



# POLICY ANALYSIS SUMMARY

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

## Introduction

Uganda hosts the largest refugee population in Africa and the third largest globally, with over 1.5 million refugees. This situation demands innovative approaches to address the challenges faced by refugees and host communities. The "Local Empowerment and Development for Refugees and Host Communities" (LEAD) project, implemented by Woord en Daad with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeks to enhance systemic changes, gender equality, and inclusive policy advocacy to improve livelihoods and access to services for refugees and hosts.

The **purpose of this policy analysis** is to evaluate Uganda's legal and policy frameworks for addressing the needs of refugees and host communities, with a focus on gender sensitivity, education, economic inclusion, and social protection. Commissioned by Woord en Daad as part of the LEAD project, the analysis aims to identify gaps and opportunities within existing policies to enhance systemic change and equitable development. It seeks to provide actionable recommendations to guide program design and advocacy efforts, ensuring that interventions effectively empower refugees and foster collaboration with host communities for sustainable outcomes.

This document provides a detailed summary of the policy analysis, including key findings, 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 policy analysis employed a qualitative approach to evaluate Uganda's refugee-related policies and frameworks. This involved a comprehensive literature review, stakeholder consultations, and policy appraisal techniques. The methodology was structured as follows:

### 1. Literature review

- An extensive review of national and international legislative frameworks, including Uganda's Refugees Act (2006), Refugee Regulations (2010), and related policies such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).
- Analysis of secondary sources, including government reports, academic studies, and documentation from humanitarian organizations, to map current practices and challenges in refugee integration and support.

### 2. Stakeholder engagement

- Consultations with key stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and refugee representatives, to capture diverse perspectives and ground the findings in local realities.
- Discussions with gender and legal experts to assess the inclusivity of existing frameworks and their implementation gaps.

### 3. Policy appraisal framework

- Deductive content analysis to evaluate the extent to which gender, education, economic inclusion, and social protection are integrated into refugee-related policies.
- Application of Rodenburg's qualitative criteria for assessing the effectiveness of policy instruments, focusing on their capacity to create opportunities and address the specific needs of refugees and host communities.

### 4. Comparative analysis

- Benchmarking Uganda's policies against international standards, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, to assess alignment and identify areas for improvement.

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- Comparative evaluation of Uganda's policy implementation with best practices from other refugee-hosting countries.
- 5. Demographic and contextual analysis**
- Examination of demographic data and settlement statistics to contextualize policy recommendations within Uganda's unique refugee landscape.
  - Integration of gender-disaggregated data to highlight the differential impacts of policies on women, men, boys, and girls.
- 6. Validation of findings**
- Cross-referencing findings with stakeholder inputs to ensure accuracy and relevance.
  - Drafting recommendations based on identified gaps and opportunities for policy enhancement.

This methodology ensured a robust analysis of Uganda's refugee policies, providing evidence-based insights to guide the LEAD project and inform broader advocacy efforts for systemic change.

## Key Findings

### 1. Policy and Legal Frameworks

- Uganda's Refugees Act (2006) and Refugee Regulations (2010) stand out as some of the most progressive refugee legislations globally, granting refugees rights to freedom of movement, access to education, and formal employment. These legal provisions align closely with international standards, including the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, while these frameworks are commendable, their implementation often fails to address practical challenges faced by refugees on the ground.
- Uganda's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) has been instrumental in integrating refugees into national development plans and fostering a whole-of-society approach. Yet, the lack of detailed gender considerations across these frameworks has limited their impact, particularly on addressing the unique needs of vulnerable populations such as women and girls.

### 2. Gender Inclusion

- Despite Uganda's commitments to gender equality through international and national policies, refugee-related policies often inadequately address gender-specific challenges. Women in refugee settlements remain disproportionately vulnerable to gender-based violence, restricted access to resources, and limited representation in decision-making. While gender is mentioned in some policies, there is a lack of actionable strategies or accountability mechanisms to ensure its integration into programming. This shortfall exacerbates existing inequalities and undermines efforts to empower women and foster equitable opportunities.

### 3. Education and Skills Development

Uganda's legal frameworks guarantee refugees access to primary education on par with nationals, and policies such as the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities aim to strengthen educational opportunities. However, gaps in implementation persist, including overcrowded schools, insufficient teaching resources, and hidden fees that hinder access to education, particularly for refugee children. Vocational training and skills development programs are available but often lack adequate infrastructure, tailored curricula, and alignment with labour market needs, limiting their effectiveness in fostering economic independence for refugees.

### 4. Economic Opportunities

While Uganda's policies support refugees' rights to work and establish businesses, practical barriers such as lack of identification documents, limited access to financial services, and discrimination in the formal labor market significantly restrict economic inclusion. The majority of refugees rely on informal employment, which offers limited stability and growth opportunities. Furthermore, financial institutions often perceive refugees as high-risk clients, curbing their access to credit and entrepreneurial support. Despite these challenges, refugees demonstrate potential for entrepreneurship and economic contribution when adequately supported.





## 5. Justice and Social Protection

Refugees face systemic barriers to accessing justice and social protection services. The long distances to courts, limited knowledge of their rights, and high costs of legal representation hinder their ability to seek redress for grievances. Additionally, the lack of legal aid and interpreters exacerbates vulnerabilities, particularly for women and marginalized groups. While Uganda has made strides in integrating refugees into national development plans, social protection schemes often exclude refugees, leaving them without critical safety nets to support their well-being and resilience.

These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and systemic improvements to bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that refugees and host communities can fully realize their rights and opportunities.

## Recommendations

### 1. Enhance gender sensitivity

- Develop comprehensive gender analysis tools: Introduce detailed frameworks and methodologies to systematically assess and address gender disparities in refugee policies and programming.
- Mainstream gender considerations: Ensure gender is integrated across all stages of policy and program design, from planning to implementation and evaluation.
- Empower women and girls: Promote leadership programs, capacity-building initiatives, and access to resources tailored to women and girls in refugee settlements to enhance their participation in decision-making and economic activities.

### 2. Improve education access

- Expand educational infrastructure: Invest in building and equipping schools in refugee settlements and host communities to address overcrowding and ensure safe learning environments.
- Eliminate financial barriers: Remove hidden fees for exams, uniforms, and school materials that disproportionately impact refugee children and hinder access to education.
- Enhance vocational training: Scale up Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs, aligning curricula with market demands and providing targeted support for marginalized groups to develop employable skills..

### 3. Facilitate economic inclusion

- Develop Refugee-Friendly Financial Products: Collaborate with financial institutions to create tailored products, such as micro-loans with flexible repayment terms, to support refugee entrepreneurs.
- Promote Formal Employment Opportunities: Simplify processes for refugees to obtain work permits and recognition of qualifications to enhance their access to formal employment.
- Support Entrepreneurship: Provide seed funding, training, and mentorship for refugee-led businesses and initiatives to foster self-reliance and economic resilience.

### 4. Strengthen legal and social protections

- Introduce Mobile Courts: Expand the use of mobile court systems to bring legal services closer to refugee settlements, addressing barriers such as distance and cost.
- Integrate Traditional Justice Mechanisms: Recognize and support traditional justice systems that align with national laws, promoting accessible and culturally relevant dispute resolution for refugees.
- Expand Social Protection Coverage: Ensure refugees are included in national social protection schemes, such as pensions, grants, and labor-intensive public works, to enhance their resilience and security.

### 5. Promote collaborative approaches

- Foster multi-stakeholder partnerships: Strengthen collaboration between government agencies, humanitarian organizations, private sector actors, and refugee communities to address systemic gaps in policy and practice.
- Align resources and efforts: Encourage coordinated planning and resource allocation among stakeholders to avoid duplication and maximize the impact of interventions.



- Advocate for policy reforms: Build coalitions to engage policymakers and donors in addressing key gaps, such as gender-sensitive programming, financial inclusion, and expanded legal protections.

These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing the critical gaps identified in Uganda's refugee policies and practices, ensuring that both refugees and host communities benefit from sustainable and inclusive development initiatives.

## Conclusion

Uganda has demonstrated remarkable leadership in hosting refugees, setting itself apart with progressive policies such as the Refugees Act of 2006 and the Refugee Regulations of 2010, which provide refugees with substantial rights, including freedom of movement, access to education, and the ability to work. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) further illustrates Uganda's commitment to integrating refugees into national development plans. These efforts have earned Uganda global recognition for its inclusive and forward-thinking approach to refugee management.

However, this policy analysis reveals that significant challenges remain in translating these frameworks into effective, gender-sensitive, and equitable practices on the ground. While the legal provisions exist, their implementation often falls short, particularly in addressing the unique needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. For instance, gender-specific challenges, such as limited access to economic resources and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence, are inadequately addressed in policy and practice. Similarly, systemic barriers, including insufficient infrastructure, hidden education costs, and limited access to justice, continue to hinder refugees' ability to thrive and integrate into host communities.

The analysis also highlights the critical importance of education and economic opportunities in promoting self-reliance among refugees. While legal provisions ensure refugees' right to education and work, gaps in implementation—such as overcrowded schools, inadequate teacher training, and barriers to accessing formal employment—limit the impact of these rights. Additionally, refugees face significant obstacles in accessing financial services and entrepreneurial opportunities, further restricting their potential to contribute meaningfully to Uganda's economy.

Justice and social protection remain key areas of concern, with refugees often facing challenges such as long distances to legal services, language barriers, and limited access to legal aid. These issues underscore the need for innovative solutions, such as mobile courts and the integration of traditional justice mechanisms, to ensure timely and affordable access to justice. Expanding social protection schemes to include refugees is also essential to address their vulnerabilities and support their integration into Ugandan society.

The LEAD project is well-positioned to address these challenges by advocating for systemic change and fostering collaboration between key stakeholders. By leveraging its partnerships and emphasising Southern leadership, the project can drive meaningful progress in enhancing gender equality, expanding educational access, promoting economic inclusion, and ensuring justice for refugees and host communities alike.

Uganda's example demonstrates the potential for refugees to become integral contributors to national development when supported by inclusive and well-implemented policies. With targeted interventions, strengthened implementation, and a commitment to addressing policy gaps, Uganda can continue to lead by example, fostering a future where refugees and host communities collaborate seamlessly for mutual benefit. The findings and recommendations of this policy analysis provide a roadmap for realizing this vision, ensuring that no one is left behind in Uganda's development journey.

