

NRC's operations in Uganda

Humanitarian overview

Uganda hosts Africa's largest refugee population, with over 1.9 million people primarily from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Recent influxes from these countries and Sudan have strained the nation's progressive open-door policy and already limited resources. While refugees are traditionally welcomed and given land and freedom of movement, a surge in new arrivals has overstretched social services, leading to insufficient food aid and increased pressure on basic needs like water, shelter, and healthcare. This situation hinders refugees' ability to achieve self-reliance and leaves many vulnerable.

Socioeconomic and service challenges:

Refugees in Uganda face significant hurdles in achieving self-sufficiency due to a lack of resources and barriers to integration.

Limited livelihood opportunities: Refugees struggle to find jobs or start businesses due to language barriers, a lack of accredited qualifications, administrative delays, and systemic barriers in obtaining work permits. This limited access to formal employment makes them vulnerable to exploitation, especially women and children, and forces many into precarious informal work.

Housing and poverty: In urban areas, refugees often live in crowded conditions, struggling to afford secure housing. This instability, combined with limited income, exposes them to poverty and exploitation.

Access to services: Essential services are severely strained. Refugees face a high burden of preventable diseases like malaria, which is exacerbated by inadequate sanitation and an overburdened national healthcare system. Similarly, accessing quality education is challenging due to insufficient funding, overcrowded classrooms, and a shortage of qualified teachers.

Protection: Refugees face threats of violence, exploitation and abuse. Women, children and marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable, and land disputes between refugees and host communities further fuel tension.



Photo: Sarah Casteran/NRC

Our core activities



Education



Information, counselling
and legal assistance (ICLA)



Protection
from violence



Water, sanitation
and hygiene (WASH)

NRC in Uganda

Established	1997, re-registered 2014
International staff	3
National staff	65

Our areas of operation

- W Terego/Madi-okolo (Rhino Camp & Imvepi)
- Arua Urban
- Adjumani (Ayilo, Nyumanzi)
- Kiryandongo (Kiryandongo settlement)
- Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono,
- Southwestern districts of Isingiro (Nakivale/Oruchinga)
- Kisoro, Bundibugyo and Kikube (Kyanggwali)



Our approach

NRC in Uganda delivers its programmes through two complementary approaches: first-line emergency response to meet urgent humanitarian needs, and durable solutions that support long-term self-reliance.

Both approaches are multi-sectoral, spanning education, protection from violence, WASH, and information, counselling and legal assistance, and are delivered in line with safe and inclusive programming standards. Cash and market systems serve as a cross-cutting theme, enabling NRC to provide flexible, market-driven responses that are relevant in both emergency and transition contexts, and to foster locally led partnerships that strengthen the overall impact of our interventions.



158,525 people reached in 2024 ▼

Education

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is dedicated to providing education for the most vulnerable children and youth affected by displacement, with a particular emphasis on girls and children with disabilities. We aim to enhance their transition to and retention in formal education systems, working closely with national authorities and collaborating with both national and international partners. Additionally, our education programmes address the challenges posed by climate change. Our initiatives include:

- providing language bridging programmes for new arrivals
- organising return-to-learning activities
- offering cash for education through the Accelerated Education Programme, covering access and scholastic materials
- conducting remedial and catch-up classes to support primary education for children and young adults
- providing vocational training for young adults to promote self-employment and diverse livelihood opportunities
- offering professional development support for teachers
- assisting with the construction and renovation of educational facilities
- enhancing the welfare of teachers in remote areas
- supplying school materials and multipurpose cash to overcome financial barriers to education
- delivering protection and psychosocial support services through the Better Learning Programme

- strengthening the capacity of local education authorities (such as School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations) to lead the planning and prioritisation of school activities



171,809 people reached in 2024 ▼

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

Our ICLA services help refugees and vulnerable host communities to know, claim and exercise their rights. Our ICLA teams:

- provide counselling and legal assistance to refugees and host communities to obtain legal identity documentation (e.g. birth registration)
- support newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees obtain the required documentation
- help resolve housing, land and property disputes
- secure access to land for livelihood programming (e.g. block farming)
- provide cash for rent for vulnerable families at risk of eviction
- support individuals and groups register business and obtain required licenses
- provide legal assistance on employment matters
- lead on durable solutions in relation to local integration of refugees into their host communities and family reunification (complementary pathways)



30,951 people reached in 2024 ▼

Livelihoods and food security

NRC has taken a strategic decision to gradually phase out Livelihoods and Food Security as a standalone core competency. This shift reflects the organisation's prioritisation of approaches that strengthen existing markets and empower households through more flexible, scalable solutions.



3,827 people reached in 2024 ▼

Protection from violence

NRC supports people affected by displacement to enjoy their right to freedom from violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation across all phases of displacement. Our protection team:

- work on community engagement and awareness to change community attitudes and behaviours
- provide cash-based interventions (CBIs) to meet domestic needs for registered populations
- build the capacity of community-based structures to effectively deliver protection assistance and increase refugee participation
- strengthen the mobile protection desks in communities to enhance ease of access for services
- identify and review the existing referral pathways to ensure people with specific needs are supported with all relevant services



11,712 people reached in 2024 ▼

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Our WASH teams are responsible for providing access to clean water and improved hygiene and sanitation to displaced and host communities.

NRC supported four primary schools in the Isingiro district with sanitation facilities. We constructed eight latrine blocks (five stances each), two incinerators, and handwashing stations at the four schools to improve hygiene in the wake of M-pox and other related diseases.

In Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono, we provided cash for menstrual hygiene management to 620 school-aged refugee girls from Sudan. This initiative was funded by the NMFA (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) flexi programme.

Regarding water, we rehabilitated five shallow wells in Kampala and Mukono. These wells, which had run dry and led to cases of waterborne disease, served as the only alternative for poor communities living in slums who couldn't afford to buy water.

In Yumbe, NRC drilled a borehole and installed a pump to provide water for the 30-acre block farms in Zone 8. Additionally, we constructed and distributed water from eight tap-stands, providing clean water to both refugees and the host community in the surrounding area. This project was funded by NMFA (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Our donors

We are grateful for the generous support from our donors:

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