



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

RESILIENCE
GOOD PRACTICES

PROTRACTED CRISES
AND CONFLICTS

Vegetable and staple food production in refugee settlements in northern and mid-western Uganda

Support for the widespread production, preservation and consumption of high nutrient value foods to strengthen resilience to food and income insecurity



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→ Context

Uganda lies almost completely within the Nile Basin with irregular rainfall patterns: monomodal rainfall patterns (one rainy season) and bi-modal rainfall patterns (two rainy seasons). Its vulnerability to climate change, especially poor rainfall and long dry spells in the northern region, is affecting food security. The influx of refugees has exacerbated these challenges. Hunger, conflict and insecurity have uprooted many people from neighbouring Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia and South Sudan over an extended period. As a result, Uganda is now the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, with almost 1.4 million refugees. Over 1 million are South Sudanese, 80 percent of whom are women and children under 18 years.

This large influx of South Sudanese refugees constitutes a major challenge across all sectors. It has created a substantial increase in the demand for food, including affordable sources of protein such as meat and eggs. The impact on the agriculture sector is particularly worrying as this is the main source of income and livelihoods for many rural communities in the hosting districts, especially the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Shrinking economic opportunities, more expensive goods and services and environmental exploitation have made the deteriorating food security situation even worse, putting a strain on vulnerable host community households and challenging their ability to meet their most basic food needs.

FAO, in collaboration with resource and implementing partners, began coordinating interventions in 2012 in some refugee settlements to address the emergency food and nutrition security and livelihood concerns of South Sudanese refugees. It provided planting materials and inputs for small-scale vegetable, staple food and poultry production, along with training in entrepreneurship and animal husbandry practices. The initiative, scaled up in 2014, aimed to improve the food, nutrition and income security of both refugees and host communities.

Key facts

Implementing partners →

Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Agency for Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD); District Local Governments of Adjumani, Arua, Kiryandongo, Lamwo, Moyo and Yumbe; Office of the Prime Minister (Department of Refugees/OPM); UNHCR and UNICEF

Resource partners →

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Belgium Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA-CRIA); Government of Sweden

Beneficiaries →

- Most vulnerable refugee households living in the settlements and willing to participate in agricultural activities
- Host community households neighbouring the settlements with access to and ability to till the land.

Gender → More than 60 percent of the targeted beneficiaries were women. Given their limited access to larger plots of land and control over productive assets, women stand to benefit more from homestead-based livelihood interventions, like backyard gardening.



How does the production of staple food and vegetable crops increase the livelihood resilience of refugees and host communities?

Starting in 2012, all interventions within the settlements used the same approach of providing refugee households with vegetable and staple crop seeds along with support in production and preservation techniques. These activities were complemented by poultry rearing and the construction and use of energy saving stoves.



Producing more than two types of nutritious vegetables enabled beneficiaries to diversify their income source – and improve household food security and diets. It also helped strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable refugees and host community households, providing a buffer against shocks and risks associated with seasonality.

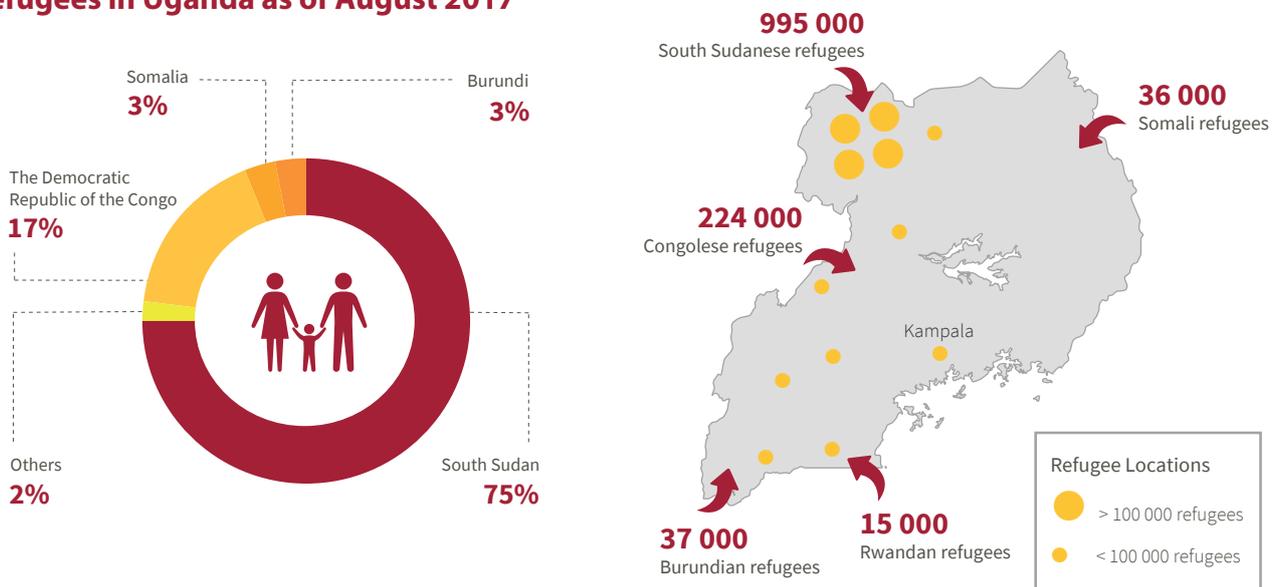
Uganda Refugee Policy

The Uganda Refugee Policy (2006) provides a distinctly favourable protection environment for refugees, promoting self-reliance and a non-camp settlement approach where refugees are granted:

- access to the same social services (e.g. health facilities) as nationals;
- the right to work and sustainable livelihoods;
- the right to establish businesses;
- the right to education;
- freedom of movement;
- access to documentation; and
- access to allocated land for shelters and agricultural use.

These settlements need to be supported with relevant sustainable livelihood interventions to the affected population to enhance food security and contribute to peaceful coexistence among refugees and host communities.

Refugees in Uganda as of August 2017



→ Challenges

FAO's approach was designed to address the specific challenges Uganda faces as a result of the large influx of refugees, including the low prioritization of livelihood interventions among other humanitarian partners. The intervention also addressed the poor crop and poultry management practices of refugees given the limited amount of land available to grow their own food as a coping strategy. In addition, many of the South Sudanese refugees, especially from the *Dinka Ngok* tribe, had no farming experience.

During implementation, the following constraints posed additional challenges:

- In a **context of climate change and natural hazards**, the low-lying areas in some settlements, especially those with poor, sandy soils, are predisposed to long dry spells and occasional floods, which affect crop production.
- The **agricultural calendar does not always coincide with both the refugees' arrivals** or funding cycles. The number of refugees increases daily. This affects planning, resulting in chaos, especially at input distribution points.
- Many refugees cross the borders through illegal border points, entering with unauthorized livestock. This affects planning and increases the **risk of transboundary animal diseases**.

→ Methodological approach

After the mobilization, identification, sensitization and registration of beneficiaries in the refugee hosting districts in West Nile, FAO provided agricultural inputs and complementary training to 8 000 households.

Inputs

- **Receipt and storage of agricultural input kits**, fumigation of seeds, if needed, transportation to settlement distribution outlets;
- **Distribution and monitoring of emergency livelihood kits** of locally adapted and diversified seeds (staple crop and vegetable) and small livestock and poultry. Beneficiaries were introduced to kale through trainings and demonstrations, enabling them to diversify their diets; and
- **Provision of livestock treatment kits** for protective disease control against Foot and Mouth Disease, Contagious Bovine Pleuro-Pneumonia, Contagious Caprine Pleuro-Pneumonia and Goat Pox/*Peste des Petits Ruminants*.

Training

- **Training of community resource persons** in relevant agronomic, animal husbandry and conservation practices: Community-based extension workers and trainers of trainees (ToTs) were identified among the refugees and trained by the District Production Department for the day-to-day follow-up and monitoring of livelihood activities within the settlements.
- **Training of beneficiaries** on:
 - **Basic agronomic practices** of selected crops, including dry season vegetable production (e.g. cassava multiplication and production); post-harvest handling and storage; poultry production and management;
 - **Micro-irrigation** and maintenance;
 - **Nutrition education** for diversified food production, preparation and consumption, as well as hygiene, handling and storage; and
 - **Production of fuel efficient stoves** that use less firewood, as well as production of charcoal from household waste.

→ Impacts

- **Improved food security and nutrition:** The produce harvested from the small-scale production interventions improved the food security of the refugee households (and other community members indirectly), enabling them to diversify their diets and boost their nutrition levels.
- **Income generation:** Thanks to the increased agricultural production, vulnerable refugee households and host communities were able to earn income by selling their surplus. Some households also purchased productive assets (goats, chicken, cattle). Market access ultimately improved for both refugees and host communities.
- **Increased beneficiary skillsets:** Through training and access to improved seeds, beneficiaries gained valuable agricultural knowledge for more resilient food and income sources.
- **Better conservation practices:** Conservation practices were adopted through the training, helping to reduce environmental degradation.
- **Improved protection of women and children:** Thanks to conservation practices, the need to walk long distances in search of fuel wood was reduced, thereby decreasing episodes of gender-based violence.
- **Reinforced social cohesion between refugees and host communities:** The production of staple food crops (maize and beans) by the host community made food available for purchase within the settlements, generating income for other necessities and improving the local economy. In addition, some refugees are now renting land from the host community for agricultural activities.



→ Sustainability

The trainings are primarily responsible for ensuring sustainability. Thanks to additional training on post-harvest handling, beneficiaries have learned to sun dry and preserve crops, such as okra, cow pea leaves and seeds, and eggplant, which can be stored and eaten during times of scarcity.

District officials continue to supervise, monitor and train the ToTs. The same ToTs are also training other beneficiaries, thereby maintaining a constant flow of capacity and skill development. Working with local non-governmental organization partners ensures that the knowledge of improved farming practices will remain within the communities after the project. Although the project's goal was to supplement immediate household food needs, the skills the beneficiaries acquired can be of great value once they return to South Sudan.

Capacity development schemes targeted at TOTs and beneficiaries ensures that communities' knowledge and skills are reinforced to manage production, post-harvesting and storage beyond the duration of the project's support and once the refugees return to their country.

→ Replicability and upscaling

As more refugees continue to enter Uganda, FAO has sourced and secured further funding through the interagency appeal process to extend and expand the project. This will allow the initiative to be scaled up and replicated elsewhere in Uganda, including in newly opened settlements or in urban areas where refugees have settled.



→ More information

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