



## Inspiring inclusion in forced displacement: Learning from Uganda

### Executive summary

Uganda is Africa's largest asylum seeker and refugee-hosting country. As of June 2024, 1,756,793 refugees and asylum seekers were [residing in Uganda](#) as well as 49,320 internally displaced persons. [Forced migrants applying for asylum](#) in Uganda originate from South Sudan (54.8%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, 31%), Sudan (3.3%), Eritrea (3.2%) and Somalia (2.9%), among others. The majority (91%) of the forced migrant population in Uganda live in settlements. The three major settlements are Adjumani, Bidi Bidi, and Nakivale. Other refugees reside in 'urban areas', mainly in the capital city of Kampala. [Women and children represent 80% of the total forced migrant population](#) in Uganda.

Several policy instruments regulate the situation of forced migrants in Uganda. The 2006 Refugee Act and its 2010 Refugee Regulations constitute the legal framework for refugee status determination and protection. With regards to policy, Uganda launched its [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#) in 2017, with its accompanying Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Framework (ReHoPE).<sup>i</sup> All policy documents regulating various aspects of refugee protection such as education, health and gender-based violence (GBV) complement this policy framework. The most recent general policy enacted by UNHCR is the 2022–2025 Inter-agency Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan (UCCRP).<sup>ii</sup> All these laws and soft law instruments are hereinafter referred to as 'the public policy framework'.

Uganda's policies are regularly praised by the international community for their exemplarity. They promote inclusion, self-reliance, and non-encampment, multi-sector assistance and inter-agency cooperation, with a notable political commitment to gender-sensitivity.

### Policy recommendations

1. Follow Uganda's good practices as a model to promote inclusion of refugees in the public policy framework, extending these efforts to encompass citizenship rights as well.
2. Extend the rights to health, education, land, housing and work to forced migrants, following the provisions of the Ugandan public policy framework.
3. Mainstream and prioritise gender sensitivity throughout refugee/asylum policy frameworks to address specific needs of displaced people.
4. Promote an integrated and holistic approach to gender-based violence which connects protection with other fundamental rights.

### About the research

These findings are the result of desk-based policy analysis aimed to critically appraise the institutionalisation of gender in refugee management and protection policy in Uganda. A four-step socio-legal methodology was followed. First, a preliminary review of academic sources on forced migration in Uganda was conducted in order to collect background and contextual data to inform the analysis and identify key policy instruments. Second, a review of primary sources included State and UNHCR policy documents on forced migration, extracted from official sources online (from the Office of Prime Minister Website and the UNHCR Comprehensive Refugee Response portal). The third step used an assessment of the institutionalisation of gender in Ugandan policy to highlight strengths and weaknesses. The fourth step required the further examination of relevant literature in order to corroborate the analysis of primary data. Resources include grey literature, UNHCR documents, policy terms of

reference, policy implementation assessment reports and academic scholarship.

### **Key findings on policy and gender**

#### Health

- Displaced women's specific needs are often articulated in the context of sexual and reproductive health
- Access to decent menstrual hygiene and sanitary products for migrant women is addressed in policy frameworks
- The prevention of GBV is usually connected to the right to health.

#### Housing

- All refugees receive materials and non-food items to construct an emergency shelter upon arrival
- Policies recognise that displaced women carry the major burden at home and face specific difficulties in accessing shelter
- The right to housing is directly connected to the right to be free from GBV and include forced migrants.

#### Land

- Land, vegetable seeds, and planting training are provided to refugees upon arrival to rural areas for economic autonomy
- The ReHoPE framework offers a particularly thorough analysis of women refugees' economic vulnerabilities and how their lack of access to land constitutes a driver for gender-based inequalities
- The policy calls to protect women and girls against the risk of conflict and violence related to land (e.g.: the host community)
- Awareness-raising initiatives target both clan leaders, refugee communities and women refugees about women's right to own and use land.

#### Education

- Education policies all highlight unequal access to education for refugee girls as well as their high dropout rates due to parents

prioritising boys' access to education, pressure for early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and exposure to GBV

- The policy recommends distribution of sanitary packs to all girls, including refugee girls, above 10 years old, the construction of gender-segregated latrines, the recruitment of female teachers and awareness-raising of child protection issues in schools.

#### Work

- The policy framework accounts for the high number of female-headed households in refugee settlements
- The government notes farming activities, alternative income generating opportunities for women and young people are needed
- The government notes food insecurity and lack of livelihoods are connected to the risk of exposure to GBV and unplanned pregnancy.

#### Access to rights and citizenship

- Existing policies inadequately address the gendered impacts of citizenship deprivation for refugee children born in Uganda, the prohibition of naturalisation, and the denial of voting rights
- The Ugandan government has yet to grant displaced women the rights to vote and pursue naturalisation, limiting their opportunities for political participation.

#### Contact

[Dr Maëlle Noir](#), Researcher, Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway.  
[maelle.noir@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:maelle.noir@universityofgalway.ie)

[Dr Sandra Pertek](#), Senior Research Fellow, International Development Department, University of Birmingham.  
[s.m.pertek.1@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.m.pertek.1@bham.ac.uk)

We advance  
**We activate**  

---

birmingham.ac.uk

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Prime Minister and World Bank (2017), *Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Framework* (ReHoPE).

<sup>ii</sup> UNHCR and Office of the Prime Minister (2022) *Inter-Agency Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2022–2025*.