



***THE UGANDA MODEL***  
***and the***  
***UGANDA SOLIDARITY SUMMIT ON REFUGEES***  
***Translating New York Declaration Commitments into Action***

Kampala, Uganda, 22-23 June 2017

**Introduction and Context**

Uganda currently ranks among the top refugee hosting nations in the world and is the largest in Africa. During the second half of 2016 a mass exodus of refugees from South Sudan roughly doubled the population to over one million, making Uganda the leading refugee hosting country in Africa. The trend of refugee flows seems set to continue in the face of recurring cycles of violence and instability in some countries, with no expected resolution in the near future despite efforts by Uganda and regional and international actors. Presently the country hosts refugees from 13 countries including Burundi, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia and South Sudan.

Refugee protection and assistance requirements place inordinate pressures on a country that is grappling with immense needs of its own citizens. Refugee-hosting areas are rendered more vulnerable to poverty and under-development by overwhelming demands on already-stressed resources. Nonetheless, Uganda's refugee laws are among the most progressive in the world.

**The Uganda Model**

The Uganda Refugee Policy<sup>1</sup> is lauded as one of the most generous in the world, has many impressive aspects, including opening its territory to refugees irrespective of nationality or ethnic affiliation and granting them: freedom of movement, land for each refugee family to settle and cultivate, the right to seek employment and establish businesses, access to public services including health and education, and access to travel, identity and other documents.

Uganda's inclusive refugee policy anticipates empowering refugees to become economically self-reliant while granting them many of the same privileges that nationals enjoy. Yet, notwithstanding the contribution refugees make to local economies, refugee-hosting districts face major development and service delivery challenges due to poor infrastructure and lack of investments, which contribute to undermining prospects for meaningful economic and social development.

In order to close this gap, Uganda has established the Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA), a holistic integrated district-level refugee management approach. STA includes refugees in national development plans, taking into account the protracted nature of displacement and the

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<sup>1</sup>As embodied in the 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations.

impact on host communities. It is worth noting that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was negotiated under Uganda's leadership through its Presidency of the UN General Assembly. Uganda was also one of the first countries of the world to align its national development plan<sup>2</sup> to the new agenda, and —through the STA—champions the principle of “Leaving no one Behind”. The STA is supported by both the UN and the World Bank through the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) initiative. The premise of this synergetic cooperation is that when communities recognize that refugees are agents of development who positively contribute to the sustainable development of their district, the refugee asylum space is both strengthened and expanded. Moreover, in the long term refugees will be better prepared to engage as agents of positive transformation as and when durable solutions are realized.

### **The Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees**

At the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York in September 2016, as the General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework ambition, member states pledged to support those countries hardest hit by the refugee crisis.<sup>3</sup>

Uganda is living up to its international obligations to refugees notwithstanding the pressures created by the unprecedented influx. Although it is a role model for the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, it will be difficult for Uganda to continue its progressive policies in the absence of robust support from the international community. This includes maintaining and promoting the asylum space and the acceptance of the host communities, as well as unlocking the potential for sustainable development and a diversified economy in refugee hosting districts.

Uganda is investing significant domestic resources in the protection, management and social integration of refugees. Refugees enjoy security as well as legal, physical and social protection. They utilize natural resources like water and firewood, and share available social services such as health and universal primary and lower secondary education as well as economic opportunities without discrimination. Significantly, the Government has set aside approximately 1,000 square miles of land for refugee use, and more is donated by the community. However, growth in national and refugee populations means that land is scarce. In some areas, sizes of plots allocated to refugees have been reduced to accommodate new arrivals. Meanwhile, there are concerns that the community may become reticent to give up land, its single most valuable resource. The inter-agency refugee response plans in Uganda are chronically and severely underfunded. Consequently the capabilities of humanitarian organizations to provide vital life-saving assistance to refugees and for Government and partners to uphold the progressive approach to refugee management are undermined. As of 1 January 2017, the South Sudan Refugee Response in Uganda was just 40 per cent funded (requiring an additional USD 151.5 million) and the Burundi Refugee Response Plan in Uganda was 33 per cent funded (requiring an additional USD 18.1 million).

Uganda is a beacon of hope and, if well supported, can become a model for how sustainable and inclusive investments in social services and in human capital among refugees can help break the cycle of conflict and build peaceful communities, both in host countries and with time as refugees return to their countries of origin.

The Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees is an opportunity to translate New York Declaration commitments into action for refugees and the communities that host them.

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<sup>2</sup> The Second National Development Plan, NDP II 2015/16-2019/20, [www.npa.go.ug](http://www.npa.go.ug)

<sup>3</sup>The UNGA Resolution (A/RES/71/1) on Refugees and Migrants (the New York Declaration), Leaders' Summit on Refugees.