

# Uganda

## The UNHCR-WFP Joint Hub Country Support Brief

Uganda hosts **more than 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers**, with new arrivals continuing from the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, and South Sudan**. The largest groups originate from **South Sudan (57 percent)** and the **DRC (31 percent)**, with smaller populations from **Somalia, Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Sudan, and Ethiopia**. **Women and children represent 80 percent** of the refugee population (UNHCR, 2024).

Refugees are welcomed, registered, allocated land, and provided with legal documentation. The Government of Uganda supports the **social and economic inclusion** of refugees through access to work and livelihood opportunities to enable greater self-reliance. Despite these efforts, most refugees in Uganda remain **highly vulnerable** and continue to rely on support.

The **scale of the refugee population** and the **wide geographic spread** of refugee settlements, including **13 main settlements across the country** as well as **urban areas in Kampala**, create a complex environment for humanitarian agencies to operate in.

### JOINT HUB SUPPORT

In December 2020, UNHCR and WFP country offices jointly requested support from the Joint Hub to assist with two key areas:

- **Revising the socio-economic and protection vulnerability frameworks to facilitate needs-based prioritization, and**

- **Operationalizing the shift to a needs-based prioritization approach for the delivery of food assistance.**

In response, the Joint Hub has provided various forms of support to the operations in Uganda **from early 2021 to late 2024**. This support has included the **deployment of a staff member** as Joint Hub Country Coordinator for six months in 2022, four **in-country missions**, and ongoing **remote technical assistance**.

Throughout the process, the Joint Hub has contributed to **building the capacity of staff in the country operations** so that monitoring, analysis, and implementation of the targeting approach, as well as future assessments, can continue to be carried out jointly.

### KEY SUPPORT AREAS



Assessment and Analysis



Targeting



Accountability to Affected People



Coordination



Learning

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Joint Hub has led the technical development of a **prioritization approach** for food assistance that reflects the complexity of the context, the availability of data, and the perspectives and feedback provided by the community. The analysis considered economic vulnerability, protection needs, and the extent to which households relied on high-risk coping strategies that increase exposure to protection risks.

With the **Individual Profiling Exercise (IPE)** ongoing, its results were progressively integrated into the prioritization strategy. At each stage, as more data was analyzed and community feedback was gathered, the approach was refined. Following the food ration reductions that affected all refugees until early 2021, the prioritization process evolved through three phases:

### 1. GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITISATION (2021)

Geographic prioritisation was introduced, with ration sizes adjusted according to location based on the overall vulnerability level of each settlement (local market prices, economic opportunities, and agricultural potential). Rations were set at **70 percent in five settlements, 60 percent in three settlements, and 40 percent in five settlements.**

### 2. INDEX-BASED RANKING IN THE LOWEST-RATION SETTLEMENTS (2022)

In the second phase, an index-based ranking system was introduced to identify the most vulnerable households in the settlements that had been receiving the lowest ration level (40 percent in phase 1). This was used as an interim measure while preparations were made for a nationwide shift to household-level prioritization. Approximately one fifth of households, depending on resource availability, were prioritized to receive higher rations (60 percent) to help meet their higher food needs. The ranking was based on a combination of socio-demographic and protection-related variables, including dependency ratio, women and girls at risk, child protection cases, serious medical conditions, disability, and older persons at risk.

### 3. HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL PRIORITISATION ACROSS ALL SETTLEMENTS (2023)

In the third phase, household-level prioritization was implemented in all settlements. This approach combined an updated index-based methodology,

used to identify the most vulnerable households, with categorical criteria that helped identify self-sufficient households who could be phased out of food assistance. The methodology for phase 3 was led by the Country Offices with technical support from the Joint Hub.



Photo: ©WFP/Daisy Masembe

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE (AAP)

From phase 2 onwards, **refugee feedback** informed the design of the household-level prioritization approach, including eligibility criteria, communication methods, and the appeals process. With support from the Joint Hub, both agencies placed strong emphasis on incorporating refugee perspectives and ensuring **regular two-way communication.**

Clear and consistent **messaging in refugees' main languages** was prioritized. Refugees were consulted to identify preferred channels for receiving information and submitting questions, feedback, complaints, and appeals. UNHCR and WFP developed key messages and FAQs for each phase, which were tested for clarity and accessibility, including for illiterate people, people with disabilities, and older persons.

Refugees were informed of their eligibility through anonymized village lists in phase 2 and through SMS messages in phases 2 and 3. Households could also check their status at partner help desks, protection desks, the WFP hotline, or the inter-agency helpline. For highly vulnerable protection cases, staff conducted house visits. Eligibility criteria were not shared directly due to fraud concerns.

A **joint appeals mechanism** was established to enable coordinated receipt, review, and response to appeals. The Joint Hub also supported the creation of an **assistance buffer**, which allowed additional support to be provided to vulnerable households found eligible through the appeals process.



## SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIP AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING

The Joint Hub played a convening role in Uganda and was mostly perceived as a neutral broker by country office and field-level staff, able to maintain dialogue and support partnership to achieve a shared vision for refugees. Throughout the process, the Joint Hub emphasized the importance of close coordination and partnership with the Government of Uganda to improve government buy-in, guidance, and support.

As a result of Joint Hub support, **UNHCR and WFP country offices have both made significant changes** to their ways of working, with increased dialogue and joint activities, as well as staff undertaking a range of new activities and incorporating new tools and approaches in their daily work. One key success is that the country teams have fully taken over the leadership of the process and are actively collaborating on prioritization, implementation and monitoring.

## PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES OF COLLABORATIVE ACTION

- A phased, evidence-based shift from blanket food assistance with reduced rations to a **needs-based prioritization system**, using three vulnerability categories. New arrivals continue to receive **100 percent of the food basket for three months**, followed by higher levels of support for an additional three months.
- **More efficient resource use**, with assistance levels aligned to household vulnerability, which is essential given ongoing funding reductions.
- **Joint resourcing of key positions** required for implementing the prioritisation approach. For example, WFP funded more than 40 case worker positions previously supported by the Joint Hub, and both country offices jointly funded the national Data Analyst position.
- **Protection mainstreamed throughout the process**, with dedicated efforts in community engagement, communication, the joint appeals mechanism, and the management of complaints and feedback.

### Further information:

Joint Hub (2025) [Uganda Learning Review](#)

Joint Hub (2023) [Community Consultation Report, Phase 3 of WFP food assistance prioritisation in Uganda](#)

Reach, WFP and UNHCR (2020) [Uganda Vulnerability and Essential Needs Assessment, Volume 1.](#)

UNHCR and WFP (2023) [Phase 3 of WFP food assistance prioritisation in Uganda: Community consultation report.](#)

UNHCR and WFP (2023) [Lessons on UNHCR-WFP Collaboration on Prioritization of Assistance to Refugees.](#)



Photo: ©WFP/Kibuuka Mukisa

Contact us: [WFP.UNHCR.hub@wfp.org](mailto:WFP.UNHCR.hub@wfp.org)

Learn more: [www.wfp-unhcr-hub.org](http://www.wfp-unhcr-hub.org)