



UGANDA SOLIDARITY SUMMIT ON REFUGEES:

An interagency briefing and call to action

SUPPORT FOR UGANDA IS A TEST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S COMMITMENT TO RESPONSIBILITY SHARING

In response to the recent and massive movement of South Sudanese refugees into northern Uganda, the President of Uganda and the UN Secretary-General are co-hosting the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees on 22nd and 23rd June. The Summit aims to mobilise international support for the response in line with the 2016 'New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees' and the promise of the SDGs to "leave no one behind".

The Summit is a critical opportunity for donor countries to ensure high level participation and pledge support to Uganda's refugee response. As non-governmental organisations working in Uganda, we welcome the opportunity afforded by the Summit to convene national and international actors. We strongly urge the international community to act on existing commitments to share responsibility for meeting the needs of refugees, including by ensuring a fully funded refugee response, supporting long term development in refugee hosting communities and redoubling efforts to facilitate a peaceful resolution to conflicts in the countries from which refugees are fleeing.

UNPRECEDENTED MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES INTO UGANDA

Uganda currently ranks among the top three refugee hosting nations in the world and is now home to more refugees than any other country in Africa. Since July 2016, the refugee population in Uganda has doubled to over one million. The rapid rise in refugees comes as a result of the increased conflict in South Sudan. South Sudanese refugees cite violence and indiscriminate killing of civilians, fear of arrest and torture, and inability to access basic needs as reasons for fleeing. Bidi Bidi refugee settlement is now the largest in the world, hosting over 270,000 South Sudanese refugees.²

The provision of protection and assistance to refugees arriving in Uganda has placed significant pressures on the country which is already grappling with immense needs of its own citizens. However, despite these pressures the Government of Uganda is implementing a progressive refugee response.

The Government of Uganda's refugee policies³ take into account the protracted nature of displacement and the impact on host communities, and aims to include refugees in national development plans. Uganda's policies include opening its territory to refugees irrespective of nationality or ethnic affiliation and granting them: freedom of movement, land for each refugee family to settle and cultivate, the right to seek employment and establish businesses, access to public services including health and education, and access to travel, legal identity and other documents. Uganda's model champions the principle of "leaving no one behind".

While recognising the contribution refugees make to local economies and communities, refugee-hosting districts face significant development and service delivery challenges due to poor infrastructure and lack of investment, which undermine prospects for meaningful economic and social development. Already we are seeing how poor infrastructure in refugee-hosting districts is negatively impacting access to basic services such as water, and in turn contribute to tension between communities, a dynamic that could lead to further strain if the needs of these communities are not proactively addressed.

¹ Uganda hosts refugees from 13 countries with the majority (68%) from South Sudan.

² The latest data on refugee movements and the numbers of refugees being hosted by Uganda is available at <https://ugandarefugees.org/>

³ Uganda has enshrined refugees' rights within the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, which are widely regarded as a model for Africa and beyond. The 2006 Act reflects international standards of refugee protection provided in international legal instruments. It recognizes the rights of refugees to work, establish businesses, move around freely within the country and live in refugee settlements rather than camps. It also outlines how a refugee situation can cease once durable solutions have been found. The Act promotes refugees' self-reliance and favours a development based approach to refugee assistance.

Recently arrived refugees who fled fighting in South Sudan rest under a makeshift shelter at Ngoromoro crossing point in Uganda's Lamwo district. © UNHCR



ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE REFUGEE RESPONSE



Simon Peter, 20, a refugee from South Sudan constructs his new home on land provided by the Government of Uganda, from mud bricks that he made at Bidibidi refugee settlement in the country's North. © UNHCR

At the UN High Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in September 2016, the General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), whereby member states pledged to support countries hosting large refugee populations.

Uganda is living up to its international obligations to refugees notwithstanding the pressures created by the unprecedented arrival of large numbers of refugees. However, it will be difficult for Uganda to continue its progressive policies in the absence of robust financial support from the international community. The inter-agency refugee response plan in Uganda is severely underfunded. As of 1 June 2017, the South Sudan Refugee Response appeal for Uganda is just 17 per cent funded and the Burundi Refugee Response Plan in Uganda is 0 per cent funded.⁴

The capabilities of humanitarian organisations to provide vital life-saving assistance to refugees and for the government and partners to uphold the progressive approach to refugee management being implemented by Uganda is being severely undermined by a lack of financial support.

In fact the lack of predictable development and humanitarian funding to help respond to the needs of refugees now living in Uganda risks unravelling the commitment by the Government of Uganda and refugee hosting communities to the country's refugee policy and practice.

It is vital that the response to the crisis brings in development actors to help bridge the humanitarian development divide and ensure a sustained and sustainable response to the needs of refugee hosting communities.

ACTION URGENTLY NEEDED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

As NGOs working in Uganda, we commend Uganda's progressive response to displacement and we strongly support the upcoming Solidarity Summit on Refugees, as well as ongoing efforts to implement the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in Uganda. We are committed to working the Government of Uganda and the international community to achieve the objectives of the Summit.

The Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees presents an opportunity to translate the CRRF commitments into action for refugees and the communities that host them.

For this to become a reality we urge the international community and donor governments to:

1. Ensure high-level participation in the Summit

In line with commitments made in the New York Declaration, the Agenda for Humanity and the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals to "leave no one behind", the international community must take demonstrable steps to stand with refugee hosting countries and actively share responsibility for supporting displaced populations. Ensuring high level participation in the Summit is the first step.

2. Bring both humanitarian and development expertise and resources to the Summit

The time to act to "bridge the humanitarian-development divide" is now. Through the 2006 Refugee Act, the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHOPE) Strategy and the Settlement Transformative Agenda, the Government of Uganda has taken important policy steps to create conditions under which refugees are able to pursue self-reliance and

which allow host communities to maintain hard-fought development gains. Donors must now do their part to bring in development technical expertise and resources in order to sustain and strengthen the implementation of these policies.

3. Commit predictable, multi-year funds at the Summit

Adequately responding to the protracted nature of the emergency and supporting resilience among refugee and host communities requires predictable, multi-year funding from donors. In line with Grand Bargain commitments, donors should pledge multi-year, collaborative and flexible funds. Funding pledged should be commensurate with the scale of the crisis and come from both humanitarian and development funding facilities. This should include funds to strengthen and empower the role of local and national actors in the humanitarian response. Development grants should be prioritised over loans and should support government-provided public services to ensure they are accessible, high quality and meet the needs of refugees and host communities. Donors must also commit to quickly translating all pledges to committed funding on the ground to ensure the delivery of lifesaving and essential services.

4. Address the root causes of the crisis

The international community must redouble efforts to facilitate a peaceful resolution to conflicts in neighbouring countries and create conditions that are conducive to informed, safe and dignified voluntary returns.

⁴ 1 June 2017 Funding Snapshots: Burundi Regional Refugee Response Plan & South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan. These figures reflect the underfunding of the humanitarian appeal in Uganda, not the total funding required to deliver the CRRF in Uganda.

These asks have been developed by international and local organisations working on the refugee response in Uganda.



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