

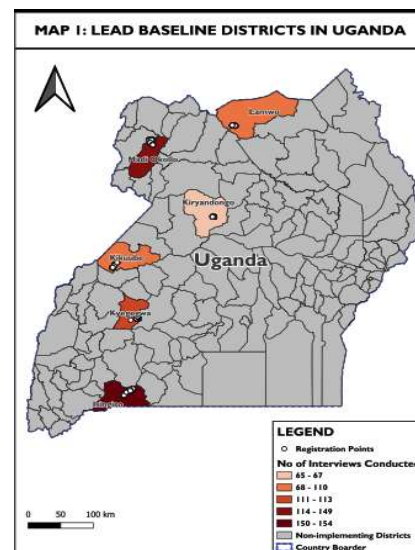
# BASELINE SURVEY SUMMARY

*Local Empowerment And Development for Refugees and Host Communities (LEAD) Programme*

## INTRODUCTION

The LEAD programme, coordinated by Woord en Daad as a support partner and implemented by 12 local partners, is a multi-year initiative funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It aims to empower local actors to deliver essential services to refugees and host communities in Uganda, fostering peaceful coexistence and dignified living. The programme adopts a holistic approach, integrating education (vocational training), livelihoods, and systemic advocacy to enhance living conditions for vulnerable populations.

The baseline study was conducted across six refugee-hosting districts in Uganda: Madi Okollo, Lamwo, Kiryandongo, Kyegegwa, Kikuube, and Isingiro. These areas were selected due to their high concentrations of refugees and host community populations, providing a representative snapshot of the programme's target beneficiaries. This baseline report was prepared by an independent consulting team, with valuable input from the staff of Woord en Daad, local implementing partners, and key stakeholders. It reflects a collaborative effort to establish benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the programme's progress over its implementation period.



The **purpose of this baseline** is to understand the situation on the three main outcomes of the LEAD project (people level-outcomes, organisational level outcomes, system level outcomes).

### The study had three primary objectives:

- **Benchmarking:** Provide baseline data to measure the impact of interventions during midterm and end-term evaluations.
- **Refinement:** Further define and refine programme activities and outcome indicators to ensure alignment with local needs and realities.
- **Contextual Insights:** Map key actors, challenges, and opportunities to inform advocacy efforts and programme adjustments.

This document provides a detailed summary of the baseline findings, including key outcomes, methodology, and actionable recommendations, to guide stakeholders in aligning efforts towards impactful interventions. Full reports are available upon request via [leaduganda@woordendaad.nl](mailto:leaduganda@woordendaad.nl).

## METHODOLOGY

The baseline study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure comprehensive and representative findings. A rigorous methodology was designed to provide a holistic understanding of the living conditions, education, livelihoods, and systemic barriers refugee and host community households face

### Sampling Design

The study targeted 681 households, exceeding the calculated sample size of 658, which was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan Table for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Sampling was stratified by displacement status, ensuring proportional representation of refugee and host community populations within each district. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select households, with sub-counties and villages identified to include a balanced mix of refugee settlements and host communities.

For the qualitative component, 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 47 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted. FGDs included representatives from women, men, and youth groups, while KIIs engaged stakeholders from district and national governments, implementing partners, and community leaders.

### Data collection techniques

- **Quantitative surveys:** A structured household survey was developed and administered using digital data collection tools (smartphones/tablets) to improve efficiency and accuracy. The survey covered household demographics, education, livelihoods, food security, and climate resilience practices.
- **Qualitative methods:** Semi-structured FGDs and KIIs were conducted to gather in-depth insights into community perceptions, systemic challenges, and organizational capacity gaps. Questions were tailored to explore topics such as education quality, livelihood opportunities, and policy engagement.
- **Organizational capacity assessment:** A detailed tool was used to evaluate the capacity of 11 local implementing partners, including refugee-led organizations and national NGOs. This assessment focused on technical, institutional, and self-sustaining capacities.

### Ethical considerations

All enumerators were trained in confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, and the organisation's zero-tolerance policy for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The survey tools adhered to Do No Harm principles, and data collection avoided interviewing minors under 18 years old. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews or discussions.

### Limitations

The study faced several limitations:

- **Household-level focus:** While representative of households, the survey did not capture individual-level dynamics, such as intra-household power relations across gender and age.
- **Recall bias:** Certain indicators relied on extended recall periods (6–12 months), potentially introducing inaccuracies due to memory limitations.
- **Proxy reporting:** Responses were provided by a single household member, which may not fully represent the experiences of all members, particularly vulnerable groups.
- **Geographic accessibility:** Some areas were challenging to access, which may have influenced the depth of data collected in those regions.

Despite these challenges, the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, alongside triangulation with secondary data sources, ensures the reliability and robustness of the findings.

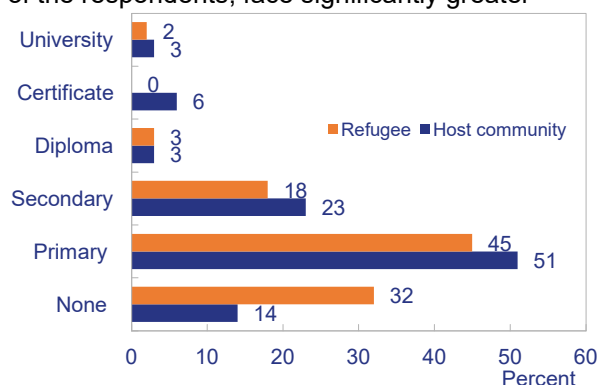
## Key Findings

### People-Level Outcomes

The baseline survey reveals stark differences between refugee and host community households across education, livelihoods, and living conditions. Refugees, who constitute 69.8% of the respondents, face significantly greater challenges compared to host community members. Below are key insights from the findings:

#### 1. Education

- While primary school enrollment rates are commendably high at 92%, significant barriers to sustained participation remain, particularly for refugee children. Refugee girls are disproportionately affected, with dropout rates reaching 19%, compared to 10% among girls in host communities. Barriers include child marriage (affecting up to 26.5% of refugee households), financial difficulties (notably school fees), and distance





to schools. Boys also face challenges, such as family responsibilities, lack of interest, and economic pressures.

- In some districts, such as Madi Okollo and Kikuube, enrollment rates approach 100%, demonstrating need for localised interventions. However, districts like Lamwo report much lower enrollment rates at 74%, highlighting regional disparities. Vocational training opportunities are underutilized, with only 6% of households reporting participation. Popular vocational training fields like tailoring (39%) and hairdressing (34.2%) align with market demand, yet accessibility remains an issue, with 32% of respondents unaware of the nearest training facility's location.
- Community perceptions on education quality are mixed. While 56.4% rate teacher quality as high, significant minorities express dissatisfaction due to inadequate teaching materials, poor learner support, and limited vocational training opportunities. Only 46.7% of respondents observe improved completion rates, reflecting the need for stronger educational systems.

## 2. Livelihoods

- Livelihood opportunities remain limited, with refugees reporting lower employment rates (54.3%) compared to host community members (58.3%). Men generally fare better than women, with employment rates of 76.5% and 59.1%, respectively. Refugees primarily depend on subsistence farming (42%) and organizational aid (31%) for income, while host communities rely more on commercial farming (37%) and wage employment (23%). These differences highlight the precarious economic situations faced by refugees, who often lack access to markets and sustainable employment opportunities. Notably, Congolese respondents exhibit the highest employment rate at 78.4%, while South Sudanese respondents lag at 44%, likely due to language barriers and limited access to resources.
- Income disparities are stark. Refugee households report an average income of UGX 126,456, significantly lower than the UGX 186,845 reported by host communities. Households headed by men earn higher average incomes (UGX 180,192) compared to female-headed households (UGX 126,155), reflecting entrenched gender inequalities. Regional variations are also pronounced, with Isingiro leading in employment rates (89.1%) and Kiryandongo trailing at 31.9%.
- Barriers to gainful employment include high competition (73%), underqualification (40.3%), and geographic limitations, with 16.5% of refugees citing long distances to job opportunities. Discrimination in hiring is also a concern, affecting 14.6% of refugees. Financial challenges are prevalent, with 83% of households struggling to meet basic needs, relying heavily on negative coping mechanisms like debt.

## 3. Living Conditions

- Refugee households face significant disadvantages in living conditions compared to host communities. On average, refugee households are larger (6.2 members) than those of host communities (4.9 members). Housing quality is also poorer, with 51.4% of refugees living in temporary dwellings compared to 24.3% of host community members. Sanitation remains a pressing issue, as 5.7% of refugees practice open defecation, compared to 3.9% in host communities. Traditional latrines are the most common sanitation facility for both groups, but access to improved facilities like VIP latrines is limited for refugees (4.4%) compared to host communities (15.5%).
- Access to electricity is similarly unequal, with only 5.9% of refugee households connected to the grid, compared to 14.6% of host community households. Cooking fuel also differs, with refugees relying predominantly on firewood (69.3%), while host communities use a mix of firewood (57.8%) and charcoal (38.8%).
- Despite these challenges, mobile money adoption is high among both groups (89.7%), demonstrating potential for financial inclusion initiatives. However, only 38.4% of households own a bank account, with significant disparities between regions. For example, Isingiro shows higher bank account ownership (67.3%), while Kiryandongo lags at 14.5%. These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve infrastructure, enhance sanitation, and expand access to financial services.

## Organisational-Level Outcomes

The LEAD baseline survey assessed the capacities of in-country partners to implement and sustain impactful programming for refugees and host communities. Findings reveal a mix of strengths and challenges across technical, institutional, and self-sustaining capacities:

### Strengths

1. **Community engagement and participatory planning:** In-country partners demonstrated strong capabilities in engaging communities throughout the project lifecycle. Most partners excel at fostering inclusive participation during needs assessments and project design phases, ensuring interventions align with local priorities.
2. **Knowledge of local contexts:** Many partners possess extensive contextual knowledge and established trust within their operational areas, enabling efficient coordination with community leaders and stakeholders.



Figure: Average capacity score by LNGO

### Challenges

1. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Gaps in monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems were consistently identified. Only 40% of partners effectively utilize tools like **PESTEL analysis** or results-based frameworks to adapt interventions to changing contexts. This limits their ability to track progress and respond dynamically to emerging challenges.
2. **Resource constraints:** Over half of the organizations reported limited access to financial and human resources. This constraint affects their capacity to deliver high-quality services and scale their impact.
3. **Technical capacity:** Some partners lack specialised expertise in areas such as vocational training, market linkage facilitation, and systemic advocacy. This hinders their ability to address complex livelihood and policy challenges faced by refugees and host communities.

### Opportunities for growth

1. **Capacity building:** Structured training programs, peer-to-peer learning and mentorship initiatives are needed to strengthen partners' abilities in M&E, adaptive learning, and technical service delivery.
2. **Resource mobilisation:** Expanding fundraising strategies and exploring public-private partnerships can help partners secure sustainable funding to enhance their programmatic reach.
3. **Collaboration and networking:** Encouraging cross-partner collaboration through shared learning platforms can help disseminate best practices and address capacity disparities across regions.

By addressing these gaps, in-country partners can play a more transformative role in improving refugee-host community outcomes, enhancing both the efficiency and sustainability of the LEAD programme.

## System-Level Outcomes

Uganda has been internationally recognised for its progressive legal framework for refugee inclusion, anchored by the **Refugee Act (2006)** and its alignment with the **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)**. These policies uphold refugees' rights to work, move freely, and access essential services, making Uganda a leader in global refugee response. However, systemic challenges hinder the effective implementation of these frameworks, affecting both refugees and host communities.

### Strengths in policy frameworks

1. **Legal protections:** Refugees in Uganda benefit from legal provisions granting them access to education, healthcare, and employment. These rights enable refugees to participate in the formal economy and contribute to community development.



2. **Refugee-host integration:** Uganda's open-door policy emphasizes social cohesion and shared access to services, fostering peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.

### Challenges in implementation

1. **Underfunded programs:** Despite Uganda's commitments, refugee response plans remain significantly underfunded. This affects service delivery in education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Only a fraction of the funding required for the implementation of CRRF-aligned programs has been mobilized, leading to resource shortages in key sectors.
2. **Vocational training gaps:** Many vocational training centers are outdated, offering limited courses that do not align with market demands. Access to these programs is further hindered by inadequate infrastructure, high costs, and insufficient geographic coverage, leaving many refugees and host community members without viable pathways to economic empowerment.
3. **Access to financial services:** Financial inclusion remains a critical barrier, with refugees facing difficulties in accessing formal banking services and credit. Although mobile money usage is high (89.7%), fewer than 40% of households have access to bank accounts. Systemic barriers such as lack of documentation and limited outreach by financial institutions exacerbate these challenges.
4. **Bureaucratic delays:** Lengthy administrative processes for obtaining work permits, identification, and other documentation hinder refugees' ability to fully participate in the economy. These delays also create bottlenecks in accessing aid and essential services.

### Opportunities for system-level improvements

1. **Policy advocacy:** Strengthening advocacy efforts to increase national and international funding for refugee response plans is critical. Advocacy should also target simplifying bureaucratic processes to improve access to documentation and services.
2. **Public-private partnerships:** Leveraging partnerships with private sector actors can bridge funding gaps, modernize vocational training centers, and expand access to financial services tailored for refugee populations.
3. **Enhanced coordination:** Establishing stronger coordination mechanisms between government agencies, international donors, and implementing partners can improve resource allocation and service delivery.

By addressing these systemic gaps, Uganda can fully realize the potential of its inclusive policies, creating a model for sustainable refugee-host community integration.

## Conclusion

The LEAD baseline survey provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by refugee and host communities in Uganda. Refugee households, which are larger and predominantly headed by women, grapple with systemic inequalities in education, livelihoods, and living conditions. Despite high school enrollment rates, dropout rates remain significant due to barriers such as school fees, child labour, and limited vocational training engagement. Economically, refugees face high unemployment, low incomes, and reliance on temporary work, leading to financial instability and heavy debt burdens.

Uganda's progressive policies, including the Refugee Act (2006) and the CRRF, offer a strong foundation for inclusion, but operational and resource challenges limit their impact. In-country partners demonstrate strengths in community engagement and contextual knowledge, yet gaps in monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive learning require attention. Climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities, with reduced rainfall and declining crop yields affecting food security. However, the adoption of climate-resilient practices shows promise for future sustainability.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires enhanced funding, streamlined policies, stronger partnerships, and capacity building for local actors. By leveraging Uganda's inclusive frameworks and addressing systemic barriers, the LEAD programme can foster lasting improvements in the lives of refugees and host communities, contributing to a model of sustainable and dignified integration.