



# Pathways to self-reliance for refugees and host communities in Northern Uganda



©FAO/IFPRI/ingakhuu

## Background

Uganda is one of the largest refugee hosting countries in Africa, with more than 1.1 million refugees, mainly from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. The Uganda Refugee Policy (2006) and the Refugee Regulations (2010) grant refugees wide-ranging rights hinged on a strategy of allocating refugees land, freedom of movement and the right to seek employment. This policy aims to build refugees' food, nutrition and income security and self-reliance. The framework provides an opportunity to support early recovery of affected populations and create a foundation for self-sufficiency.

Under the leadership of the Office of Prime Minister (OPM) of the Government of Uganda, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and OPM jointly produced a study on the food security, resilience and well-being of refugee and host communities in Northern Uganda, in collaboration with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The study, conducted within the Resilience Measurement Unit (RMU), aims to provide policy makers with evidence-based policy and programming recommendations to support the overall social integration and resilience of refugees in Uganda, in alignment with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

Building on the study, this brief focuses on three main areas of findings and recommendations: (1) **livelihood diversification**; (2) **land**; (3) **capacities, skills and aspirations**.

## Findings and recommendations

1. As expected, **agriculture is crucial for both refugees and host communities**. However, refugees have a limited number of crops cultivated and report a low level of productive assets while the main challenge for host communities is secure access to water for production.

## KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ Displacement and refugees' arrival create opportunities for business enterprises in host communities. However, agriculture remains crucial for both refugees and host communities so its productivity should be reinforced.
- ▶ Better natural resources management will increase assets productivity; while better use of services and government structures, and enhanced technical skills build resilient livelihoods.
- ▶ Refugees' integration into the local economy is a long-term process and needs tailored programming for both refugee and host communities.

Specific packages for refugees should range from social protection mechanisms linked to targeted livelihoods support for the most vulnerable to increase their resilience and enable self-reliance, to adapted packages that include a mix of food assistance and livelihood diversification in the form of in-kind and cash assistance and capacity building, to development-oriented activities targeting those who are already moving toward self-reliance to link them to existing and emerging market opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the evidence of the study shows that displacement and refugees' arrival create opportunities for operating business enterprises. Therefore agriculture livelihoods must be understood at a system level to appreciate the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for income generation along agriculture value chains including input supplies, production, post-harvest handling, value addition and market access and linkages that intersect with specialized skill development (e.g. information technologies and mechanical engineering).

**2. Access to land is important for resilience and a limiting factor for refugees.** Interventions should enhance access to land for refugees and increase tenure security to support agricultural livelihood investments. Improving access to land could be accomplished by encouraging pooling, renting and casual labor on larger farms and increasing tenure security for the landlords. Increased tenure security will enable a more sustainable approach to land-sharing arrangements, opening the way for investments in larger-scale production on underutilized land.

**3. Refugees' integration into the local economy is a long-term process.** Interventions need to build on existing skills, experience and aspirations to provide diversified livelihoods support that integrate refugees' activities within local markets and sales systems to respond to existing market gaps that are met through informal structures. To boost hosting districts' labor markets, business opportunities should take advantage of the specific market demands created by the presence of refugees and the population increase that can build the case for private sector expansion of services. Population characteristics across refugee and host communities, specifically skills, past working experiences and aspirations, also represent another key opportunity on which to build a skilled, semi-skilled and non-skilled labor force.

## Informing programming and policy makers

The evidence from the study has been already integrated into:

### ▲ **FAO programming: Refugee and Host Community Response Roadmap (2018–2020)**

FAO directly integrated the programming recommendations from the study into the development of its Refugee and Host Community Response Roadmap (2018–2020), a strategy document that aims to improve the current state of refugee and host community's food and nutrition security, well-being and resilience. According to FAO's theory of change, a better use of the assets that refugees and host communities currently have (e.g. land and natural resources, skills, refugees support programs, district development plans, services and governance structures) will increase land productivity and capacity to add increased value to production to build resilient livelihoods able to meet household needs.

### ▲ **UNDP's Report on Land Dynamics and Livelihood in Refugee Hosting Districts of Northern Uganda (2018)**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted a qualitative review of Northern Uganda to provide insights on land as a key productive asset to promote self-reliance. UNDP's report provides evidence on the access and utilization of land



in the refugee context and considers the influence of social, political and economic dynamics on land decision-making. The UNDP report also highlights the impact of land decisions on household livelihoods and the environment. The quantitative study conducted by FAO complemented UNDP's qualitative study to provide quantifiable evidence to UNDP findings.

### ▲ **Refugee Response Plan (2019–2020)**

The 2019–2020 Refugee Response Plan (RRP), implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), drew heavily from this study to articulate the needs assessment for the Livelihoods and Resilience Sector and the programmatic strategy, integrating the Resilience Capacity Index (RCI) as the outcome level indicator for the sector and resilience pillars' indicators throughout the monitoring framework. Furthermore, the dataset is closely informing the development of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) for food and non-food expenditures, including productive assets, which is anticipated to guide future cash transfer programming in the refugee response to meet household basic needs.

## What is the Resilience Measurement Unit (RMU)

The RMU was set up in Uganda in 2016 with the technical lead of FAO under the framework of the EU-funded "Information for Nutrition, Food Security and Resilience Analysis for Decision Making" (INFORMED) Programme. The RMU sits within OPM and is responsible for coordinating and undertaking resilience and food security analysis. The RMU receives technical guidance from FAO and IGAD through the Resilience Analysis Unit (RAU) on the design of tools for data collection, analysis and reporting. The RMU has adopted the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) methodology as the primary analysis tool to understand resilience capacities across Uganda. The study has been conducted within the RMU, with representatives from FAO, UNICEF, WFP and UBOS.

