



NAVIGATING THE NEXUS:
A brighter future for refugee and
host community children in
West Nile, Uganda

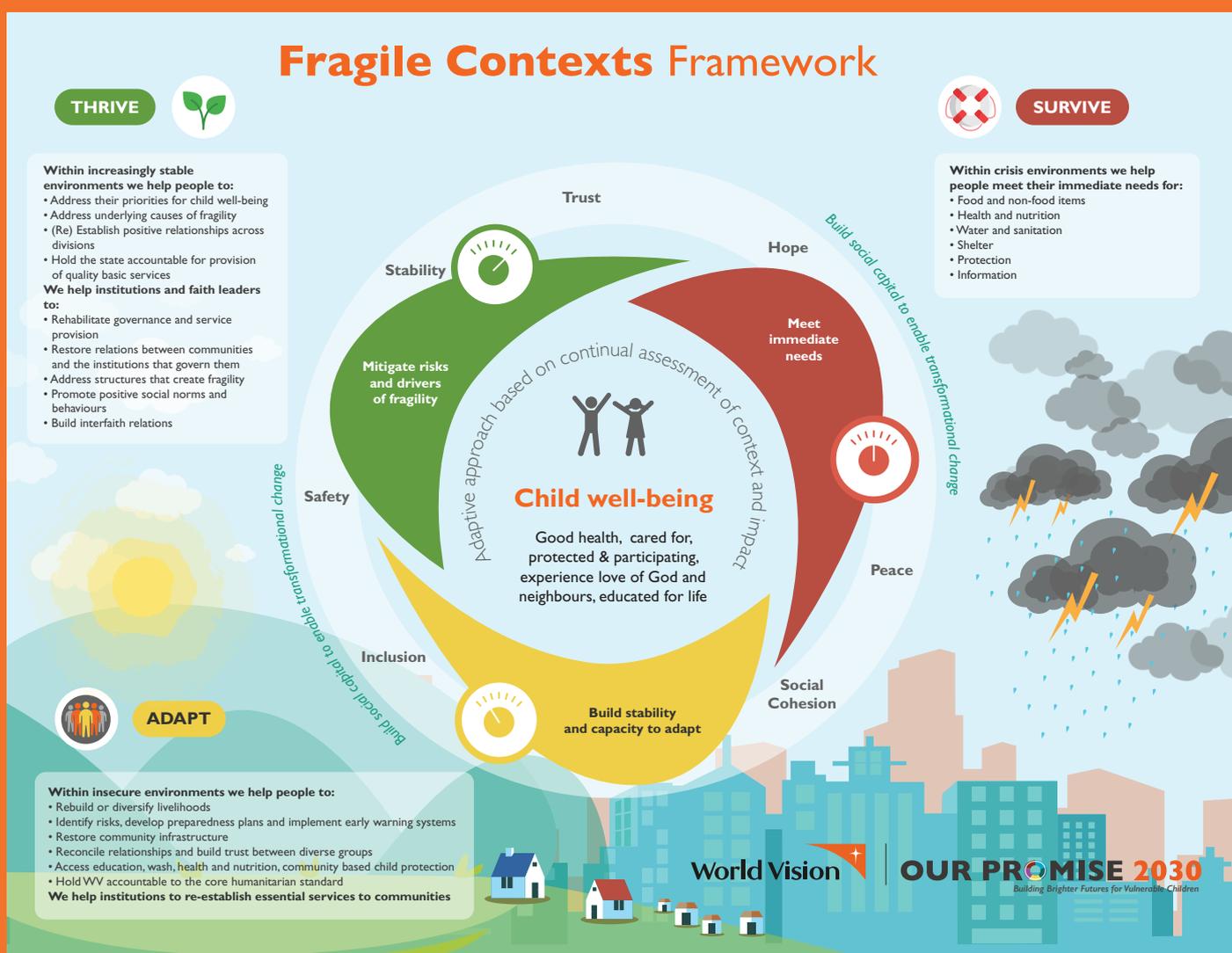
World Vision 

Our approach
to fragile contexts

A brighter future for children: World Vision's Fragile Contexts Approach

Two billion people live in countries where development outcomes are deeply affected by fragility, conflict and violence and which are some of the most dangerous places in the world to be a child. In these fragile contexts children face extreme levels of abuse, exploitation, deprivation and violence, often for generations.

Through its global strategy, Our Promise, World Vision is aligning its humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and advocacy efforts to address fragility. Based on more than 70 years of experience working in fragile contexts, World Vision has developed a Fragile Contexts Programme Approach (see diagram below) to support its efforts to expand and deepen its impact. Its approach has informed global frameworks, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus¹, and, in turn, is informed by them. World Vision's Fragile Contexts Programme Approach (FCPA) has been piloted in multiple countries, with more planned in the future.² World Vision's goal is to make a sustainable difference in the lives of the most vulnerable girls and boys so they can survive, adapt and thrive now and in the future despite fragility. At the heart of the FCPA is the ability to shift from meeting immediate humanitarian needs to addressing root causes even in the context of continued fragility, in order to support transformative change whenever possible, so that communities can build resilience to shocks over the long term.



In 2017, through its global strategy, Our Promise, World Vision made a commitment to direct 27 per cent of its global funding to fragile contexts by 2020. In 2018, World Vision directed 28 per cent of its funding to ten of the most fragile countries in the world where it operates and reached 10.1 million of the most vulnerable people. Almost 60 per cent of those it reached were children. World Vision is committed to continue to grow this commitment through diverse funding, partnerships and knowledge sharing.

¹ OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-DevelopmentPeace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019.

² FCPA pilot countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Mali, Mexico, South Sudan.

Executive summary

Through its response to large-scale humanitarian needs precipitated by over a million South Sudanese refugees fleeing to Uganda throughout 2016 and 2017, World Vision has built an understanding of the needs and aspirations and gained the trust of many refugee and host communities in the region. This case study examines World Vision's experience of adapting its programming in a refugee context to respond to the multiple needs of vulnerable children, families and communities; support them to achieve their long-term aspirations; and determine how these efforts can best foster social cohesion among and between households and communities. It highlights a number of 'building blocks' that World Vision has identified as key enablers for nexus work to be successful:

- strengthening social capital within communities, between communities and with local service providers to improve livelihoods, resilience to shocks, and community well-being
- contributing to local economic development and financial inclusion of refugee and host communities, which has increased livelihoods options for refugees and hosts and increased economic interactions between them
- investing in education as an important strategy for reducing individual and household poverty over the long term and reducing protection risks for children, a critical contribution to achieving the Government of Uganda's national development goals
- linking social safety nets transfers³ with longer-term development activities; combining humanitarian transfers with livelihoods interventions provides a viable way to support the most vulnerable households rebuild their lives and livelihoods
- adapting developmental livelihoods and child protection interventions to a refugee context. This enables children and their communities to meet their needs and aspirations in the long term, contributing towards building their resilience and social capital.

This paper also outlines key challenges to operationalising the nexus and provides recommendations to governments, donors and implementing agencies on how to address them. World Vision recommends the following:

- **The Government of Uganda** should continue to promote greater coordination and collaboration among actors, including local authorities (district and sub-county), to ensure high-level policy frameworks are more quickly translated into tangible and sustainable improvements in the lives and livelihoods of refugee and host communities. The government should also ensure sufficient budget allocations to improve rural on- and off-farm livelihoods, particularly for vulnerable women and youth, in line with the Government of Uganda's National Development Plan III.
- **Donors** should fully fund the Refugee Response Plan for 2020 and 2021 and significantly increase the proportion of multiyear and flexible funding. Particular emphasis should be placed on rural on- and off-farm development, supporting government efforts on inter-agency coordination, livelihoods for women and youth, formal and informal child protection systems and private-sector partnerships, especially on mobile money. In addition, donors should extend the timeframes of humanitarian programming and integrate short-term and longer-term assistance.
- **Implementing agencies** should strengthen their organisational capacity in child protection in emergencies and mainstream child protection in other response sectors, such as livelihoods, to enhance protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and all other forms of violence. Further, they should ensure conflict sensitivity analysis in livelihoods programme design and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure they contribute to strengthening social capital and social cohesion between refugee and host communities.

³ Social safety nets include cash, vouchers and in-kind transfers.

Providing psychosocial support to children in emergency
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Introduction

Today, 79.5 million people are forcibly displaced around the world, including almost 26 million refugees, more than half of whom are children. This is the largest number of forcibly displaced people on record. Nearly 80 per cent of refugees are displaced for an average of seven years, fleeing conflict, persecution, human rights violations, discrimination and the effects of climate change.⁴

Many live in limbo for decades⁵ with few clear pathways out of displacement. Short-term humanitarian assistance is far too often the default response to forced displacement, essential but insufficient to address displacement sustainably or equitably over the long term.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's promise to 'leave no one behind' is particularly pertinent for refugees, but they are largely absent from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Closing the 'SDG gap' for refugees is a monumental challenge for both national governments and the international community but doing so is acutely needed.

Important policy commitments to refugees have been made in the past few years, driving greater coordinated and comprehensive short and long term responses to what is widely recognised as a global refugee crisis. The unanimous adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants⁶ (Resolution A/RES/71/1) by the UN General Assembly in September 2016 laid out the contours of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The CRRF includes a commitment to foster self-reliance and resilience among refugee populations and host communities 'to enable them to make best use of their skills and capacities and to invest in building human capital'. Working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus has emerged as a promising approach to support this objective. It aims to facilitate better joined-up efforts between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action in fragile contexts, with the goal of achieving more meaningful progress for the world's most vulnerable people.

This case study examines World Vision's experiences working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus⁷ in West Nile, Uganda. It seeks to demonstrate how these efforts are laying the critical building blocks towards improved livelihoods, self-reliance and resilience for refugees and host communities in support of the CRRF and the Ugandan government's priorities.

Methodology

World Vision undertook a 10-day field study in the West Nile region and Kampala in 2019. The research team conducted 11 key informant interviews with World Vision field staff and leadership, district level officials, UN agencies and government officials. In West Nile region the study team held focus group discussions (FGDs) in Yumbe and Arua districts with more than 220 women, men, girls and boys.

The team also conducted desk research to complement findings of the field study.



Children playing at a World Vision managed Child Friendly Space in Bidibidi refugee settlement.
© Derrick Kyatuka/World Vision



A South Sudanese refugee and World Vision beneficiary at her retail shop in Maaji 2 refugee settlement.
© Derrick Kyatuka/World Vision

4 Protracted refugee situations are where refugees 'continue to be in exile for 5 years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for (the) implementation of durable solutions'. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2018).

5 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015 (Geneva: UNHCR, 20 June 2016), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57678f3d4.html>, 20.

6 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 September 2016, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1.

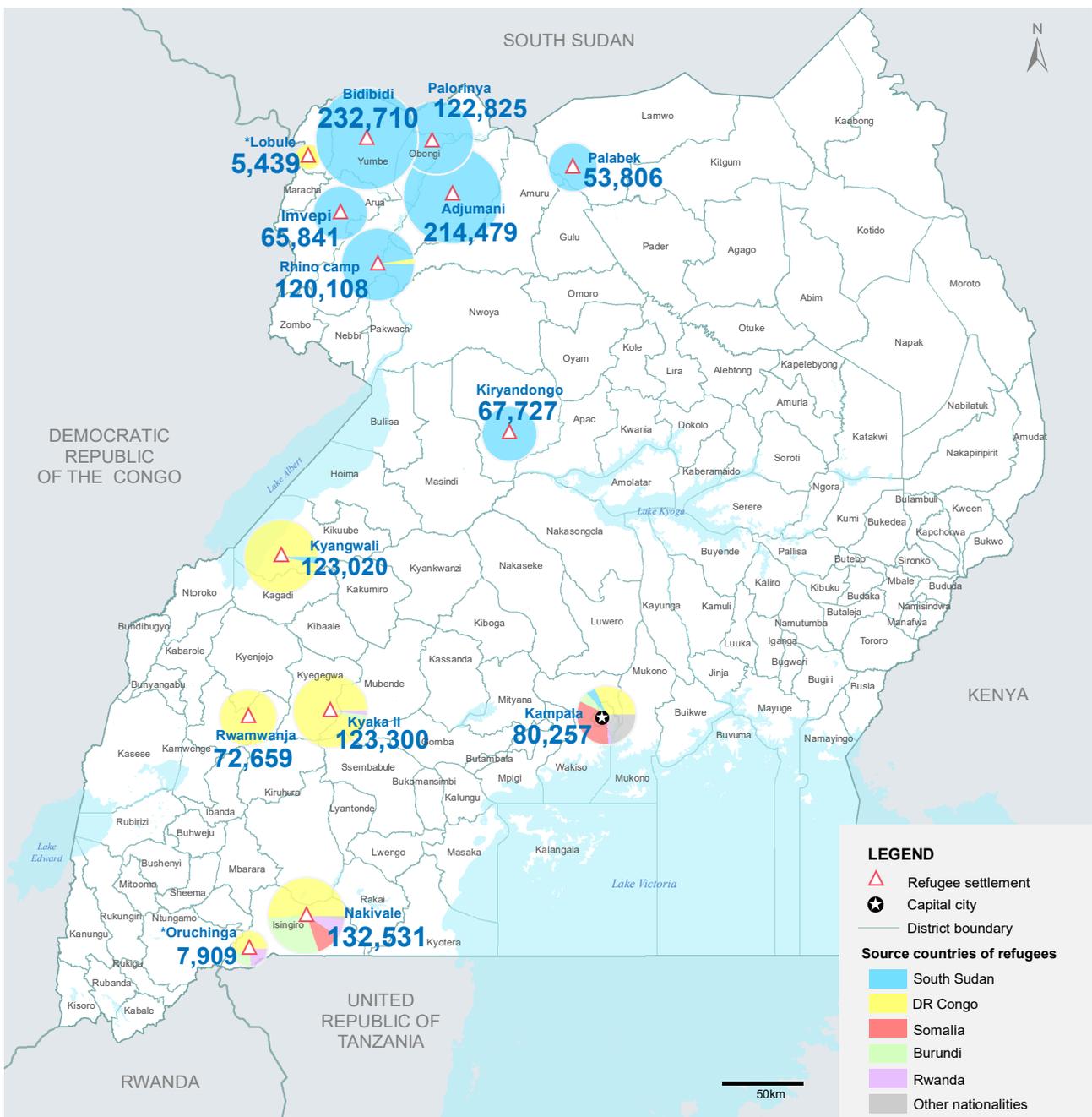
7 Nexus approach, nexus programming or the nexus is understood in this paper as an approach or framework that takes into account both the immediate and long-term needs of affected populations and enhances opportunities for peace. Humanitarian-development-peace nexus focuses on the work needed to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crisis. It challenges the status quo of the aid system, which is overstretched and operates with little coordination between project-based development and humanitarian interventions, resulting in it not effectively meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people. A more joined-up approach would offer opportunities to respond more effectively and holistically to people's needs. The nexus is a continuation of long-running efforts in the humanitarian and development fields, such as disaster risk reduction (DRR), linking relief rehabilitation and development (LRRD), the resilience agenda, and the embedding of conflict sensitivity across responses.

I.

Refugee Policy in Uganda

With over 1.4 million refugees, Uganda is the world's fifth largest refugee-hosting nation. Sixty-one per cent of refugees are from South Sudan (880,673) and twenty-nine per cent (415,098) are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Forced displacement has been a persistent issue in Uganda, with a long history of providing refuge to people displaced by conflict as well as seeking refuge in other countries due to conflict in Uganda. Most recently, escalation of conflict in South Sudan in 2017 led to a significant, rapid increase in refugee arrivals to northern Uganda. As a result, Uganda's refugee population more than doubled in just under seven months.

Refugee Population in Uganda per District and Origin April 2020

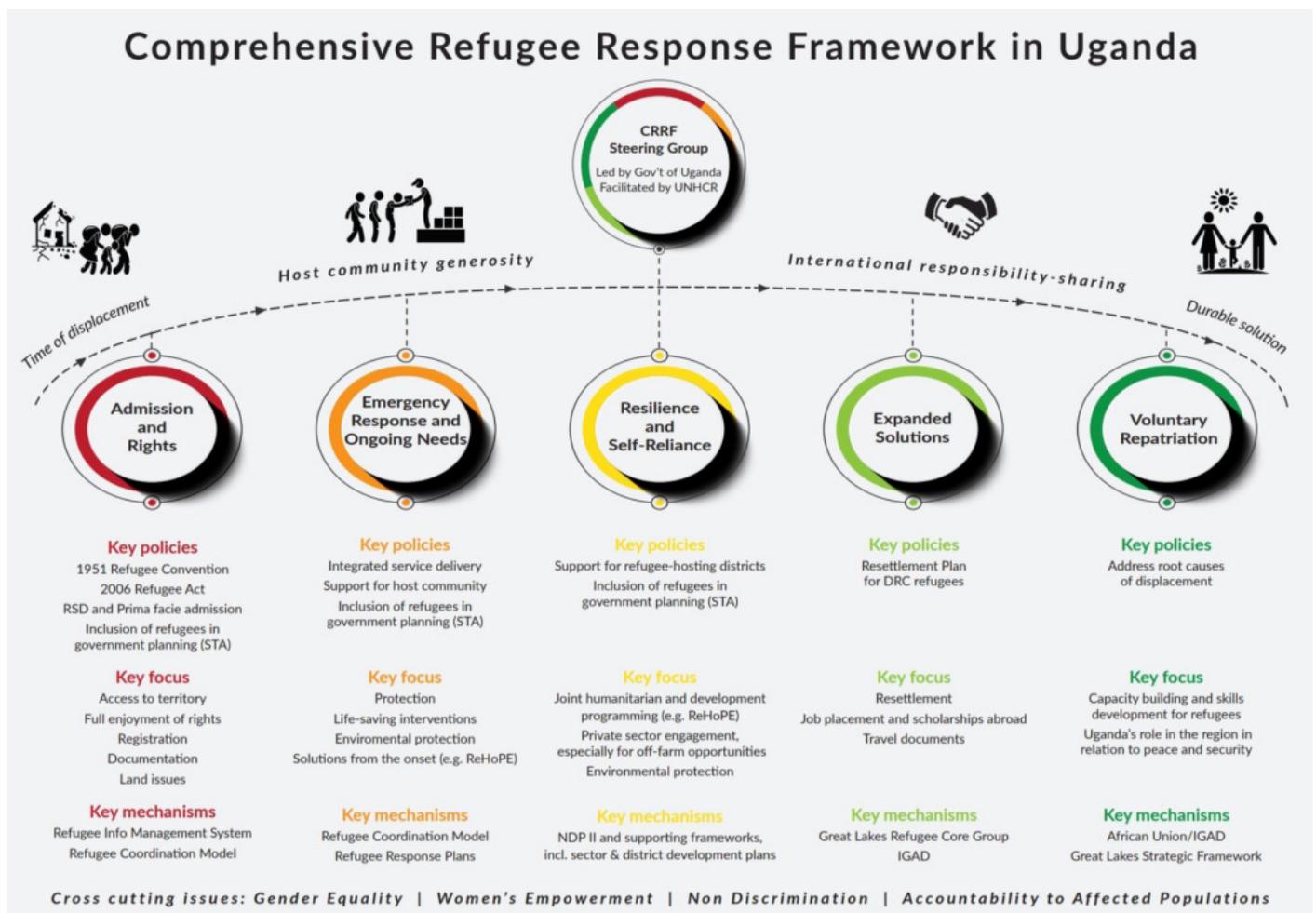


Source: Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Uganda and UNHCR. Refugees and asylum seekers statistics map in Uganda, 30 April 2020, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/76013>

Uganda’s Refugee Act of 2006 and its accompanying 2010 Refugee Regulations grant refugees many of the same rights accorded to Ugandan citizens, including the rights to work and open businesses, freedom of movement, and access government services. These policies also explicitly recognise the rights of refugee children to be accorded the ‘same treatment as nationals with respect to elementary education’ and extend refugee children’s rights to include those contained in a number of national, regional and international laws⁸ to which Uganda has committed.

To further operationalise these rights, the Government of Uganda integrated its 2015 Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA)⁹ – which commits it to support refugee and host communities’ resilience and self-reliance – into Uganda’s second National Development Plan. To operationalise the government’s policy commitments to greater resilience and self-reliance, it developed the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) initiative which acts as a mechanism to bring together the efforts of humanitarian and development partners operational in Uganda in support of the Government of Uganda’s refugee policy objectives.¹⁰

In 2018, Uganda became the first country formally to pilot the CRRF. This framework is the translation of the principles and objectives set out in Annex 1 of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in the Uganda context. It follows the five pillars of the Global Declaration (as outlined in the figure below). The Government of Uganda committed to maintain its open-door policy towards refugees at the Global Compact on Refugees Forum despite the increasing number of refugees it hosts.¹¹



Source: Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Uganda. <https://opm.go.ug/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-uganda/>

8 These include the national Children Act (1997), the AU’s African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1981); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Act 21 Refugees Act 2006 and the Geneva Conventions.
 9 UNHCR, Global Compact on Refugees Digital Platform http://www.globalcrf.org/fr/crrf_country/uga/
 10 Government of Uganda, UN, World Bank, ‘REHOPE–Refugee and Host Population Empowerment: Strategic Framework’ (June 2017), <http://ug.one.un.org/report/rehope-refugee-and-host-population-empowerment>.
 11 UNHCR, ‘Global Compact on Refugees, Pledges and Contributions’, <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/channel/pledges-contributions>.

2.

World Vision’s work in Uganda

World Vision began operations in Uganda in 1986 by providing emergency relief in response to the civil war in the 1980’s. At present, World Vision implements child-focused, community-based programming in 43 of the country’s 134 districts, with refugee-response programmes focused on child protection, resilience and livelihoods, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the West Nile region.

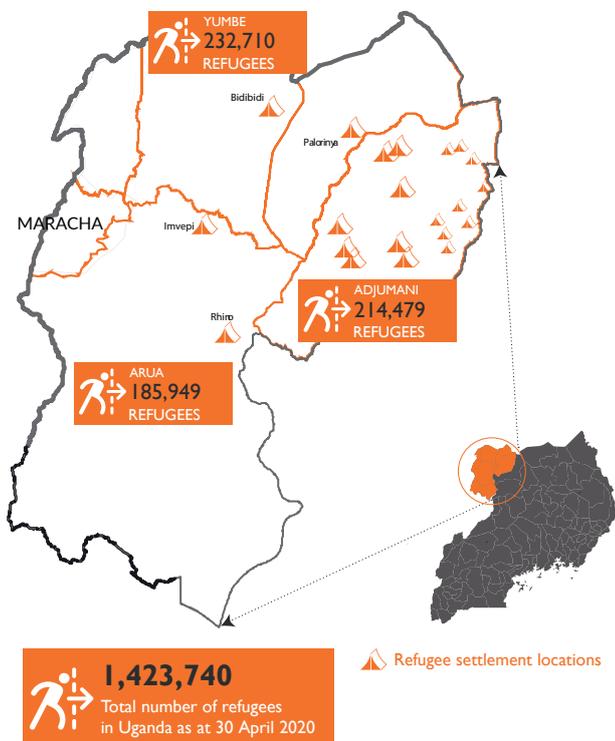
World Vision began its West Nile Refugee Response (WNRR) in January 2014, and rapidly scaled up efforts in 2016 when the conflict in South Sudan intensified, causing more than 1.2 million

people to flee across the border by mid-2017. More than 80 per cent of South Sudanese refugees settled in West Nile.¹² With 61 per cent of all South Sudanese refugees under the age of 18, this was, and continues to be, very much a children’s crisis.

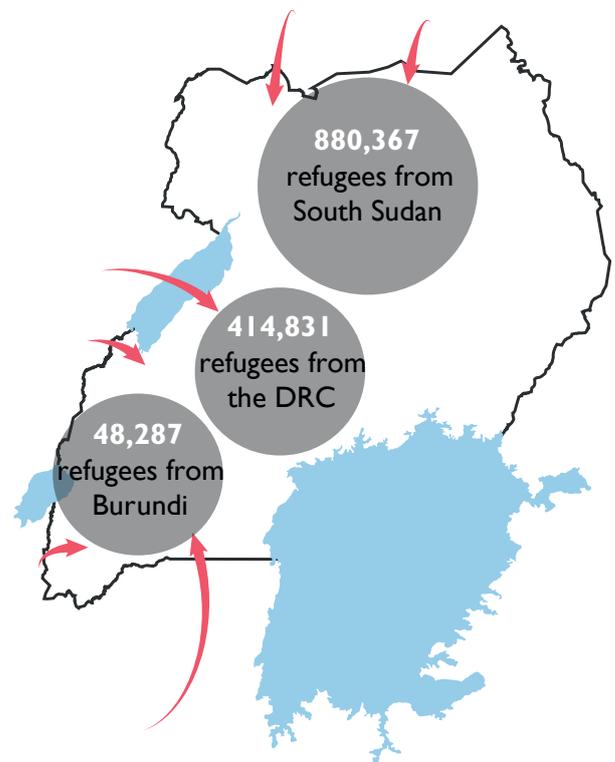
World Vision’s subsequent two-year strategy (2018–20) in West Nile prioritises improved livelihoods and resilience, as well as child protection, in line with World Vision’s overall strategic priorities in Uganda. Response operations are currently being implemented in Adjumani, Arua, Obong’i¹³, and Yumbe districts, reaching approximately 350,000 refugees each month.

Map of Uganda Highlighting World Vision’s Refugee Response Areas

West Nile response locations



Refugees by country of origin



12 UNHCR, 'Uganda: 2017 End of Year Report: South Sudan – Regional Refugee Response' (December 2017), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/63609.pdf>.

13 Former district name was Moyo.

3.

Building blocks to enable the nexus

The protracted conflict and instability in South Sudan leave little hope that many South Sudanese refugees will be able to return home safely in the near future. To date, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has not recommended returns to South Sudan and is unlikely to do so until there is lasting peace in South Sudan.¹⁴ In this context, strategies to support greater self-reliance and resilience for refugees in Uganda over the longer term are a logical response for the government, its development partners and implementing organisations.

While there are no 'easy fixes' for long-term solutions for refugee issues, the following section identifies ways in which World Vision's programming works across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to lay foundational building blocks for improved livelihoods, self-reliance and resilience for refugee and host communities.



A beneficiary of vocational skills training. Vocational skills continue to restore hope to vulnerable refugee youth.
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With new arrivals abating, most refugees have now been set up in settlement areas and more permanent infrastructures are in place (e.g. schools, roads, WASH facilities). Reflecting the changing context, World Vision's response has also largely transitioned from the acute-crisis stage towards a more stable operating environment. World Vision assessments showed that refugees increasingly were starting small-scale vegetable production and small businesses, indicating that the relatively stable situation had created an enabling environment for supporting more developmental livelihoods activities for many refugees. Nonetheless, humanitarian needs remained high, as indicated by their continued reliance on food assistance from UN World Food Programme and other forms of basic needs programmes from other humanitarian actors.



Beneficiaries lining up at a mobile food distribution point to receive their monthly food relief.
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¹⁴ UNHCR, 'UNHCR Position on Returns to South Sudan – Update II (April 2019)', <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cb4607c4.html>.

3.1. Strengthening social capital

Social capital plays a key role in building household and community livelihoods, resilience to shocks, and overall well-being in both development and humanitarian settings.¹⁵ Social capital refers to 'social networks and associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness'.¹⁶ A key feature in refugee settings is that social capital and social networks have been destroyed or greatly decreased due to displacement.¹⁷ Recognising this as a vulnerability, World Vision is helping refugees to rebuild social capital through the formation of different types of self-help groups. Self-help groups are commonly used in community-based development, helping to build solidarity, mutual support and collective action to solve collective problems¹⁸ and to foster peaceful coexistence. In this instance World Vision felt that working across the nexus to bring this developmental approach into what was typically defined as a humanitarian context could support refugee community self-reliance in the longer term and rebuild social networks. In the formation of these groups, attention was paid to gender balance by ensuring that women were represented in leadership positions and, to the extent possible, that the groups included members from both the refugee and host communities.

The self-help groups were an important building block to improved livelihoods over the long term in several ways:

- **They provided access to group-based training opportunities:** Refugees interviewed for this case study identified that now that the situation had stabilised and many of their immediate survival needs were taken care of through humanitarian assistance, being able to provide for themselves and their families was a high priority. World Vision was responding to this priority through facilitating the formation of self-help groups whose common objectives were to improve their livelihoods.

Training on two of World Vision's proven development approaches – Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and Savings for Transformation (S4T)¹⁹ – was provided to these self-help groups to improve livelihoods. Both approaches have shown their applicability in stable and protracted crises contexts²⁰ in addition to more conventional early recovery approaches such as Food or Cash for Assets. In focus group discussions, participants identified better access and opportunities to share information, seek advice, pool resources and spread/mitigate risks as key benefits of membership in these groups.



Beneficiaries of a village savings and loan association posing with a saving box in Palorinya refugee settlement.
© Derrick Kyatuka/World Vision

Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) involves the systematic regrowth and management of trees and shrubs from felled tree stumps, sprouting root systems or seeds. The regrown trees and shrubs – integrated into crops and grazing pastures – help restore soil structure and fertility, inhibit erosion and soil moisture evaporation, rehabilitate springs and the water table, and increase biodiversity. Some tree species also impart nutrients such as nitrogen into the soil. As a result, FMNR can double crop yields, provide building timber and firewood, fodder and shade for livestock, wild foods for nutrition and medication, and increased incomes and living standards for farming families and communities.

15 Noel Calhoun, 'With a Little Help from Our Friends: A participatory assessment of social capital among refugees in Jordan', UNHCR New Issues In Refugee Research, research paper no. 189 (2010), <https://www.unhcr.org/research/working/4ca0a0109/little-help-friends-participatory-assessment-social-capital-among-refugees.html>.

16 R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

17 Calhoun, 'With a Little Help from Our Friends'.

18 M. Gugerty, et al. 'Delivering Development? Evidence on self-help groups as development intermediaries in South Asia and Africa', *Development Policy Review* 37, no. 1 (2019): 29–151.

19 Recent VisionFund Analysis found that 'the financial capacity [to contribute to savings groups] is similar among refugee and host community groups: there is a consistent increase of the share-out amount across all the groups, confirming the assumption that refugees have means to save and borrow'. Martina Crailsheim et al. 'Contextual and Financial Assessment of Savings Groups in West Nile', Uganda VisionFund International (March 2019), *Contextual and Financial Assessment of Savings Groups in West Nile, Uganda*. <https://www.visionfund.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Contextual%20and%20Financial%20Assessment%20of%20Savings%20Groups%20in%20West%20Nile.pdf>

20 In addition to West Nile, Uganda, World Vision has implemented Savings for Transformation programmes in 38 countries, including programmes with refugees in Kenya and fragile contexts such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

- **Improved sense of safety, stability and normalcy:** Women who engaged in a UNDP-funded Cash for Work programme²¹ said their participation in the group helped them to get to know their neighbours better and enabled them to feel a stronger sense of normalcy, safety and security. In turn, they felt more confident that they could recover from the horrific violence they had experienced and that investing time and energy in rebuilding their lives and livelihoods was worthwhile.
- **Fostering social cohesion between refugee and host communities:** To the extent possible and in line with government policy, the self-help groups included both refugees and host community members.²² This helped refugees build social capital outside their own community. These external networks are particularly important for economic advancement for refugees because they provide a pathway to access new information and opportunities, including job and local business prospects or how to access services.²³ They also serve to reduce tensions over perceived inequalities in access to services and other critical resources that are part of a humanitarian response by means of building mutually beneficial social and economic relationships between refugee and host communities. In FGDs, women and men from both the refugee and host communities often referred to each other as brothers and sisters. Their children attended school together, and they invited each other to important

community-bonding events such as weddings, funerals and church services. In some cases, refugees and host community members also mentioned that 'they sit together and have community dialogues on peaceful coexistence'. Peaceful coexistence is one of six main objectives of the STA, the government's framework to operationalise its CRRF. Such peaceful coexistence endeavours have enabled refugee and host families to share common resources, like grazing grounds, and access social services, like healthcare, schools, markets, churches/mosques and water points. This in turn can foster unity and support graduation from a safety net to self-reliance.²⁴ Youth Peace Clubs facilitated by World Vision also act as a type of self-help group for refugee and host community youth, providing opportunities for leadership development, to be seen as positive agents for change in their communities, and for refugee and host community youth to work collectively as forces for good.

“We have met friends, in the group and with the host community. With my friends, we can laugh, give advice and ideas for businesses”

Female respondent, Imvepi

21 FGDs were held with self-help groups whose membership included women who were survivors of gender-based violence and who were participating in a UNDP-Japan Platform funded Cash for Work programme. Discussions were held separately with women and with men.

22 'As refugees are integrated into host communities, the fact that they continue to receive inputs from humanitarian actors while Ugandan nationals do not can create hostilities. In this case, the 70–30 rule for allocating resources – 70 per cent to refugees and 30 per cent to host communities – may not be good enough as refugees still receive more support than nationals. Furthermore, this rule does not apply to food distribution, which only goes to refugees.' Government of Uganda, UN, World Bank, 'Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Strategic Framework' (2017), <http://ug.one.un.org/report/rehope-refugee-and-host-population-empowerment>, 24.

23 Calhoun, 'With a Little Help from Our Friends'.

24 Livelihood Sector Working Group operational updates.



Providing sustainable livelihood opportunities for South Sudanese refugees in Uganda.
© Derrick Kyatuka/World Vision

Young people as promoters of peace: Peace Clubs in northern Uganda

In West Nile, World Vision helps youth form peace clubs, trains peace club members and provides the materials for children to organize activities to spread peace messages throughout the refugee and surrounding host communities. Once a week, groups that vary in size from 15 to 50 young men and women, gather and go through a World Vision developed peace road curriculum sessions. The sessions help members learn how to create more harmonious communities, resolve conflicts without violence and foster a culture of peace. More than 4,000 young people have taken part in Peace Clubs in West Nile.

3.2. Contributing to local economic development and financial inclusion for long-term sustainability

The West Nile region is one of the poorest regions in Uganda. The refugee situation has brought much needed resources into the region. By increasing resources dedicated to addressing the situation and targeting both refugees and host communities through national policies, the conditions on the ground have improved for both groups, increasing economic interactions between them.

- **Strengthening availability of the quality and quantity of food in local markets:** FGDs with women in host communities highlighted the contribution refugees were making to strengthening supply and demand in local markets, which they saw as a contribution to broader community economic development. There was increased demand for products sold by host community members, an increased availability of both quantity and quality of food, and other items in markets which contributed to increased dietary diversity.
- **Savings groups:** Savings groups are commonly deployed in development settings as a means to assist poor households to increase their financial assets and build resilience to shocks. More recently, World Vision has been adapting its savings group approach (Savings for Transformation) for fragile contexts.²⁵ A number of NGOs

have been implementing savings groups approaches in refugee and host communities in the West Nile region.²⁶ VisionFund, the microfinance arm of World Vision, led a collaborative effort with other NGOs to assess the appropriateness and capacity of refugee and host communities to establish and expand savings groups²⁷ under the oversight of UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Uganda. Based on the results of this assessment World Vision facilitated refugee and host community members to set up savings groups and provided trainings and materials to get them started. World Vision used the S4T²⁸ approach to support communities in settlements and remote areas in accessing financial resources and in enabling them to save small amounts of money to invest in building high value assets. S4T was identified by World Vision and communities as a means to address current household needs while investing in their longer-term aspirations. A World Vision report found that the main benefits for members in saving groups, both hosts and refugees, are social cohesion, poverty alleviation and an improved quality of life.²⁹ To date, World Vision has facilitated the creation of more than 600 savings groups throughout West Nile. The saving groups were linked to financial service providers, particularly VisionFund, which was already providing a loan product to both refugees and host communities in the area. Savings group participants interviewed for this case study reported having used their portion of group savings to start small businesses, access health services, pay school fees and/or increase household diet diversity.

25 For example, a recent review of factors for resilience in Somalia identified one of the key factors for households being more resilient to shocks as participation in savings groups. Somalia Resilience Program, 'Positive Deviance in Somalia: Why are some households more resilient than others?' (September 2018), https://www.usstatic.com/2018/SomReP_Positive_Deviance_Study_Report.pdf.

26 Marina Crailsheim et al. 'Contextual and Financial Assessment of Savings Groups in West Nile, Uganda' (VisionFund, March 2019). <https://www.visionfund.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Contextual%20and%20Financial%20Assessment%20of%20Savings%20Groups%20in%20West%20Nile.pdf>

27 Ibid.

28 For more on World Vision's Savings for Transformation approach, see <https://www.wvi.org/savings-transformation>.

29 World Vision and Busara, 'Qualitative Insights Report: Improving the impact of VSLAs on refugees' and host communities' self-reliance, resilience and economic capacity (November 2019).

3.3. Investing in education

The contribution of inclusive, quality education to reducing poverty and improving national social and economic outcomes is well known. Education is a key building block to improved livelihoods for both adults and children and can prevent family separation, recruitment into armed forces and groups, and child labour.³⁰ If and when refugees can pursue their education in host countries, their potential return can 'represent a benefit for the home country, in particular regarding economic independence and social resilience.'³¹ Keeping girls in school also improves child protection and health outcomes through reductions in child marriage and early pregnancy as well as lower birth rates over their lifetimes.³²

Access to education is a challenge for refugee children in Uganda but such access was a high priority for both the children and the caregivers World Vision interviewed. Using the Government of Uganda's Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) curriculum, World Vision helped 532 refugee children (269 boys and 263 girls) to achieve a primary school-leaving certificate; these were children whose schooling had often been disrupted for multiple years due to conflict and displacement. The AEP helps children from both the refugee and host communities to catch up with their peers so they can eventually integrate into the formal education system. World Vision is supporting adult and refugee youth with training programs provided through their participation in a number of livelihood initiatives, including savings groups for financial literacy and business skills; FMNR for new farming and environmental restoration techniques; and Cash for Work programmes for business skills and seed capital.



Refugee children attending Early Childhood Development class in Imvepi refugee settlement.
© Derrick Kyatuka/World Vision

3.4. Linking social safety nets with longer-term development activities

While meeting the immediate survival needs of refugees must always be a priority, pairing humanitarian safety net transfers with additional livelihoods interventions has emerged as a viable way to work across the nexus in order to support the most vulnerable households to rebuild their livelihoods and self-reliance after experiencing shocks. Providing support to address vulnerable households' immediate needs also helps them free time to invest in improving their livelihoods.

Some examples of how World Vision is partnering with other agencies to link safety net transfers to longer-term development activities in West Nile include:

- World Vision and the World Food Programme (WFP):** Through its partnership with WFP, World Vision provided humanitarian food assistance to over 223,000 beneficiaries every month on average in Arua and Yumbe district in 2019. Through its private match funding, World Vision supports food assistance beneficiaries to participate in livelihoods activities such as saving groups and FMNR.³³ With children representing 61 per cent of refugees, World Vision is also mainstreaming protection in its programming by training its food assistance managers to identify potentially at-risk children at its food distribution sites and to report and refer them to the appropriate support channels.
- World Vision and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):** As part of the CRRF push for increased collaboration and partnering, World Vision joined forces with UNDP and the Government of Japan in a Cash for Assets project that provided work opportunities to refugee and host community members to build roads which linked refugee settlements to local markets, the health centre, a football field, a community centre and rubbish pits. These were identified as underfunded priorities of the Ariwa and Odupi Sub-County Development Plans. In interviews, project participants shared a number of benefits including (1) better roads that serve host communities and refugees in the short and long term, and (2) increased household incomes due to better links to local markets, which enabled caregivers to better provide for their family's health and their children's education. They were also able to invest in other income-generating activities such as purchasing livestock and opening small businesses.

30 International Network for Education in Emergencies, 'Child Protection', <https://archive.ineesite.org/en/child-protection>; Global Protection Cluster.

31 UNHCR, Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion (September 2019), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/education/5d651da88d7/education-2030-strategy-refugee-education.html>, 34.

32 Quentin T. Wodon et al., 'Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global synthesis report', World Bank policy research working paper 116829 (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2017), 3; Céline Ferré, 'Age at First Child: Does education delay fertility timing? The Case of Kenya', Policy Research Working Paper 4833 (World Bank, February 2009).

33 For more details on World Vision's work on linking humanitarian food assistance to livelihoods activities, see World Vision, 'Telling Our Stories: Leveraging food assistance for a hunger-free world' (2014), <https://www.worldvision.org/wp-content/uploads/telling-our-stories-report.pdf>.

3.5. Adapting longer-term development approaches and models to a refugee context

While programming approaches such as those highlighted above were required to lay foundational building blocks for working across the humanitarian and development nexus, tested and vetted longer-term development interventions have also had to be adapted to the refugee context.

World Vision has been working in Uganda for more than 30 years on child-focused humanitarian and development programmes in 43 of the country's 134 districts, including in West Nile. The focus of World Vision's work and interventions has been on improved livelihoods and child protection.

When the situation in West Nile began to stabilise and there was an enabling government policy environment, World Vision took a strategic decision to explore how its proven livelihoods and child protection development approaches could be used and adapted to the more complex and fragile refugee setting in West Nile.

Some ways in which proven longer-term development approaches were adapted include:

- **Child Protection Committees (CPCs).** Child protection is a strategic priority across all of World Vision's programmes in Uganda where children's rights are enshrined in the government's policy framework. Several child protection mechanisms exist at different levels, such as the CPCs at the community level. As part of its refugee response, World Vision has established dozens of CPCs. Each committee is gender balanced and composed of nine members, with over 600 individuals participating in these committees. World Vision adopted the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development's model to train CPC members and para-social workers in host communities. Participants also include government representatives in charge of children and protective affairs as well as police officials. Some CPCs have become more independent and quite successful in building and maintaining child protection systems around children at risk and referring and reporting cases to the relevant authority or organisation. By identifying and verifying unaccompanied and separated children and children at risk, the CPCs have greatly supported the case management work undertaken by World Vision and other agencies.

- **Increasing the pool of professionally trained early childhood development (ECD) educators.** Caregiver volunteers working in World Vision's child friendly spaces were provided with professional ECD training and received certification from the government's Primary Teacher College. In line with government policy 70 per cent of those enrolled were refugees and 30 per cent were from the host community.
- **Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR).** World Vision Uganda is the largest implementer of FMNR in Uganda and coordinates the Uganda FMNR network. FMNR has its origins as a Cash for Work project in Niger in the 1980s, however, today it is largely implemented in development settings. In Niger, FMNR contributed to farmers producing an additional 500,000 tons of cereal per year. As a result, 2.5 million people were more food secure.³⁴ Based on this learning, World Vision decided to start implementing FMNR projects in the West Nile region to respond to the dual needs of restoring the natural landscape and the environment in light of the ongoing and increasing cutting of trees for firewood or materials for construction, a need identified by refugee and host communities as well as UN and government stakeholders. World Vision ensures that FMNR sites are established, managed and accessed by both refugees and host community families, which is a new approach.



A child playing with a teddy bear at a Child Friendly Space
© Derrick Kyatuka/World Vision

34 United Nations, Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR): A technique to effectively combat poverty and hunger through land and vegetation restoration, #SDGAction30735, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=30735>.

4.

Challenges

As the World Vision team implemented nexus-related programming across the West Nile region, several challenges and new risks emerged:

- At some ongoing food distributions in West Nile, staff members observed that some children had started coming to collect the family food ration without their parents or caregivers. Children told World Vision staff that their parents or caregivers had gone back to South Sudan to see whether it was safe to return or to look for work, leaving them behind to care for the family house and the land in Uganda. This creates new child protection risks and requires more investment in child protection systems, specifically targeting child headed households, providing children with ongoing access to social (and financial) support services across the nexus of humanitarian and development interventions.
- Currently, project timelines are often too short to realise the full potential of approaches that need more time to mature, such as FMNR. Long-term and flexible funding is required to deliver on development outcomes for refugees and host communities in Uganda. A programme such as FMNR works best for the most vulnerable people when combined with life-saving assistance that will help them meet immediate basic needs such as food as the benefits of longer-term approaches take time to materialise.
- The South Sudanese Regional Refugee Response Plan was 49 per cent funded in 2019,³⁵ and of that only a small proportion was flexible funding. Funding for early recovery funding for activities such as public works and productive assets programmes through the World Food Programme, United Nations Development Programme and World Vision had started to emerge, but this was not long term. At the same time, development funding was slow to materialise, as noted by several interviewees. This has slowed down efforts to build the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities and realising the commitments made by governments in the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants. Successfully working across the nexus requires all actors to be able to adapt to needs and aspirations of highly vulnerable children and their families. World Vision was able to bridge some gaps in its nexus programming by drawing on its private funding base. However, for sustainable nexus programming at scale, sufficient multiyear flexible funding, underpinned by strong political will to incentivise greater collaboration among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, is needed to enable the nexus to be operationalised in Uganda.
- The policy environment in Uganda provides a strong base upon which to realise the promise of nexus approaches to support a pathway out of poverty for refugees in Uganda. Operationalising those commitments requires sustained and long-term budgetary support from the Government of Uganda and long-term, flexible funding by its institutional development partners. To date, this funding has been limited, hindering achievement of the government's national development goals, and civil society's ability to support those goals, from becoming a reality.

Beneficiaries of a Livelihoods project receiving goats from World Vision in Omugo refugee settlement
© Moses Mukitale/World Vision



35 UNHCR, 'South Sudan Situation: Regional Update' (December 2019), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/73852>.

6.

Conclusion and recommendations

Working at the nexus of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action is a vital act of solidarity with highly vulnerable children, women and men living in fragile contexts. World Vision has committed to increasing its impact, investment and presence in these most difficult places. People-centred, agile, responsive and integrated programming across the nexus, combined with advocacy and community empowerment, is both possible and urgent to achieve positive change for the most vulnerable children and their communities.

The policy context in Uganda allows for the nexus to be operationalised in a way that enables children and their communities to meet their needs and aspirations and that fosters social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among and between refugee and host communities. However, the policy context in itself will not be adequate. Incentivising new ways of working and ensuring the right financing mechanisms are in place and are properly resourced is necessary.

The following recommendations are based on World Vision's experience in West Nile and are meant to contribute to ongoing efforts to operationalise the nexus at scale in Uganda:



Refugee children accessing Early Childhood Development education.
© Moses Mukitale/World Vision

I. Working across the nexus in the refugee context of West Nile is not an end in and of itself; it is a means to deliver better development outcomes for the most vulnerable refugee and host community girls, boys, women and men, in line with the Government of Uganda's national development plans and key global commitments.

In order to sustain improvements to refugee livelihoods, self-reliance and resilience, World Vision recommends:

Government and donors

- Ensure greater investments in rural development to increase both on- and off-farm income earning opportunities through improving local job and food markets; focusing on climate-smart agriculture; training in business, digital literacy and technical/vocational skills; and improving access to financial services for refugees and host communities.
- Provide timely safety nets to support vulnerable households to meet their immediate needs, protect assets and ensure they have the time and energy to invest in improving their livelihoods over the long term.
- Engage in policy dialogue at the national level to improve policy implementation at the district and sub-county levels and to facilitate greater coordination and collaboration among all actors to enable them to operate across the nexus.
- Provide women and youth with equal access to livelihoods opportunities, such as value chains, savings groups and business training and ensure women and youth are represented in leadership and decision-making roles.
- Engage the private sector, including mobile telecommunications and mobile money companies, in order to provide not only funding but also training and employment opportunities to the refugee and host communities' women and youth.
- Extend the timeframe of humanitarian or early recovery programming and ensure peacebuilding measures are integrated into programme design and monitoring frameworks.

2. More than 60 per cent of refugees in West Nile are children. The rights of all children in Uganda are enshrined in the government's policy frameworks, and child protection systems exist at multiple levels. However, greater effort is needed to ensure refugee children are able to realise those rights. Improving refugee children's access to education, protection and health/nutrition services contributes to a more protective environment for those children today and prepares them to be productive members of society in future.

In order to strengthen protective systems for refugee children, World Vision recommends:

Government and donors

- Increase investment in formal and informal child protection systems. Greater efforts are needed to extend child protection services through existing formal and informal systems to all refugee children and ensure these systems are better integrated into national programs. Particular focus should be placed on ensuring sufficient funding for child friendly spaces and case management services until a smooth and full transition to community centres or integration to national services can occur.
- Fully fund and implement the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda: Access to an education provides refugee children in Uganda with the best possible chance for a brighter future and contributes to them being able to live a productive, fulfilling life that contributes to building a prosperous and peaceful society.
- Support further in-depth research on the impacts of nexus-related programming on child protection outcomes. This research should include the areas of livelihoods, protection and education.

Implementing agencies

- Strengthen organisational capacity in child protection in emergencies and mainstream child protection in other response sectors, such as livelihoods, to enhance protection of children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and all other forms of violence.

3. Transition in a fragile context like the refugee settlements in West Nile is not a linear process. While overall stability has increased, acute needs persist or are re-emerging. People are still on the move, including new arrivals, which creates new pockets of vulnerability. In order to determine when and how to work across the nexus, World Vision recommends:

Government

- Ensure sufficient budgetary support for refugees issues in national budget planning, in line with the governments National Development Plan II.

Donors

- Fully fund the Refugee Response Plan for 2020–21 and increase the proportion of funding that is not earmarked or is softly earmarked; the regional refugee response plan was only 49 per cent funded in 2019, and the majority of this funding was earmarked.
- Supply sufficient multiyear flexible funding underpinned by strong political will to change conventional ways of working.
- Continue to meet acute humanitarian needs while concurrently supporting longer-term efforts to build resilience and self-reliance; providing short-term relief allows vulnerable populations the time and energy to invest in their futures.

Implementing agencies

- Integrate conflict sensitivity analysis in livelihoods programme design and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure programmes contribute to strengthening social capital and social cohesion between refugee and host communities.

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