

Responding to Refugee Crises

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Lessons from evaluations in Ethiopia and Uganda
as countries of destination



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A young Burundian refugee farms his little plot
on the edge of the Kashjowa village, Uganda.
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Foreword

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has recognised that international co-operation and development assistance in relation to forced displacement, refugees, and migration need greater attention. In 2016, the DAC formed a Temporary Working Group on Refugees and Migration.

This working paper is a case study on Ethiopia and Uganda as countries of destination for refugees. The case study looks at the approaches adopted in Ethiopia and Uganda to promote refugee self-reliance and enable refugees to work to earn income. It compares outcomes in the countries, with a specific focus on access to employment and business creation, including legal and socio-economic barriers. The case study draws from a number of evaluations of efforts by the international community to support Ethiopian and Ugandan initiatives. The case study was undertaken as part of a wider research project on learning from evaluations to improve responses to situations of forced displacement.

The study, **Responding to Refugee Crises in Developing Countries: What Can We Learn From Evaluations?** provides evidence from evaluations to feed into guidance on better programming that is being developed through the DAC Temporary Working Group. The main paper and three accompanying case studies draw on evaluation findings to highlight some of the key lessons and recommendations for positive change going forward. The main paper and three case studies (Afghanistan, South Sudan and Ethiopia/Uganda) can be found at: www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/evaluating-refugee-migration.htm.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (Ethiopia)
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAR	Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas strategy
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRDIP	Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project
GBV	Gender Based Violence
ICAI	UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LEWIE	Local economy-wide impact evaluation
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service (Ethiopia)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister (Uganda)
ReHoPE	Refugee and Host Population Empowerment strategy
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SRS	Self-Reliance Strategy
STA	Settlement Transformative Agenda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WFP	World Food Program

A tale of two countries: Different pathways towards refugee self-reliance

The vast majority of refugees are hosted in developing countries, and Africa is the region with the highest refugee population. Conflict and food insecurity in countries in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, as well as in South Sudan and Yemen have contributed to large refugee populations in Ethiopia and Uganda. Both Ethiopia and Uganda are attempting to deal with these sizable refugee populations and ongoing influxes of refugees. Donors have provided assistance to both countries to support development and each host government's ability to assist refugees.

This case study looks at efforts by the international community to support the approaches adopted in Ethiopia and Uganda towards refugee self-reliance. It compares outcomes in the countries, with a specific focus on access to employment and business creation. The case study draws from a number of evaluations and recent reports.

Refugees from South Sudan cross the border with Uganda at the Kaya River via a bridge built by UNHCR.
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Context

Ethiopia is the second largest refugee-hosting nation in Africa after Uganda, with over 811 555 registered refugees and asylum-seekers as of February 2017.¹ The significant and long-lasting presence of refugees from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and Yemen is due to recurring episodes of conflict, political unrest, human rights violations, drought and famine in these countries. The escalating violence in South Sudan has been largely responsible for the recent surge in refugee numbers in Ethiopia. (See the South Sudan case study for more information on the drivers of conflict and displacement in South Sudan.) South Sudanese refugees are able to access Ethiopia's western region. In 2016, it hosted 287 500 South Sudanese refugees.² The majority of refugees in Ethiopia reside in camps located in remote areas near their respective countries' borders. Although Ethiopia maintains an open-door policy toward refugees, it does not provide for the possibility of local integration as a durable solution.³ While Ethiopia is a country of destination for many refugees, some refugees transit via Ethiopia, staying in the country while they seek better assistance and work opportunities elsewhere including by crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe.

Uganda also has a long history of hosting refugees fleeing persecution and conflicts in the Great Lakes, East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Until 2010, Uganda's refugee population remained stable with voluntarily repatriations and refugee resettlement nearly keeping pace with new arrivals.⁴ However, from 2010 onward, renewed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) led to a steady influx of refugees. Numbers rose again sharply after 2013 due to renewed violence in South Sudan and instability in Burundi. By 2015, Uganda was hosting more than 500 000 refugees. By the second half of 2016, that figure had doubled with the influx of refugees fleeing the intensification of conflict in South Sudan. As of February 2017, UNHCR reported that Uganda was hosting over one million refugees and asylum seekers.⁵ This is the largest refugee caseload in Uganda's history. As of September 2016, nearly 74% of the refugees in Uganda were living in established settlements in eight predominantly rural host districts in the northern and eastern part of the country. Approximately 11% had "self-settled" in Kampala and 15% remained at transit centres in northern Uganda awaiting registration.⁶ According to UNHCR, women and children constitute the majority of the refugee population in Uganda, especially among new arrivals from South Sudan.

Self-reliance is the ability of an individual, household or community to meet essential needs and to enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable manner and with dignity. By becoming self-reliant, refugees and displaced persons lead active and productive lives and are able to build strong social, economic and cultural ties with their host communities. Self-reliance can assist in ensuring that persons of concern are better protected by strengthening their capacity to claim their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

UNHCR (2014a) Global Strategy for Livelihoods:
A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018, p. 7,
www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf.

Recreation center being built in Dolo Ado,
Ethiopia, where camps are shifting from
emergency to long-term operations.
© UNHCR/Jiro Ose



How both countries support refugees' livelihoods and self-reliance

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, refugee affairs are within the remit of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) under the Ministry of Federal Affairs. In practice, this responsibility falls to the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), a semi-autonomous body with responsibility for the implementation of all policies relating to refugees and returnees.⁷ According to a 2013 evaluation of UNHCR's response, ARRA is both an implementing partner for most sectorial activities and a government body that monitors, regulates and authorises partners to operate. "Moreover, through its placement in the National Intelligence and Security Service and with its engagement in border areas, ARRA has a further dual role of a security agency versus a service provision agency".⁸ The 2013 evaluation of UNHCR also noted that "ARRA kept tight control over its role as implementing partner, limiting the opening up of humanitarian space to international agencies".⁹

Ethiopia is party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, but holds formal reservations regarding refugees' right to work and primary education.¹⁰ Ethiopia's national legal framework, the Refugee Proclamation of 2004, granted refugees some rights but with restrictions related to rights of movement and residence and the right to work. Until 2009, Ethiopia enforced a strict policy of encampment for all refugees. Starting in 2010, however, the country began implementing an "out-of-camp policy" allowing Eritrean refugees to live outside camps provided they are able to support themselves financially or have the support of relatives already living in non-camp areas. In 2015, some 8 000 Eritrean refugees lived in Addis Ababa under the out-of-camp policy and several hundred lived in other cities.¹¹ At the September 2016 Refugee Summit, the Ethiopian government pledged to relax its encampment policy for all refugees, raising the number of out-of-camp beneficiaries to 10% of the refugee population.¹²

Refugees in Ethiopia, whether they live in camps or in cities, are unable to engage in formal employment and have traditionally had limited access to land for agricultural production.¹³ Ethiopian law restricts access to work permits for foreigners, and, in practice, work permits are not granted to refugees and asylum seekers, preventing their access to the formal market.¹⁴ According to a 2015 US evaluation, "the government of Ethiopia follows a strict policy of only granting work permits to foreigners when there are no qualified nationals available to do comparable work. These permits are rarely issued to refugees due both to lack of qualified personnel and discrimination against the refugee populations".¹⁵ Similarly, refugees cannot obtain business licenses and it is "almost impossible for refugees to establish their own enterprises".¹⁶ Most refugees have been restricted to informal jobs and they lack full legal protection.¹⁷ Work in the informal sector has also been subject to government regulation, and "in refugee camps, government authorities have strict regulations about the type of informal work in which refugees can participate".¹⁸ Furthermore, refugees are generally not allowed to own land in Ethiopia.¹⁹ Some reports also indicate that the inability to access formal employment may expose refugees to labour market exploitation with cases of refugees working for reduced wages.²⁰

A 2011 impact evaluation commissioned by the UNHCR and World Food Programme (WFP) noted the severely limited income-generating opportunities available for refugees. The main income-generating opportunity for refugees was work as day labourers. This evaluation also found that refugee families lacked access to land for farming and grazing, and that restriction on the movement of refugees meant they had few opportunities for agricultural production. However, families that received remittances were significantly better off.²¹ The evaluation said donors had provided over USD 100 million to UNHCR and WFP "to provide refugees with sufficient food and non-food items, while livelihood programming ha[d] attracted only a very small proportion of donor assistance".²² While WFP was providing food aid to refugee camps, however, refugees

were not included in WFP programmes promoting sustainable livelihoods, productive safety nets and school feeding programmes that were benefiting rural communities in areas surrounding the camps.²³ The evaluation noted that UNHCR lacked funding to promote refugee self-reliance and that the long-term distribution of full food rations, combined with the limited economic opportunities for refugees, “created a dependency syndrome” and prevented refugees from achieving self-reliance. Hence Somali refugees had been present for 20 years in camps but lacked economic freedom to pursue livelihood opportunities, while at the same time “major donors ha[d] not vigorously lobbied for policy changes that might expand refugees’ economic rights, and thus durable solutions”.²⁴

Despite its official policies limiting refugees’ right to work in both the formal and informal sectors, as noted above, the government has allowed some specific initiatives that aim to enable refugees to find income-generating activities in the informal sector. There are a number of examples of such projects in recent years to promote self-employment and self-reliance. Between 2012 and 2014, for instance, the International Labour Organization (ILO) partnered with UNHCR and the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) to implement a project promoting wage employment and self-employment within refugee camps and the surrounding host communities in the Dollo Ado area of southeastern Ethiopia. By facilitating economic exchange and collaboration between hosts and refugees, the project increased household income and contributed to improving social cohesion.²⁵ UNHCR, local authorities and the IKEA Foundation joined forces in 2012-14 in another project in the same area in which local authorities allocated 1 000 hectares of land for agricultural activity and, UNHCR invested in irrigation and infrastructure with the support of the IKEA Foundation. The aim of this project was to increase household income for 50 000 refugees and members of the host community.²⁶ On 20 September 2016, at the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, “Ethiopia pledged to make available 10 000 hectares of irrigable land within the bounds of the national laws of Ethiopia to allow 20 000 refugee and host community households (100 000 people) to engage in crop production by facilitating irrigation schemes, subject to the availability of external financial assistance”.²⁷

These new initiatives show positive progress because refugees in the Dollo Ado camp had not had many livelihood opportunities before. The camp experienced a large influx of Somali refugees following severe droughts in the Horn of Africa in early 2011. The 2013 evaluation of the UNHCR response noted that refugees there had “almost no livelihood opportunities and depleted assets” when they came. This led to a dependence on food aid, with refugees forced to sell food aid as a course of cash to meet other basic needs.²⁸ The situation was particularly concerning, the evaluation added, since many of the refugees had come in need of life-saving assistance and with high levels of malnutrition. The failure to provide cash or other livelihood support thereby had a negative impact on refugees’ food security. As the Horn of Africa region is prone to food insecurity, an important lesson to be drawn is that providing food aid to refugees in camps in Ethiopia is not sufficient, particularly if they have to sell a portion of their food rations to support their other basic needs. The evaluation noted that malnutrition rates “in the established camps hovered around 33% while in the new arrivals it was closer to 50%. Mortality rates were far above emergency thresholds”.²⁹ There is evidence of projects in other camps that focus on self-reliance. “In the Jijiga area, where there are three camps hosting nearly 40 000 Somali refugees, UNHCR also engages refugees and host communities in self-reliance activities under its Development Assistance for Refugees project”.³⁰ International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) are also implementing loans and training programmes in refugee camps close to the border with Eritrea aiming to provide capital to establish micro-enterprises, equip participants with vocational skills in a particular sector (such as tailoring or computing), and/or provide basic educational skills.³¹

Somali refugees queuing up at a water point in Kobe camp, Dolo Ado region, Ethiopia. © UNHCR/Paul Spiegel



While the situation is changing and some progress has been seen on the ground, “limited strategic thinking to longer-term sustainable programming and very few resources devoted to livelihoods and self-reliance” were highlighted in the UNHCR response to the arrival of large numbers of South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia.³² A 2015 evaluation of US refugee activities in Ethiopia also highlighted the lack of livelihood programming and support for refugees in some camps. With such a lack of livelihood opportunities, refugees remain unable to meet their basic needs and rely entirely upon aid and assistance.³³ When they exist, livelihood and vocational training programmes have generally enabled refugees to “increase income and food security, improve their self-confidence and self-esteem” and to “improve education, learn new skills that they can use after returning home, in resettlement, and to a limited extent while still living in the camps”.³⁴

Evaluations highlighted that access to training, jobs and livelihood programmes may need to pay greater attention to meeting the needs of women and those with specific vulnerabilities. The evaluation for the US Department of State noted that very few refugee women have been involved in vocational training programmes because “most vocational trainings were in trades that are more attractive to men”.³⁵ In addition, livelihood programmes have been more effective for refugees with prior experience or skills, in particular those who “possessed higher education and previous experience as business owners or skilled workers were better able to maintain their businesses following graduation from [the small business training] programs”.³⁶ This was not the case for refugees who had “low levels of education or little prior experience and for the more vulnerable”, who “often included single mothers [and] survivors of gender-based violence”.³⁷ Evaluations of UNHCR’s response have also found that women who are heads of households in refugee camps tend to be more food insecure and lack income-generating opportunities.³⁸ One result of the lack of livelihood opportunities for women is that “women occasionally engage in transactional sex to support their food security – sex is even bartered for food”.³⁹

More broadly, the 2015 evaluation on US livelihoods programmes noted weaknesses in contextual understanding and monitoring systems, as well as an overall deficiency of technical knowledge and experience among implementing partners.⁴⁰ According to the evaluation, there was an overall lack of comprehensive needs or baseline assessments focusing on refugee livelihoods, despite the existence of some market/livelihoods assessments. The evaluation observes that as a result of this gap, implementing partners “struggled to draw connections between the market context, refugees’ skills and capacities, and programming decisions. This threatens the development and implementation of effective programs and hinders understanding about the outcomes of livelihoods programs”.⁴¹ The evaluation therefore recommended that the US conduct “extensive situational analysis to understand the existing capacities, as well as needs and priorities of refugee communities”.⁴²

“The situational analysis should include participatory assessments to identify the opportunities and challenges for implementing livelihoods activities in the context of the camp and surrounding communities. It should also seek to assess the capabilities, existing assets, skill and knowledge gaps, and aspirations of the refugee community members. Data collected should be disaggregated by nationality, sex, and age.”⁴³

The 2017 working paper on migration decisions by Eritreans in Ethiopia argued that livelihood support, where implemented, is helping refugees in Ethiopia “to meet basic needs, but there appears to be little meaningful effect beyond this”.⁴⁴ It also said “the potential benefits of existing livelihood support programmes are being undermined by underlying structural issues or restricted access to the labour market, as well as general problems such as high unemployment”.⁴⁵

The situation in Ethiopia is changing, however, and the government, with the support of donors, is now focusing on efforts to support job creation for the country's sizable refugee population. Following the examples set in Jordan and Lebanon, Ethiopia is developing a national compact focused on job creation.⁴⁶ Donors including the United Kingdom, the European Union, the World Bank and the European Investment Bank are supporting the Jobs Compact with the aim of improving the conditions of refugees and host communities in Ethiopia. They also expect that the Compact may help reduce secondary movements to Europe.⁴⁷ For the UK, support for the Compact is explicitly linked to the "UK's priority for addressing movements by irregular migrants and refugees through the central Mediterranean".⁴⁸ According to a 2016 review of UK assistance focusing on irregular migration, the Compact is an effort to "reframe the response to protracted displacement from repeated humanitarian aid towards a combination of short-term relief and more sustainable development interventions designed to promote local integration. It is centred on the idea of finding durable solutions that include access to employment and education for long-term refugees, with shared responsibility between the host country and donors. The compact model has been facilitated by a shift to multi-year funding".⁴⁹ In practice, the focus on job creation means that the Ethiopian government will grant refugees access to parts of the labour market. In exchange, the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK and other donors will help to leverage international finance for the development of a series of industrial parks. The objective is to create 30 000 jobs for refugees as part of much wider job creation project for host communities. While the infrastructure for industrial parks will be donor-financed, the actual jobs will be created by the private sector. To reach the intended scale, the scheme will have to attract a considerable amount of finance from both donors and the private sector.⁵⁰

The objective of the Jobs Compact is ambitious, particularly in view of the poor record of industrial parks across Africa on job creation. A 2015 report by the African Development Bank Group on special economic zones (SEZs) in Africa expressed doubt about the usefulness of those created in the 1990s and 2000s. It said many previous SEZs in Africa failed to achieve meaningful growth due to "competitive weaknesses in terms of high labour costs and inability to reach scale" in comparison with SEZs in Asia.⁵¹ Many previous SEZs in Africa also suffered from poor implementation choices by national governments and poor regional trade integration.⁵² The foreword to the report stated that "the risks of pursuing an SEZ approach for the wrong reasons, based on political rather than economic considerations, is more prevalent in fragile situations where policymakers [are] under enormous pressure to show quick results".⁵³ This largely supports previous research on SEZs in Africa including a report published by the World Bank in 2011 that highlighted many of the challenges facing SEZs in Africa.⁵⁴ Several existing SEZs in Ethiopia have a mixed record to date with regards to job creation. A 2015 UNDP comparative study of SEZs in Africa and China made similar observations. It noted that Ethiopia's first SEZ, the Eastern Industrial Zone that is entirely owned and managed by a private Chinese investor (Jiangsu Qiyuan Group), had not met its job creation goal. The report noted that initially the Eastern Industrial Zone planned to create 20 000 jobs but as of 2015, had created approximately 4 500 jobs, and highlighted the challenges that the SEZs in Ethiopia have encountered particularly with regards to infrastructure.⁵⁵

The Jobs Compact approach was reviewed in a 2017 report by the UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI), highlighting "the Compact is as yet unsupported by evidence of what works in preventing secondary displacement, and it rests on a number of assumptions that will need to be tested".⁵⁶ The ICAI review said that monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the Compact will be necessary to "avoid drawing superficial or spurious links between aid interventions and rapidly changing migration patterns".⁵⁷ Similarly, a 2017 report on migration decisions of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia indicated that it is too early to judge the impact of the Jobs Compact.⁵⁸

Secondary displacement has been a topic reviewed in other evaluations, which have raised questions about how effective livelihood programmes may be in reducing this. For example, a 2015 evaluation of US livelihoods programmes in Ethiopia responded to assertions by UNHCR and some implementing partners that “livelihoods programs potentially can reduce secondary movement”. It recounted that “when probed about a possible correlation between their programs and secondary migration, [International Rescue Committee] staff reported that they have no idea how many of their program participants have left for secondary migration and that they have challenges monitoring their graduates as many depart for secondary migration”. The evaluation also noted “the general inadequacy in understanding this issue, coupled with complete absence of effective program monitoring, means that the correlation between livelihoods program and secondary migration cannot be determined”.⁵⁹ Currently there does not appear to be a strong evidence base demonstrating the linkages between livelihood initiatives and secondary displacement, and donors should work to generate evidence and build experience to test underlying assumptions on the impact of programming choices on secondary displacement.

A Somali refugee sells her fruit at the market in Buramino camp, Ethiopia. The market was built with funding from the IKEA Foundation to enable refugees to have their own businesses and cease to depend solely on assistance.
© UNHCR/Diana Diaz



Uganda

In Uganda, refugee affairs are the responsibility of the central government and are dealt with by the Department of Refugees under the political leadership of the Minister for Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). Uganda has long maintained an open-door policy for refugees, even at times of sharp increases in arrivals, and it is known for its progressive refugee and asylum policies. Uganda's efforts have focused on providing a form of "local settlement" enabling refugees to become self-reliant.⁶⁰

A 2013 US Department of State evaluation highlights that "Uganda's refugee policy is more generous than those of many countries in the region in that refugees are granted land and have the right to engage in employment".⁶¹ A 2016 assessment for the World Bank also noted that "Uganda's approach has allowed refugees to positively contribute to their own and Uganda's economic and social development, exemplified by the significant volume of economic transactions between refugees and Ugandan nationals and by the creation of employment opportunities for Ugandan nationals by refugees".⁶² For the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Uganda's "approach is based on two premises: firstly, that displacement is an area of shared responsibility for governmental, humanitarian and development actors; secondly, that it is an area of shared opportunity for refugees and Ugandans alike."⁶³ Furthermore, Uganda's approach has proven successful in helping refugees contribute to Uganda's economy:

In Uganda, refugees have the right to work and to establish their own businesses under the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Regulations. However, there is some legal ambiguity and confusion within various parts of the government as to whether refugees are exempted from obtaining a permit to work.⁶⁵ In practice, there are significant variations in economic opportunities for refugees related to whether they enter formal or informal employment; whether they have access to productive capital; and based on their location in rural or urban areas. For instance, many of the Ugandan settlements hosting South Sudanese are located in the least developed areas of the country where livelihood opportunities are limited.⁶⁶ Under the terms of the 2006 Refugee Act and the Refugee Regulations, refugees have access to land but they cannot own the homes they live in or the land they cultivate. "These factors have bearing on the extent to which refugees can become locally integrated over a longer period of time".⁶⁷

"The evidence presented is strong: of refugees living in rural Ugandan settlements, just 1% depend entirely on humanitarian assistance. Many operate their own businesses and even employ Ugandans. Likewise, in the capital Kampala, an estimated 1 in 5 refugees employs non-family members, and roughly 40% of those employed by refugees are Ugandans."⁶⁴

While in principle refugees granted status can settle either in urban areas or in rural refugee settlements, in practice the Ugandan government has favoured a policy of confinement of refugees to settlements with the allocation of a piece of land for housing and farming constituting the foundation for sustainable livelihoods for a large portion of the refugee population. Some refugee settlements are closely embedded in the local Ugandan economies, attracting goods, people and capital from outside to their active internal markets.⁶⁸ Ugandan private companies have seen refugee settlement areas as potential markets. For example, "Ugandan telecom companies launched several initiatives aimed at targeting refugee users of SMS banking and transfer services".⁶⁹ A study for the World Bank noted that this has provided employment for refugees in the settlement areas, and has helped other refugees by making it easier for them to receive remittances from relatives and friends within or outside of the country. In turn, the attention from the Ugandan private sector has also helped refugees to meet expenses including their children's school fees.⁷⁰

The World Food Programme in 2016 commissioned a report that used local economy-wide impact evaluation (LEWIE) methodology to analyse the economic impact of refugee settlements in Uganda. The report used LEWIE “to estimate benefits and costs of refugee assistance for a unique host country setting where the refugees are given plots of land of agriculture and also freely allowed to interact in the host communities”.⁷¹ It found that refugees have had a positive impact on local economies in and around the settlements in which they live, in that “refugees create income spill overs by demanding goods and services, which in turn stimulates local production”.⁷²

Working with UNHCR and other stakeholders, Uganda has developed and implemented several initiatives designed to further support refugees’ self-reliance and economic independence including the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), the Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas (DAR) strategy, the Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA), and the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategy. The 1999 Self-Reliance Strategy was jointly developed by Uganda’s Office of the Prime Minister, the Directorate of Refugees and UNHCR Uganda. This SRS aimed to integrate the services provided to refugees into regular government structures and policies, and to empower refugees and Ugandans in the area so that they will be able to support themselves.⁷³ Some of the achievements of the strategy included “a high level of acceptance of the principle of Self-Reliance for refugees by all stakeholders [and] the integration of key services to refugees with those offered by local government service providers, leading to the phasing out of some functions previously performed by NGOs and for some refugees, the food self-sufficiency based on refugee agricultural plots has led to a reduction in the quantity of food assistance provided by WFP”.⁷⁴ The Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas strategy (DAR) programme was launched in 2004 by the government of Uganda and UNHCR, as the successor to the SRS. It aimed to ensure better food security, access to social services and improved income generating opportunities for refugees and host communities as well as to empower refugees and locals to participate in the planning and implementation of their own development agenda.⁷⁵

Since 2015, the Uganda National Development Plan (NDP II 2015/16-2020/21) includes refugees in national development planning and structures through a five-year government strategy called the Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA).⁷⁶ The STA aims to promote social and economic development in areas hosting refugees for both refugees and host communities in partnership with UN agencies, the World Bank and other stakeholders. The main initiative developed in 2015 to support the STA is a multi-year Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) Strategic Framework that brings together the government of Uganda, UN agencies, the World Bank, development partners and the private sector to support resilience-building efforts for refugees and host communities (with a cost of up to USD 350 million over a five-year period). Its goal is “developing a coordinated strategy to transform and transition interventions in Uganda’s refugee-impacted districts from a humanitarian to a development approach”. The five objectives of ReHoPE are to:

- foster sustainable livelihoods for refugees and host communities, thereby contributing to socioeconomic growth and increased individual income
- improve delivery of social services such as education; health; and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in refugee hosting areas
- create an enabling protection environment that promotes the full enjoyment of rights for refugees to live in safety, harmony, and dignity with their host communities and the natural environment

- encourage social cohesion and peaceful coexistence through the inclusion of refugees and host communities in development interventions
- prepare refugees for solutions when/if they return home through the building of knowledge, skills and capacity.⁷⁷

A 2016 evaluation for the UNHCR of the role of livelihood training looked at the 2016-2020 ReHoPE, and said it epitomises the “development approach that UNHCR has increasingly taken in recent years, and is an effort to close the longstanding ‘relief-development gap’”.⁷⁸ Japan’s International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has made a USD 4.5 million contribution anchored within the ReHoPE strategy to enable UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme “to coordinate their efforts to help more refugees and their Ugandan hosts to learn new skills in business and entrepreneurship, use these to start their own businesses and finally link them to markets for their products. This will empower them to be more productive and make the most of their new skills to develop the local economy”.⁷⁹ The World Bank is also supporting this effort through a soft loan, the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) in the Horn of Africa, aimed to improve access to basic social services, expand economic opportunities and enhance environmental management for communities hosting refugees in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Uganda.⁸⁰

A 2016 evaluation of UNHCR’s response to the South Sudanese refugee crisis in Uganda and Ethiopia raised some questions about ReHoPE. It said the strategy has a five-year proposed budget of USD 350 million, but “still lacks operational details, has not yet been approved by the Government of Uganda and its fundability is uncertain”.⁸¹ Another analysis in 2016 noted constraints for the implementation of the ReHoPE strategy. One of these constraints relates to the fact that “refugees’ independence from aid structures is especially pursued through agricultural approaches”: in principle refugees receive “two plots of land – one to live on, one to farm – as well as the necessary means to work the land”.⁸² While this approach has been appropriate for some refugees and some settlements, other settlements offer refugees “geographically limited spaces in remote rural regions which are relatively isolated from flourishing urban areas”.⁸³ The allocated plots may be “too small and the soil quality is often too poor to yield a sufficient harvest”.⁸⁴ These remote areas also offer “few opportunities to find formal employment and refugees may be restricted in how far they can travel due to decisions made by the Office of the Prime Minister’s local office and the high travelling costs”.⁸⁵ As a result of these constraints, “refugees remain partly dependent on aid”.⁸⁶ This approach is also inappropriate for urban refugees. While there is general enthusiasm in the aid community and Ugandan government about the ReHoPE initiative, there are also some concerns and all partners will need to contribute to learning and monitoring and assessing the programme’s eventual impact.

- The response by the international community has been very reactive, focused on receiving, assisting and stabilising a vulnerable population and offering very little opportunity to take a more developmental approach in terms of education and livelihood opportunities in the early stages of displacement.⁸⁷
- There has been limited funding, a lack of development actors and a lack of space within the response architecture for early solutions planning that would focus on activities more geared towards building self-reliance. This highlights the need for increased human resource capacity and the availability of more flexible funding to enable medium-term and longer-term planning.⁸⁸
- While the government of Uganda continues to provide plots to the newly arrived South Sudanese refugees, there is a shortage of land. The size of the plots has therefore been reduced from what was previously allocated.⁸⁹

- There has been too much focus on supporting agriculture and a certain mismatch with the profile of the refugees, many of whom are pastoralists and young people with limited skill or interest in agriculture.⁹⁰

A 2016 evaluation of Uganda's refugee management approach, sponsored by the World Bank in collaboration with UNHCR, highlighted the positive steps that Uganda has taken to promote refugees' livelihoods, primarily through granting access to land for agricultural activities in rural areas. However, the report also addressed many of the shortcomings of the Ugandan approach. For instance, refugees living in urban areas have had a more difficult time accessing employment, and refugees often cited unfamiliarity with the language, legal issues, poor interview skills, discrimination and a lack of relevant documents as barriers to accessing employment.⁹¹ The report further noted that "only a small number of refugees are engaged in occupations requiring a higher skill level, such as the provision of educational or health services, due to the differences of academic qualifications and limited proficiency in English. The difficulties faced in acquiring their degrees and having their academic documents certified prevent qualified refugees from engaging in formal job searches".⁹² It went on to note that "refugees are mainly engaged in occupations that provide little income, social protection, or job security", especially for refugee women whose participation in the formal sector is low.⁹³ It also noted that women face discrimination in accessing productive resources, land, credit, employment and self-employment opportunities, which "increases the female refugees' exposure to risk".⁹⁴ The self-employment level of refugee women is nevertheless higher (than formal employment), at 28 %, and initiatives such as community savings groups and women's savings and credit groups have provided female refugees with seed money to start businesses.⁹⁵

Vulnerable refugee women who are unable to support themselves and their families economically can have recourse to negative coping strategies and become involved in commercial sex.⁹⁶ A 2013 evaluation that looked at the effectiveness of US gender-based violence prevention programmes working with refugees in Uganda suggested that violence against refugee women is common, and recommended that "GBV [gender-based violence] prevention and response activities need to be better integrated into livelihood and income generation, education, family planning, HIV counselling/testing, and youth programs provided to refugee and host community members".⁹⁷

Box 1. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework for Uganda

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016, and the “commitment of UN Member States to apply a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in the event of significant or large-scale movements of people seeking international protection, as well as protracted refugee situations” are intended to “promote an equitable sharing of responsibilities, entailing various specific contributions by States and international and non-governmental actors, based on good practices and tested approaches.” The framework includes “measures to support the impact on host countries, including host communities and refugees’ timely access to solutions”.⁹⁸ The framework provides that UNHCR will work with Member States and national, local and international partners to begin piloting the framework in a number of countries and situations.⁹⁹

Uganda was confirmed as one of the designated pilot countries. On 24 March 2017, the government of Uganda and UNHCR officially launched the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework for Uganda “providing formal evidence to development partners of how the national strategy known as the Settlement Transformative Agenda already contains the principles and objectives set out in Annex 1 of the New York Declaration”.¹⁰⁰ The framework will be implemented in Uganda through the National Development Plan and its Settlement Transformative Agenda, under the leadership of the Ugandan government. A multi-stakeholder Secretariat under the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister has recently been established to “serve as a knowledge hub and platform for strategic discussions, building on refugee structures and initiatives already in place”.¹⁰¹ In addition, UNHCR has received commitments from a number of donors to second staff to the Secretariat, including Germany and the UK.¹⁰²

South Sudanese woman with rice harvested from a farm in Mirieyi village in Adjumani, Northern Uganda.
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Lessons from Ethiopia and Uganda

The increasing numbers of refugees and forcibly displaced people worldwide is straining the humanitarian system. In this context, it is critical to promote refugees' self-reliance and to enable refugees who are able to work to earn income and meet their and their family's basic needs. These are necessary for creating a future where the forcibly displaced are less reliant on humanitarian assistance. Yet many countries continue to restrict refugees' freedom of movement, free choice of residence and the right to work.¹⁰³

The ability of refugees to become self-reliant in countries of asylum is closely related to whether they are in an environment that enables their economic inclusion in the host society. Access to the labour market and access to productive assets are essential ingredients for refugees' livelihood opportunities and self-reliance. Yet in many countries there are legal and socio-economic factors and administrative burdens that restrict or prevent refugees' access to the labour market. Some evaluations have questioned if donors have sufficiently invested in supporting longer-term strategies for refugee livelihoods in Ethiopia and Uganda and if they have done enough diplomatically to encourage host governments to promote refugees' ability to access formal employment.

Refugees have faced more restrictions in Ethiopia than in Uganda including more limited opportunities to access work and create their own businesses. In the past, this has led to greater reliance on humanitarian assistance, with refugees unable to work legally in the formal sector or to integrate locally. This is changing and the Ethiopian government is increasingly working to promote job opportunities for refugees with support from international donors through the new Compact model. In Uganda, refugees have traditionally benefited from a conducive legal framework that grants rights and access to land to refugees, with refugees engaging in business opportunities that benefit local communities, allow for their greater self-reliance and contribute to Uganda's economy. In terms of the impact of livelihood programmes on secondary displacement, however, there does not appear to be a strong evidence base that this kind of programming effectively reduces secondary displacement.



Research notes and citations

- 1 UNHCR, 2017a
- 2 UNHCR, 2017b: 7
- 3 See UNHCR, 2005. UNHCR's Executive Committee Conclusion on Local Integration "acknowledges that the process of local integration is complex and gradual, comprising three distinct but inter-related legal, economic, and social and cultural dimensions, all of which are important for refugees' ability to integrate successfully as fully included members of society". See UNHCR, 2005.
- 4 Mathys, 2016: 13
- 5 UNHCR, 2017c
- 6 Mathys, 2016: 5
- 7 Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016b: 23
- 8 NutritionWorks, 2013: 26
- 9 Ibid.: 7
- 10 Holzaepfel and Tadesse, 2015: 3
- 11 Mallett et al., 2017: 20
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 WFP, 2012: 9; Mallett et al., 2017: 16
- 14 Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016b: 25
- 15 Holzaepfel and Tadesse, 2015: 3
- 16 Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016b: 25
- 17 Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014: 40
- 18 Holzaepfel and Tadesse, 2015: 3-4
- 19 Samuel Hall Consulting, 2014: 29
- 20 Ibid.: 41
- 21 TANGO International, 2011: vi
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.: vii
- 24 Ibid.: viii
- 25 ILO, 2014
- 26 UNHCR, 2016b: 5
- 27 United Nations, 2016: 4
- 28 NutritionWorks, 2013: 31
- 29 Ibid.: 32
- 30 Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016b: 26
- 31 Mallett et al., 2017: 19
- 32 Ambroso et al, 2016: 111
- 33 Holzaepful and Tadesse, 2015: 11
- 34 Ibid.: 20
- 35 Ibid.: 12
- 36 Ibid.: 21
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 TANGO International, 2011: viii
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Holzaepfel and Tadesse, 2015: 18
- 41 Ibid.: 19
- 42 Ibid.: 27
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Mallett, 2017: 19
- 45 Ibid.: 23
- 46 See ICAI, 2017: 20. The Jobs Compact was presented by the prime ministers of the United Kingdom and Ethiopia at the September 2016 Leaders' Summit on Refugees in Washington, DC. The Department for International Development of the UK has put forward USD 80 million for the development of the Jobs Compact. The World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the European Union also indicated support to the Jobs Compact in principle, with combined pledges of over USD 550 million.
- 47 The Compact will support industrialisation in Ethiopia, creating 100 000 new jobs for Ethiopians and refugees, according to a 2016 UK government press release. See www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-pledges-new-uk-support-to-help-tackle-migration-crisis.
- 48 ICAI, 2017: 15
- 49 Ibid.: 19
- 50 Ibid.: 20
- 51 African Development Bank Group, 2015: 28
- 52 Ibid.: 28 and 29
- 53 Ibid.: 7
- 54 Farole, 2011
- 55 UNDP, 2015: 20-21
- 56 ICAI, 2017: 20
- 57 Such Jobs Compacts are also reportedly under discussion in Kenya and Uganda. See ACAI, 2017: 20 and 28
- 58 Mallett, 2017: 23
- 59 Holzaepfel and Tadesse, 2015: 18
- 60 In contrast to the concept of local integration, which is based on the assumption that refugees will remain indefinitely in the country of asylum, local settlement does not presuppose that refugees will find a durable solution in the country of asylum. See Crisp, 2004: 3. Local settlement and self-reliance, as applied in the case of Uganda, therefore does not imply permanent asylum. In the Ugandan context, the "promotion of self-reliance is clearly an interim measure in the context of an over-arching commitment to repatriation as a durable solution". See Meyer, 2006a: 29.
- 61 Glass and Doocy, 2013: 18
- 62 Vemuru et al., 2016: 37
- 63 Clements, Shoffner and Zamore, 2016: 49
- 64 Ibid.: 51
- 65 The Immigration Department interprets the Regulation to mean that refugees require work permits like other non-citizens. In the interpretation of the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, on the other hand, once a refugee is in the country, he or she is granted de facto the right to work. See Betts et al., 2017: 89.
- 66 International Rescue Committee/ ReDSS, 2016: 23
- 67 Ibid.: 22
- 68 Betts et al., 2014: 11
- 69 Vemuru et al., 2016: 40
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Taylor et al., 2016: 25
- 72 Ibid.: 33
- 73 Government of Uganda/UNHCR, 2004: 3
- 74 Casa Consulting, 2003: 73

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- 75 UNHCR, 2006: 163
- 76 See UNHCR Global Focus on Uganda, <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/5129> (accessed 10 March 2017).
- 77 Vemuru et al., 2016: 25
- 78 Easton-Calabria, 2016: 3
- 79 See www.ug.undp.org/content/uganda/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/06/30/japan-contributesus-4-5m-towards-refugees-and-hostcommunities-in-uganda.html.
- 80 The DRDIP is implemented in four districts hosting large numbers of refugees. These are Adjumani, Arua, Isingiro and Kyriandongo districts. For more detail, see <http://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/are-progressive-refugee-laws-sufficient-ensure-self-reliance-refugees-insights-uganda>.
- 81 Ambroso et al., 2016: 12
- 82 Krause, 2016: 52
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.: 53
- 85 Ibid.: 52-53
- 86 Ibid.: 53
- 87 International Rescue Committee/ReDSS, 2016: 23
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 In Adjumani the size of plot allocated to each family had to be reduced to 30 by 30 metres and in some settlements to 20 by 30 metres, compared to the 50-by-100-meter plots previously allocated. See Ambroso et al, 2016: 30
- 90 International Rescue Committee/ReDSS, 2016: 24
- 91 Vemuru et al., 2016: 36
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid.: 39
- 94 Ibid.: 48
- 95 Ibid.: 38
- 96 Omata and Kaplan, 2013: 18
- 97 Glass and Doocy, 2013: 33
- 98 Türk and Garlick, 2016
- 99 UNHCR 2016a: 3
- 100 United Nations Uganda, 2017d: 3
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 UNHCR, 2017d
- 103 NutritionWorks, 2013: 3

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South Sudanese refugee shows a groundnut about to be planted at Nymanzi refugee settlement in Adjumani district in Northern Uganda.
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Responding to Refugee Crises: Lessons from evaluations in Ethiopia and Uganda as countries of destination

The OECD **DAC Network on Development Evaluation** is an international forum that brings together evaluation managers and specialists from development co-operation ministries and agencies in OECD DAC member countries and multilateral development institutions. The network has been instrumental in developing key international norms and standards for evaluation.

Responding to Refugee Crises in Developing Countries: What Can We Learn From Evaluations? provides evidence from evaluations to feed into guidance on better programming that is being developed through the DAC Temporary Working Group on Refugees and Migration. The main working paper draws on evaluation findings to highlight key lessons and recommendations for positive change going forward. It is complemented by three case studies that look at how policy objectives have been implemented in specific country contexts. The working papers highlight the evaluation work of DAC members and aim to strengthen the evidence base to help improve responses to situations of displacement in developing countries.

Key topics covered in the working papers include: lessons on bridging the gap between humanitarian and development programming; efforts to strengthen international response to protracted crises; lessons on whole-of-government approaches in refugee contexts; learning from work in urban settings; improving access to employment and quality education; new financing mechanisms for refugee crises in middle income countries; and lessons on financing in response to the Syria crisis.

Working paper and case studies on Afghanistan, South Sudan and Ethiopia/Uganda can be found at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/evaluating-refugee-migration.htm>.



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