy implementation skills, and a positive attitude toward local policy execution was fostered, enhancing collaboration between central and regional offices, as well as with other ministries and partners.



Mr. Patrick Okello, the Commissioner for Refugees together with JICA officials, OPM Senior staff and UNHCR in a group photo during the Regional Leadership Workshop

2. **HDP-Nexus Forum:** The forum took place on the third day of the National Stocktaking Meeting from 4–6 November 2025 at the Munyonyo Conference Center, Kampala, with approximately 175 participants. It was organized by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, JICA, and UNDP. The purpose was to review and consolidate the progress of Uganda’s nationally led refugee response in preparation for GRF 2027 and to develop policy recommendations based on the HDP-Nexus approach. The JICA Advisor led overall coordination, program design, stakeholder engagement, technical

guidance, venue arrangements, and communications. Key outcomes included the identification of good HDP-N practices in Uganda, alignment and coordination of policy and implementation frameworks, establishment of common indicators, and strengthened collaboration among local governments, the private sector, and international partners. These results were presented at the GRF Progress Review in Geneva in December, contributing to the visibility of Uganda's efforts and laying an important foundation for resource mobilization and policy development ahead of GRF 2027.



Participants in a group photo during the HDP Nexus Forum at the Munyonyo Conference Center, Kampala

As part of its continued partnership with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), IOM supported capacity-building efforts of the Department of Refugees through the donation of essential equipment.



At the center is the IOM Chief of Mission; on the left is the IOM Head of Operations for East and Central Africa; and on the right is Mr. John Bosco Ssentamu, OPM Senior Settlement Commandant, receiving the items on behalf of the OPM Department of Refugees

3.2 Partnership Forums

3.2.1 The Humanitarian Platform for Local and National Organisations (NHP):

The Local and National NGO Forum, established in 2018, serves as a platform for collaboration among local and national organizations engaged in humanitarian preparedness and response across Uganda, including refugee-hosting areas.

The Forum provides a structured mechanism for coordination, knowledge sharing, and advocacy to strengthen the collective impact of its members in supporting vulnerable communities.

In 2025, Forum members operating in refugee and host communities delivered services that reached 60,692 beneficiaries as detailed in the table below.

Refugees				Host Communities			
Male	PWD Male	Female	PWD Female	Male	PWD Male	Female	PWD Female
11,801	565	17,447	645	8,828	4,415	16,263	728

Their interventions spanned multiple thematic areas, including: Jobs and livelihoods (promoting income generation and economic resilience), Child protection (safeguarding children's rights and wellbeing), Education (enhancing access and quality of learning opportunities), Gender-based violence (prevention, awareness, and survivor support), Health and nutrition (primary care, nutrition, and emergency response), Water, sanitation, and environment (promoting environmentally friendly practices and energy solutions) and Economic empowerment (financial literacy and livelihood support) among other interventions.

The Forum's leadership collaborates with OPM in refugee response, contributing to refugee and host community service delivery.

Despite their valuable contributions, members continue to face significant challenges, particularly limited and insufficient funding, especially when compared to resources available to international organizations, highlighting the need for greater support to local actors.

3.2.1 The Humanitarian International NGO (HINGO) Forum

The Humanitarian International NGO Forum (HINGO) is a network of 63 international NGOs operating across Uganda's humanitarian sector, including refugee response, Karamoja programming, disaster preparedness, and public health emergencies, to enhance internal and external coordination, advocate on key humanitarian issues, facilitate learning for members, and ensure strong sector representation. The Forum works closely with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in coordinating its activities and achieved the following in 2025:

1. **Coordination:** In 2025, HINGO held three regular members' meetings and multiple ad-hoc sessions on key issues (QUAM+, OPM PCM, NDP4). The Forum actively participated in major coordination platforms, engaged with donors, UN agencies, and government stakeholders, and facilitated member involvement in strategic processes such as WFP consultations and the UCRRP planning. Key events included a Donor Briefing, the Annual General Meeting, and participation in the GRF Stock Taking meeting.
2. **Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Pledges:** HINGO made nine pledges at the 2023 GRF, supporting Government priorities (self-reliance, climate change, localization, durable solutions, transition management) and initiatives promoting inclusion, refugee-led programming, and advocacy for the Uganda Refugee Model. By mid-term, members
 1. reported 50 projects worth USD 111 million, demonstrating strong partnerships in refugee response.
 2. **Advocacy:** HINGO focused on urgent needs arising from funding shortfalls and worsening conditions in refugee settlements. The Forum, influenced by the UCRRP, prepared advocacy briefs highlighting funding gaps and their impact on the Uganda refugee response.
3. **Localization:** HINGO advanced the Localisation Strategy with U-LEARN advanced the localisation strategy. It promoted the uptake of QUAM+ tools and methodologies and maintained representation in global initiatives, including Charter4Change, the Grand Bargain Working Group, and the Refugee Engagement Forum.



A section of HINGO membership during one of their meetings in 2025 in Kampala

3.3 International Engagements

Section 8(c) of the Refugees Act, 2006, assigns the Office of the Prime Minister (Department of Refugees) the responsibility to advise the Government of Uganda on international and regional conventions, as well as Uganda's obligations relating to refugees. In addition, Section 8(i) mandates the Department to promote Uganda's regional and international cooperation on refugee matters, ensuring alignment with commitments to other countries and relevant international frameworks.

Key engagements included participation in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Ministerial Consultations on Refugees in Djibouti, the East African Community (EAC) Regional Refugee Coordination meetings in Arusha, and multiple United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) events, including the Executive Committee (EXCOM) sessions in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva.

These platforms enabled OPM to provide technical guidance on Uganda's refugee policies, share national experiences on settlement management and self-reliance programs, and strengthen collaboration with neighboring countries, UN agencies, and other international partners.



Hon. Eng. Hilary Onk, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees delivering a statement at the 2025 EXCOM in Geneva, Switzerland

meetings in Arusha, and multiple United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) events, including the Executive Committee (EXCOM) sessions and the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva, Switzerland. The Departmental so attended Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIPs) meetings in Kigali, Rwanda, where partner states reviewed directives on refugee and asylum seeker management, including cross-border movement, durable solutions, and the harmonization of databases. In addition, Uganda was represented at the East African Standby Force workshop on maritime security in Djibouti and sectoral council interstate security meetings in Entebbe, discussing the draft East African Refugee Policy. These platforms enabled OPM to provide technical guidance on Uganda's refugee policy frameworks, share national experiences on settlement-based refugee management and self-reliance programs, and strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries, UN agencies, and other international partners. In addition to national engagements, the Department continued to promote Uganda's regional and international cooperation on refugee matters through participation in high-level forums, technical consultations, and peer-learning platforms. Key engagements included participation in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Ministerial Consultations on Refugees in Djibouti, the East African Community (EAC) Regional Refugee



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees, highlighting Uganda's progress on migration governance during the 2025 Global Compact for Migration dialogue in Geneva



Hon. Eng. Hilary Onek, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees together with the Ugandan Ambassador to Switzerland (Middle) and the Commissioner for Refugees Management

ort Beyond policy dialogue and coordination, the Department actively engaged in knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and technical peer-learning. This included participation in IGAD workshops on migration data harmonization (Mombasa), regional gender analysis, qualifications frameworks, and durable solutions (Entebbe, Nairobi); as well as workshops on monitoring and evaluation frameworks (IGAD Nairobi validation) and Justice Analysis and Paralegal Programming toolkits (IRC).



Mr. Nelson Balyeku, M&E Officer, presenting on behalf of OPM at the IGAD Support Platform validation workshop in Nairobi, Kenya

The Department also participated in GCM peer-exchange workshops (Nairobi) and contributed to the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development side event in Munyonyo focused on inclusive economic growth and job creation. Capacity-building engagements further included leadership and institutional trainings hosted in Tokyo (Japan) and at JICA workshops in Kampala.



Mr. Douglas Asimwe, the Assistant Commissioner for Refugees, participating in AU Regional 2025 GRF Review process in Mozambique



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees joins guests for a Group Photo during the 2025 International Migration Day.



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees, joins other NCM participants for a group photo during the 2025 Voluntary National Review for GCM Implementation

In April 2025, the Department also hosted a study tour delegation from South Sudan to share Uganda's refugee response operations and settlement management practices, contributing to peer-country learning and regional application of good practices.



Commissioner for Refugees Management and Department of Refugees Staff with the South Sudanese Delegation at the Department of Refugees Headquarters in Kampala



Mr. Douglas Asimwe, the Assistant Commissioner for Refugees Management together with the UNHCR Representative engaging with the team of a delegation from the South Sudanese who were on an official tour to Uganda.



The Commissioner for Refugees/NCM Chairman, Uganda in a group with other NCM members from Kenya, Ethiopia, during a peer exchange visit in Nairobi Kenya



Mr. Patrick Okello, Commissioner for Refugees Management with the French Ambassador in Uganda with Donors and Implementing Partners



Mr. Douglas Asiimwe, the Assistant Commissioner for Refugees, with Mr. Jason Hepps, the Deputy Representative, UNHCR cochairing a meeting with Donors in Arua during a mission to West Nile to assess refugee response challenges



CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Introduction

The section provides an update on the implementation of the national refugee policy and the refugee-related projects undertaken by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in 2025.

4.1 Progress on the National Refugee Policy

The Development of the National Refugee Policy has evolved in response to emerging dynamics in Uganda's refugee response. The initial draft, completed in 2024, was aligned with the Government's mandatory Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA).

In 2025, further consultations were undertaken to incorporate inputs from key stakeholders and ensure alignment with new national priorities and international commitments.

However, during this period, new global challenges in refugee protection, including shortfalls in international resources and responsibility, have emerged, impacting or threatening the "Uganda Open-Door Approach" to refugee hosting. With this situation, the National Refugee Policy is now undergoing further review by Government.



Stakeholders participating during the National Consultation for the Development of the National Refugee Policy



4.2 OPM Refugee Projects

4.2.1 Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP):

In 2025, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) did not directly implement projects. However, significant progress was made in securing funding for key initiatives to strengthen Uganda's refugee response. Notably, OPM secured World Bank support for the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP), anticipated to commence in 2026, which will focus on the provision of social and economic services, infrastructure development, integrated natural resource management, and promotion of economic opportunities for refugee-hosting communities.

4.2.2 People's Republic of China for the China Humanitarian Assistance Project (CHAP)

Additionally, OPM obtained one-off support from the People's Republic of China for the China Humanitarian Assistance Project (CHAP), also set to begin in 2026. This project targets Nakivale and Kyangwali Refugee Settlements and Nyakaande Transit Centre, aiming to strengthen emergency refugee response services for newly arrived refugees. Key interventions will include protection-focused activities such as the provision of hot meals, distribution of dignity kits, safety and psychosocial support, as well as enhanced coordination and community engagement.

Although both projects were secured in 2025, implementation and reporting will be undertaken in 2026.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Introduction

This section outlines the key challenges and recommendations identified in the refugee response, focusing on service delivery, coordination, and social cohesion, and their broader impact on the overall effectiveness of the refugee response.

5.1 Challenges Facing the Uganda Refugee Response in 2025

1. The Uganda refugee response in 2025 faced multiple interrelated challenges across coordination, protection, security, social cohesion, education, health, infrastructure, and livelihoods, which threatened the well-being of both refugees and host communities.
2. In 2025, protection interventions faced severe setbacks due to drastic reductions in funding affecting critical functions of the government, including Refugee Status Determination (RSD), registration and documentation, land management, settlement activities, land demarcation, surveys, clearing, and allocation. These constraints have limited OPM ability to effectively oversee the response, monitor, and respond to emergencies. Furthermore, peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives have been halted, heightening the risk of tensions and conflicts within settlements, particularly among communities previously stabilized through targeted interventions.
3. Security and Social Cohesion: Overall, security in refugee settlements remained relatively stable, with isolated incidents being effectively managed by settlement authorities. However, certain settlements, notably Kiryandongo, experienced fragile tensions resulting in violent clashes among refugees, leading to injuries and fatalities.
4. Food prioritization and insufficient livelihood opportunities prompted some refugees to leave settlements and relocate to border areas or urban centres in search of income-generating activities. This movement has been accompanied by a rise in crime and social challenges, including increased teenage pregnancies.
5. Funding Constraints: The refugee response faced dwindling funding for settlement service delivery, which has negatively impacted programs promoting peaceful coexistence and community engagement. Funding shortfalls have contributed to ethnic tensions and conflicts among refugees, as well as deteriorating infrastructure, particularly

the road networks within settlements, which hampers the transport of shelter materials for Persons with Special Needs (PSNs).

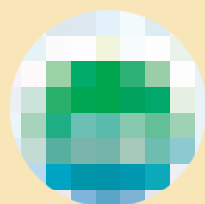
6. **Law Enforcement and Child Protection:** Inadequate police manpower across settlements has further strained security management. Reports indicate an increasing number of children moving between settlements without formal transfers. This movement may be linked to food shortages, but also raises concerns about child abandonment and neglect, requiring urgent monitoring and intervention.
7. **Water and Environmental Challenges:** Settlements such as Kiryandongo face low groundwater potential, severely affecting access to safe water and undermining sanitation, hygiene, and agricultural productivity.
8. **Education Sector Challenges:** The education system in refugee settlements is under significant stress: There has been an increase in irregular training centers in settlements and surrounding communities. High teacher turnover combined with growing class congestion has worsened the teacher-to-pupil ratio and pupil-to-toilet ratio. Newly arrived refugees, particularly Sudanese, present unique educational challenges due to differences in curriculum and language. Between 2024 and 2025, the refugee response experienced a 21% reduction in teachers (1,256), pushing the PTR from 71:1 to 117:1. Without additional funding, an expected 54% further reduction (2,531 teachers) is anticipated between 2025 and 2026. Consequently, 92 schools may open for the first term without teachers, affecting 107,411 refugee pupils and 19,551 Ugandan nationals.
9. **Health Sector Challenges:** Funding gaps in 2026 are projected to significantly affect Village Health Teams (VHTs) and primary health care delivery. Current staffing shortages already exceed 1,300 health care workers, leading to reduced operational capacity in HC IIs and HC IIIs. This could result in the withdrawal of essential health services, including maternal and child health, vaccination, and emergency care.
10. **Livelihoods and Land Use:** There is growing pressure from landlords seeking compensation for land provided for refugee settlements. Increasingly, landlords prefer leasing land directly to refugees, rather than offering it to OPM free of charge, limiting land availability for agricultural production.

11. Infrastructure and Accommodation: Settlements such as Rhino Camp face inadequate staff accommodation, and open fencing around OPM offices, including the Arua Desk Office, exposes government property to security risks.
12. WFP significantly reduced General Food Assistance, cutting rations for moderately vulnerable refugees (82%) from 30% to 22%, for the most vulnerable (13%) from 60% to 40%, and for new arrivals from 100% to 60%.
13. Reductions in partner staffing, with some NGOs suspending operations, resulting in the loss of professional jobs for approximately 20,000 Ugandans and creating significant capacity gaps in the refugee response.

5.2 Key Recommendations

1. Funding and Financial Sustainability: Donors should provide flexible, predictable, and long-term funding to fully support the Uganda Refugee Response and reduce dependency on shrinking humanitarian, earmarked funds.
2. Resilience and Self-Reliance: Need to foster economic independence by investing in agriculture, vocational skills training to promote self-reliance, rather than just short-term emergency relief.
3. Support and strengthen integrated national systems: There should be a shift from emergency humanitarian aid to development-based approaches by fully supporting the relevant government sectors that have integrated services into national systems with the required resources both financial and technical, especially in health, education, and water.
4. Enhance coordination, data and accountability: There is need to improve targeting by using the existing coordination structures that aligns with the national context through digital, accurate, transparent and joint planning approaches to reduce duplication of efforts and increase efficiency to ensure aid reaches the most vulnerable and offer sustainable solutions.

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