



Reviewing the journey of Self-reliance in the Uganda Refugee Response

Technical brief
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Acronyms

(R)SRI	Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAR	Development Assistance for Refugees
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
DoR	Department of Refugees at OPM
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FLT	Financial Literacy Training
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GRF	Global Refugee Forum
HINGO	Humanitarian International NGO Network
ILO	International Labor Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JLIRP	Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees
LH	Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub
LSRWG	Livelihoods and Self-Reliance Working Group
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
MSD	Market System Development
OPM	Office of Prime Minister
REF	Refugee Engagement Forum
RLOs	Refugee-Led Organizations
SRRG	Self-Reliance Reference Group
SRI	Self-Reliance Index
SRS	Self-Reliance Strategy
STA	Settlement Transformation Agenda
SUPREME	Security, Protection and Economic Empowerment
TVET	Training and Vocational Education
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
U-RIL	Response Innovation Lab Uganda
USE	Uganda Skilling Exchange
VSLAs	Village Saving Loans Associations
VTIs	Vocational Training Institutions
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Refugee actors in Uganda are exploring more developmental approaches to address the long-term challenges faced by refugees. This is in line with global trends of moving to the Humanitarian-Development and Peace Nexus. There is growing interest in self-reliance programming: programmes that promote and strengthen the social and economic ability of displaced and host individuals, households, communities, and systems to meet their basic needs in a sustainable manner. This increased interest paved the way to new initiatives in Uganda and globally. Yet, many questions remain as a broad range of partners operationalise the concept of self-reliance.

This technical brief captures the state of affairs of self-reliance policy and programming in Uganda's refugee response. It analyses evolving trends, highlights questions and concerns, and reflects on ways forward. Ultimately, the goal is to inform and guide key actors (i.e. the government, refugee actors and their partners, donors) in their efforts to formulate, support, and implement effective self-reliance programmes.

Self-reliance: concept and policy approaches

Globally, self-reliance has expanded from a narrow focus on livelihoods to a multi-dimensional approach including economic, legal, and social aspects. In Uganda, the concept has guided refugee policy since 1999, through initiatives like the Self-Reliance Strategy, the Settlement Transformation Agenda, and the CRRF. Despite enabling policies, challenges such as low refugee employment, inadequate land for agricultural production, limited access to education, weak urban assistance and poor integration in Kampala hinder outcomes. Uganda's Refugee Act (2006) rests on four pillars: access to: land, right to work freedom of movement, and access to social services. Translating rights into tangible progress remains difficult.

In 2023, Uganda pledged to increase resilience and self-reliance (among other related pledges) at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the largest international gathering on refugee issues, which it co-convened in Geneva, Switzerland. Ongoing debates caution against using self-reliance as a cost-cutting strategy and call for approaches rooted in refugee agency, dignity, and equity.

Current programmatic practices

In Uganda, the number multi-dimensional self-reliance programmes is growing. Self-reliance programmatic practice in Uganda's refugee response can be grouped in two categories: **1)** Economic livelihood development, and **2)** social, legal, and additional self-reliance interventions.

In Uganda, most self-reliance interventions remain primarily centred on economic livelihoods, particularly agriculture. Recent efforts, seek to diversify into off-farm and non-farm activities like skills development, financial inclusion, and climate-smart approaches. An increasing number of initiatives embrace a more systemic view, linking refugees to markets, technology, and value chains - especially the market systems development approach.

Lessons learned and gaps

Implementing self-reliance: Programmatic approaches that integrate a range of social and economic inclusion components are increasingly recognised as more effective than single-sector interventions. There is growing acknowledgement that self-reliance programming extends beyond individual and household-level interventions and tackles structural barriers through system-level strategies. In Uganda, the multi-dimensional nature of self-reliance programmatic practice is increasingly evident in practice, through approaches like graduation programmes.

Adequate targeting that considers intersectionality with gender, age, social and economic status, disability and other socio-economic and demographic factors is a crucial step in self-reliance programming. In Uganda, different programmes have placed particular emphasis on women, youth, and the very poor. Despite the predominant role of humanitarian actors in self-reliance programmes in Uganda's refugee response, other actors such as private sector actors, national and local governmental authorities, innovation-support actors, development agencies, and civil society actors hold a central position in advancing sustainable and financially viable programmes.

Measuring self-reliance: While self-reliance programming has been ongoing for many years, systematic efforts to rigorously measure and share the impact of these interventions remains limited. However, important efforts to develop self-reliance measurement frameworks are underway both globally and in Uganda.

- **Globally:** In 2020, [RefugePoint](#), the [Women's Refugee Commission](#) and partners from the [Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative \(RSRI\)](#) launched the [Self-Reliance Index \(SRI\)](#) – a global tool that aims to assess and measure how refugee households move towards self-reliance.
- **Uganda:** One of Uganda's GRF pledges in 2023 was to develop a unified government-led measurement framework to assess self-reliance of both refugees and host communities. Since then, the self-reliance reference group (SRRG), under the JLIRP, has developed the minimum standard indicators and the Uganda Self-reliance Index (UG-SRI) to measure refugee self-reliance and determine the minimum livelihood investment package for households.

Financing self-reliance: Traditional short-term and sectoral humanitarian funding streams are not well-suited for long-term multi-dimensional self-reliance programming. The high programmatic costs of self-reliance programming limit their scope and challenge their scalability. To address the interconnected financial and scalability challenges, various directions can be envisaged, including reducing costs; developing a minimum investment package and an associated envelope by the SRRG; leveraging the influence of those already supported to foster organic community growth, including job creation and community-driven projects; adding income-generating streams in programmes; bringing more funding from development actors; and exploring complementary financial channels to diversify funding sources.

Self-reliance and localisations: In Uganda, self-reliance efforts have been led by the national government with the support of international partners. Further structured engagement of refugees and local actors should be pursued to align with Grand Bargain principles. The ongoing parallel work on self-reliance and localisation in the refugee response is an opportunity to create a coherent and inclusive strategic direction for all stakeholders.

1. Introduction

1.1. Situational analysis

The refugee crisis in Uganda is becoming increasingly protracted. In June 2025, the country hosted over 1.9 million refugees.¹ Recognised for one of the most progressive refugee policies in Africa (and the world), Uganda provides a wide range of rights and opportunities to forcibly displaced populations. However, refugees are still facing a vast array of socio-cultural, economic and other challenges that prevent them from fully attaining prosperous, healthy and dignified lives. Additionally, structural challenges in the humanitarian sector — such as decreasing budgets² and competing priorities — have further strained humanitarian assistance programming in Uganda.³

The humanitarian sector increasingly recognises that refugees' dependency on humanitarian aid is neither sustainable nor dignified.⁴ Echoing global trends and moving away from traditionally-siloed humanitarian assistance programmes, response actors in Uganda have been exploring developmental approaches to address the long-term challenges faced by refugees.⁵ In particular, there has been an increased interest in self-reliance programming, i.e. programmes aimed at promoting and strengthening the social and economic ability of displaced and host individuals, households, communities, and systems to meet their essential needs in a sustainable manner.⁶



UNHCR defines self-reliance as "the ability of individuals, households, or communities to meet their essential needs in a sustainable manner and to live with dignity." ⁷

In Uganda, many refugee actors and their partners are increasingly engaged in, and gathering evidence on, self-reliance programming. In 2023 and as a part of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the Government of Uganda pledged to increase programming on resilience and self-reliance for refugees.⁸

This increased interest paved the way to new initiatives in Uganda and globally. Yet, many questions persist or have emerged as a broad range of partners operationalise the concept of self-reliance. The evidence on what it takes to help refugees become and remain self-reliant is neither comprehensive nor conclusive. This gap may hamper efforts to further invest and sustain self-reliance policy and programming.⁹

¹ UNHCR, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/uga> (consulted 9 May 2025).

² The underfunding of the response has been drastically compounded by the suspension of US funding in 2025. Additional information: https://repository.impact-initiatives.org/document/impact/922e002e/REACH_Impact-of-Reduced-Funding_Uganda-brief.pdf

³ Uganda's Refugee Response Plans, which secured only 40% of necessary funding in 2023 and merely 20% as of April 2024; UNHCR. (2023) Funding Update. Available at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/uganda-funding-2023>; UNHCR. (2024) Funding Update. Available at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/uganda-funding-update>.

⁴ Refugee Point, *Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative* (last accessed December 4, 2024), <https://www.refugeepoint.org/our-work/self-reliance-initiative/>.

⁵ Sarah Doyel, "Paragon of 'Self-Reliance': A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda," in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

⁶ For definitions of key terminologies, see Annex 3.

⁷ UNHCR, *Resilience and self-reliance from a protection and solutions perspective*, EC/68/SC/CRP.4, March 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/58ca4f827.pdf>.

⁸ Global Compact on Refugees, *Pledges and Contributions* (last accessed December 4, 2024), <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions>.

⁹ Simar Singh, Solenne Delga, Alli Gillespie, "Refugee Self-Reliance: The State of the Evidence," in *RSRI*, March 2024, <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/blog/state-of-evidence>.

1.2. Objectives of the brief

This technical brief intends to capture the state of affairs on self-reliance policy and programming in Uganda's refugee response. It analyses evolving trends, highlights questions and concerns, and proposes reflections on ways forward. It offers a space of reflection, beyond traditional siloes and between humanitarian, development, innovation, and private sector actors, on future directions of self-reliance programming. Ultimately, the goal is to inform and guide key actors (i.e. the government, refugee actors and their partners, donors) in their efforts to formulate, support, and implement effective self-reliance programmes.

1.3. Background

Self-reliance is one of the strategic learning priorities of the Uganda refugee response Learning Hub (LH). The LH supports the efforts of the Livelihoods and Resilience Sector Working Group (LRSWG), the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Secretariat, and the Secretariat for the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees (JLIRP) to analyse and share evidence. This technical brief builds on these experiences and resources as well as the ongoing self-reliance work of other refugee response actors.

Box 1: Enablers and barriers of self-reliance.

This brief does not review structural and contextual enablers and barriers of self-reliance, which have been reviewed elsewhere

- For enablers in the Uganda policy framework as well as some barriers, including some persisting ones, identified since the 2000s, see section 2.
- For a review of the livelihoods-specific barriers and enablers, see U-Learn, 2023: The Realities of Self-Reliance Within the Ugandan Refugee Context (Assessment Report¹⁰ and Research Brief¹¹).
- RefugePoint and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) collaborated to produce a worldwide knowledge-mapping and assessment of available research and evidence relating to self-reliance for refugees which summarizes "what works and what does not" for different contexts and populations.¹²

Following this introduction (part 1): this technical brief first examines self-reliance concept and policy approaches both globally and in Uganda, including critiques of the concept (part 2). It then presents the state of affairs of self-reliance programming in Uganda's refugee response (part 3) before analysing lessons learned, including good practices, challenges, and gaps (part 4). It then ends with short recommendations addressing key challenges (part 5). For scope and methodology, see 6.1 and definitions of key terminologies, see Annex 6.2.

¹⁰ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/the-realities-of-self-reliance-within-the-ugandan-refugee-context/>

¹¹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/the-realities-of-self-reliance-within-the-ugandan-refugee-context-2/>

¹² <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/evidence-review>

2. Self-reliance: concept and policy approaches

2.1. Global perspectives

Historically, self-reliance has been related to the idea of reducing the role of the government in providing social welfare and attributing the responsibility of solving social problems to individuals.¹³ The concept became mainstreamed into the international refugee approaches in the early 2000s. This shift departed from conventional forms of humanitarian relief providing free material aid towards more developmental approaches.¹⁴ In the Handbook for Self-Reliance, UNHCR (2005) states that self-reliance is a pathway to “durable solutions” for refugees and should be promoted across all phases of refugee assistance,¹⁵ a position widely shared across institutions. Over the past 15 years, self-reliance has become a global goal in refugee responses. It is one of the four key objectives of the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, a global framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing and sustainable refugee responses.¹⁶

However, the concept of self-reliance is not new. Self-reliance policy references on refugees date back to the 1950s. The multidimensional concept of self-reliance has evolved and gone through three notable phases:¹⁷

1. First, the primary focus was placed on economic opportunities; self-reliance programming was equated with livelihoods programming.
2. More considerations were then given to the social and legal dimensions of self-reliance, in alignment with the 2005 UNHCR definition.
3. Today, there is a growing consensus that the economic dimension of self-reliance, while central to the concept, is only one component of a more complex multidimensional approach that aims to sustainably meet refugees’ basic needs.¹⁸ It includes individual and community-level components of protection, as well as system-level dimensions around legal policy and advocacy

¹³ Naohiko Omata, “The role of developmental ‘buzzwords’ in the international refugee regime: Self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion,” *World Development*, Volume 167, July 2023, 106248, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000669#b0410>.

¹⁴ Naohiko Omata, “The role of developmental ‘buzzwords’ in the international refugee regime: Self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion,” *World Development*, Volume 167, July 2023, 106248, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000669#b0410>; Sarah Doyel, “Paragon of ‘Self-Reliance’: A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda,” in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Handbook for Self-Reliance*, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/handbook-self-reliance#:~:text=The%20Handbook%20for%20Self%2DReliance,torn%20homelands%20once%20they%20return.>

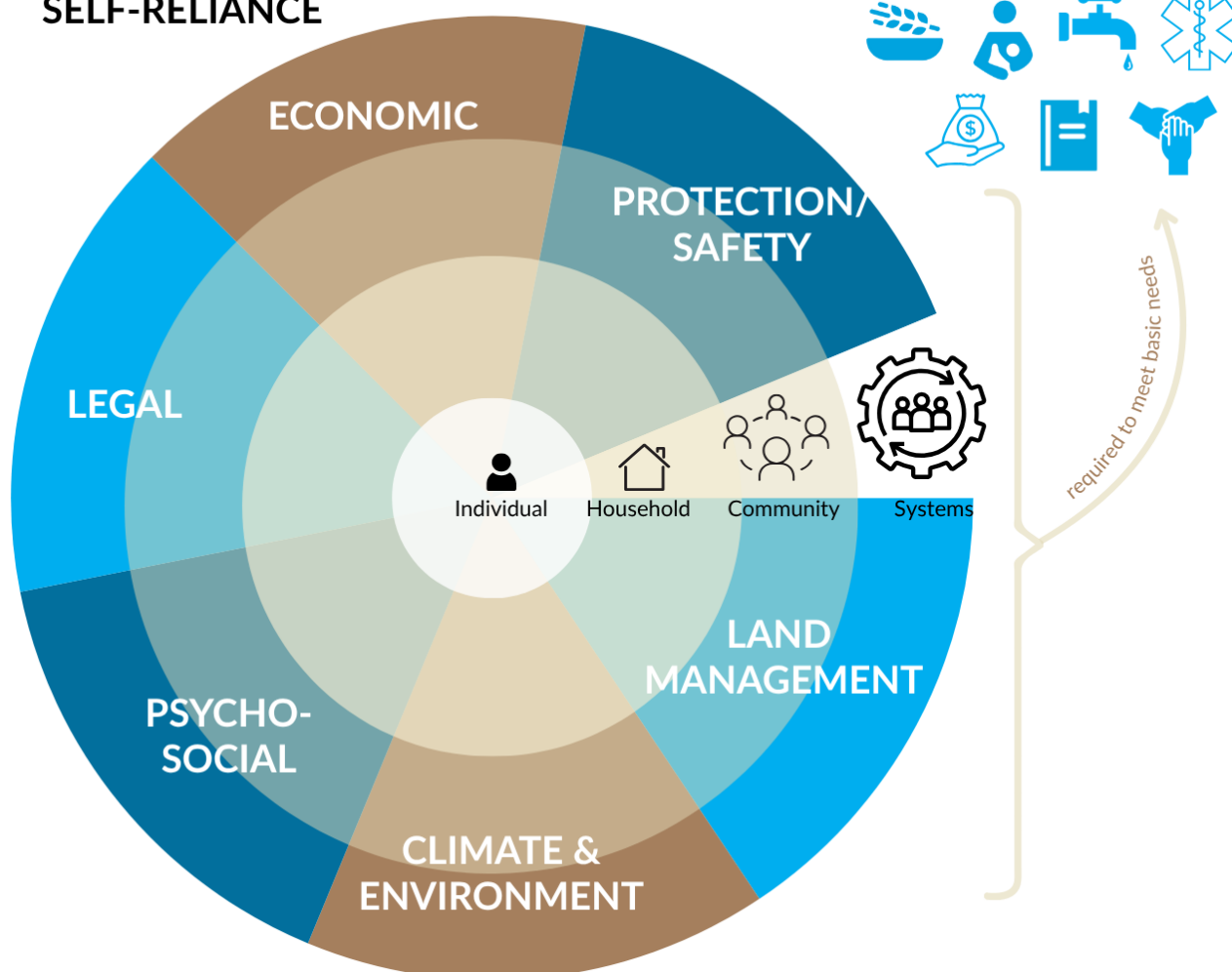
¹⁶ UNHCR, *Global Compact on Refugees* (last accessed December 4, 2024), <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees>.

¹⁷ Solenne Delga, Simar Singh, Camille Strauss-Kahn & Rachel Furlow, “Self-Reliance Evidence Review: Defining Self-Reliance,” in *Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative*, Danish Refugee Council, RefugePoint, 2022, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/649384155bf3162e720ac75c/1687389226701/SRER_Defining+Self-Reliance_final.pdf.

¹⁸ Sarah Meyer, “The ‘refugee aid and development’ approach in Uganda: empowerment and self-reliance of refugees in practice,” *UNHCR/University of Oxford*, Research Paper No. 131, 2006, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242187022_The_'refugee_aid_and_development'_approach_in_Uganda_empowerment_and_self-reliance_of_refugees_in_practice.

Figure 1: U-Learn representation of the multidimensional concept of self-reliance

6 DIMENSIONS OF SELF-RELIANCE



2.2. Ugandan perspectives on self-reliance

The policy and programmatic evolution of the self-reliance concept in Uganda echoes global developments but with a persisting focus on the economic dimension.¹⁹

Historical overview

Uganda's self-reliance policy for refugees began in 1999 with the Self-Reliance Strategy for refugee hosting areas (SRS)²⁰, aimed at enabling both refugees and host communities to support themselves through integrated services. The land allocation to refugees led to self-sufficiency, while access to education and health services improved.²¹ However, challenges persisted including poor engagement of development partners, limited integration into national and district development plans, weak local capacity, and poor connections with UNHCR.²²

¹⁹ Sarah Doyel, "Paragon of 'Self-Reliance': A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda," in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

²⁰ Government of Uganda and UNHCR, *Self-Reliance Strategy (1999 – 2003) For Refugee Hosting Areas in Moyo, Arua and Adjumani Districts, Uganda. Report of the Mid-term Review*, April 2004, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/media/self-reliance-strategy-1999-2003-refugee-hosting-areas-moyo-arua-and-adjumani-districts>.

²¹ Government of Uganda and UNHCR, *Self-Reliance Strategy (1999 – 2003) For Refugee Hosting Areas in Moyo, Arua and Adjumani Districts, Uganda. Report of the Mid-term Review*, April 2004, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/media/self-reliance-strategy-1999-2003-refugee-hosting-areas-moyo-arua-and-adjumani-districts>.

²² UNHCR, *Handbook for Planning and Implementing Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) programmes*, January 2005, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/428076704.pdf>.

In 2003, the SRS was replaced by the Development Assistance for Refugee-Hosting Areas (DAR) policy, which focused on increasing the capacity of local actors. However, movement-restricting regulations limited refugees' opportunities.²³

The 2006 Refugee Act eased these restrictions, granting refugees the right to work, freedom of movement, and access to services. The 2010 Refugee Regulations provided a framework for its implementation.

In 2015, the Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA I) (2016-2021) aimed to achieve self-reliance for refugees and attain social development for Ugandan nationals by prioritizing sustainable livelihoods, governance, and infrastructure development in refugee-hosting areas.²⁴

In 2017, Uganda adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), focusing on self-reliance and long-term solutions and advocating for the local integration of refugees into national development plans,²⁵ supported by a National Action Plan (2018-2020).²⁶

The Strategic Direction (2021-2025) sought to mainstream the CRRF into national planning, foster partnerships, and ensure international responsibility-sharing for refugee support.²⁷

More recently, in 2023, Uganda released the STA II to further operationalize self-reliance and promote social development in refugee hosting districts.

Since 2023 the Office of the Prime Minister is developing a new National Refugee Policy aimed to harmonize and streamline various legal and administrative frameworks. The policy currently under development may further shape the discussion on programmatic approaches for self-reliance.

²³ Lucy Hovil, "Uganda's refugee policies: The history, the politics, the way forward," in *International Refugee Initiative*, October 2018, <http://refugee-rights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/IRRI-Uganda-policy-paper-October-2018-Paper.pdf>.

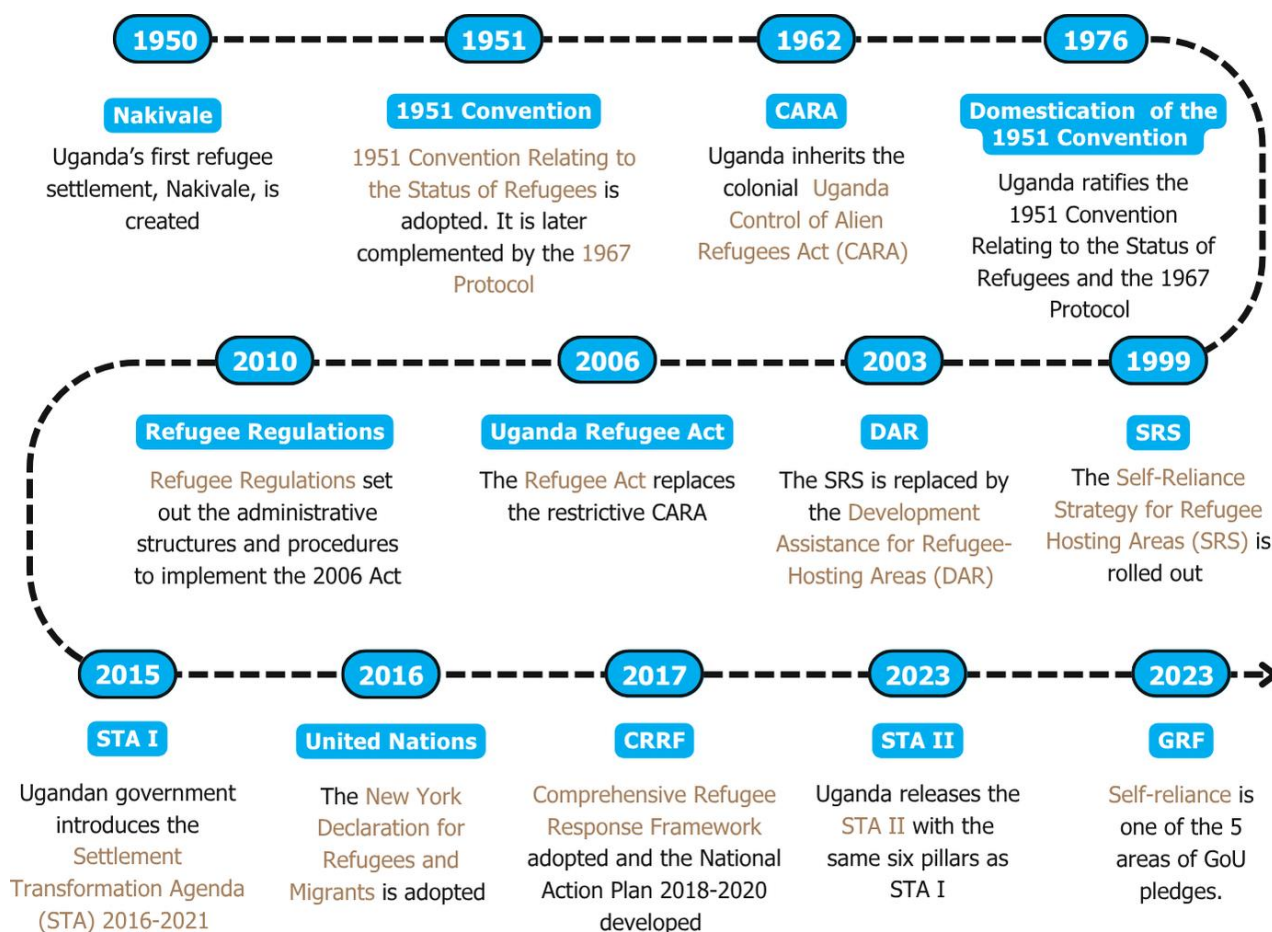
²⁴ UNHCR, *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: The Ugandan Model*, 2018, <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Case%20study-%20comprehensive%20refugee%20response%20model%20in%20Uganda%282018%29.pdf>.

²⁵ https://www.eqmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

²⁶ Office of the Prime Minister, *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Uganda* (Last accessed December 4, 2024), <https://opm.go.ug/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-uganda>.

²⁷ Office of the Prime Minister, IMPACT and GIZ, *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in Uganda. Evaluation Report*, March 2022, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94044>.

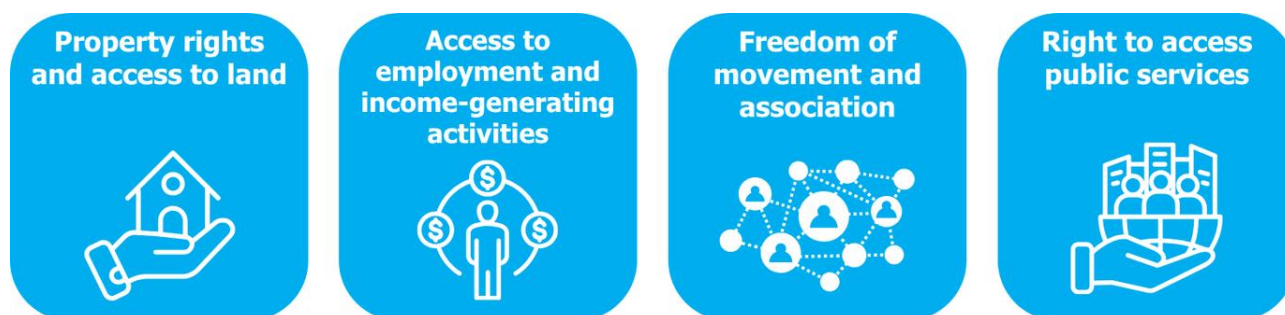
Figure 2: Timeline with key policies related to refugees in Uganda



The four pillars of self-reliance policy in Uganda and their limitations

In sum, Uganda's current refugee policy framework was shaped by an early emphasis on self-reliance resulting in what many observers have described as a unique and progressive approach.²⁸ Refugees benefit from a combination of rights and opportunities that can promote their self-reliance including the right to land and property through a settlement-based approach; the right to work and employment; freedom of movement; and access to health, education and other national services.

Figure 3: Four pillars of self-reliance policy in Uganda



²⁸ Alexander Betts, et al, *Refugee Economies in Uganda: What Difference Does the Self-Reliance Model Make?*, Oxford Refugee Studies Center, 2019, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/refugee-economies-in-uganda-what-difference-does-the-self-reliance-model-make>.

1. Property rights and access to land:

Uganda has promoted self-reliance among refugees through land allocation since 1950. Nevertheless, the land allocation model faces several challenges. Since 2016, the refugee population has increased by 217%. As a result, both the quality and quantity of land accessible to refugees has decreased over the years. Many refugees lack access to sufficient land, while others deal with infertile plots and the harmful effects of climate change and environmental degradation.²⁹ As such, there is increasing recognition that access to land alone is not sufficient to advance self-reliance.

Box 2: Settlement system vs. camp-based system

Village-style settlements in Uganda offer more opportunities to refugees than enclosed camps. Although it still heavily relies on humanitarian assistance, the settlement system enables refugees to support themselves more effectively, promoting dignity, feelings of confidence, and connections with host communities. The often rural and remote nature of settlements, however, requires further development of basic services for nationals and refugees.

2.. Access to employment and income-generating activities:

The 2006 Refugee Act stipulates that refugees “receive at least the same treatment accorded to aliens generally in similar circumstances [...]”. However, this standard creates a barrier for refugees as they must obtain work permits like other foreigners. Only 29% of refugees in Uganda are actively working compared to 64% of host community members.³⁰ Refugees face challenges in the formal labour market, including acquiring work-related documentation (e.g. work permits), lack of awareness on their rights, limited employment opportunities, and prejudicial treatment favouring nationals. Refugees thus seek work in the informal sector where they have limited or no rights.

3.. Freedom of movement and association:

The 2006 Refugee Act stipulates that refugees are entitled to free movement in Uganda. This mobility enables them to pursue livelihood opportunities and other services outside their settlements. Yet, their freedom of movement is limited by high transportation costs, or poor connectivity between settlements and markets/urban centres.

4.. Right to access public services:

The Uganda model encourages integrated social service provision, health and education, as well as market access for refugees. However, barriers to education — especially vocational training education — remain.³¹

Access to employment and freedom of movement significantly positively influence refugees’ welfare. Refugees benefit from greater mobility, higher incomes, lower transaction costs for economic activity, and potentially more sustainable sources of employment compared to refugees in other settings. However, despite Uganda's efforts to economically integrate refugees, outcomes have been only partially successful, as demonstrated by low refugee employment, inadequate land for agricultural production, limited access to education, and weak urban assistance and integration in Kampala.³² In 2018, refugee poverty stood at

²⁹ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

³⁰ UNHCR, *Uganda knowledge brief using socioeconomic data to promote employment solutions for refugees in Uganda*, July 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88388>.

³¹ Alexander Betts et.al. “Uganda Self-Reliance Model: Does it Work?” Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre, Research in Brief 11, January 2019, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/research-in-brief-ugandas-self-reliance-model-does-it-work/@download/file>.

³² *Ibid* + Sarah Doyel, “Paragon of ‘Self-Reliance’: A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda,” in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

46%, nearly three times that of host communities, with 54% of refugees still relying primarily on aid.³³ According to the 2021 JLIRP, "Uganda's progressive policies and decades-long strategies of promoting refugee self-reliance have not been effective and sufficient in improving the social, economic and financial inclusion of refugees and host communities."³⁴

2.3. Current self-reliance policy efforts in Uganda

Until recently, there was no coordination mechanism dedicated to self-reliance in the Uganda refugee response architecture. Since 2019, the Livelihoods and Resilience Sector Working Group (LRSWG) has been working to "enhance [the] coordination and operational effectiveness of livelihood programming." In May 2022, the LRSWG developed its Livelihoods and Resilience Sector Strategy for the Refugee Response Plan 2022-2025.³⁵ This group plays an important role in the coordination of self-reliance efforts, albeit with a strong livelihoods lens.

Between 2023 and 2025, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development (MGLSD), CRRF Secretariat, the Livelihoods and Resilience Sector Working Group (LSRWG) and partners have worked to standardise self-reliance interventions and their measurement in the refugee response. The Self-Reliance Reference Group (SRRG) was formed under the JLIRP in August 2023 under the leadership of the CRRF Secretariat and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The SRRG is co-chaired by the World Food Programme (WFP), and it is composed of over 30 representatives from government ministries, departments and agencies as well as humanitarian and development partners. It was tasked with developing government minimum standard indicators and Uganda Self-reliance Index (UG-SRI) to measure self-reliance levels of refugee and host community households in Uganda.

In 2023, Uganda co-convened the most recent Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the largest international gathering on refugee issues, where various cross-cutting pledges were agreed upon by different governmental actors under five thematic areas (see Table 1 below).³⁶ Table 1 shows that several pledges relate to self-reliance even though only the first one is labelled as such. For example, climate change actions have a direct impact on livelihood options and outcomes, and as a result, on self-reliance outcomes. Similarly, localisation relates to self-reliance as it highlights the importance of local leadership in advancing more sustainable solutions for refugees.³⁷ Likewise, durable solution pathways are linked to self-reliance as they create agency, enabling refugees to make informed decisions about their futures.

Pledges in the self-reliance category essentially focus on livelihoods, whereas other categories touch upon non-economic aspects of self-reliance. There is no direct governmental pledge on the social and legal aspects of self-reliance such as promoting social capital or social cohesion or increasing refugees' awareness of their rights.³⁸

³³ Aziz Atamanov Johannes Hoogeveen Benjamin Reese, "The Costs Come before the Benefits Why Donors Should Invest More in Refugee Autonomy in Uganda," in *World Bank Group Poverty and Equity Global Practice*, Policy Research Working Paper 10679, January 2024,

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>.

³⁴ Sarah Doyel, "Paragon of 'Self-Reliance': A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda," in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

³⁵ U-Learn, Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper, May 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/agricultural-value-chains-strategic-positioning-paper/>.

³⁶ The Government of Uganda, *Global Refugee Forum; Pledges by the Government of Uganda*, 2023.

https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/final_pledges_-_global_refugee_forum_2023.pdf

³⁷ The Government of Uganda, *Global Refugee Forum; Pledges by the Government of Uganda*, 2023.

https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/final_pledges_-_global_refugee_forum_2023.pdf

³⁸ The Government of Uganda, *Global Refugee Forum; Pledges by the Government of Uganda*, 2023.

https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/final_pledges_-_global_refugee_forum_2023.pdf.

While self-reliance is widely promoted in refugee policy, including by the Government of Uganda and its partners, global evidence highlights several implementation challenges. This brief presents some of the ongoing debates around self-reliance to further inform the collective reflection: (i) self-reliance, responsibility and power asymmetries and (ii) self-reliance and global geopolitical interests.

Self-reliance, responsibility and power asymmetries

A synthesis of development studies articles was published in the peer reviewed journal *World Development*. It highlights that the growing emphasis on self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion in refugee policy reflects a broader trend toward neoliberal approaches in the humanitarian sector,⁴¹ with a shift from collective welfare and rights-based principles toward market-oriented solutions and individual responsibility.⁴² From this perspective, self-reliance justifies reducing long-term humanitarian obligations of international actors, functioning as an “exit strategy” in response to gaps in funding and durable solutions.⁴³

A 2024 World Bank paper on the costs and benefits of investing in refugee autonomy in Uganda shows that the shortfall in international burden-sharing may result in elevated levels of poverty among refugees, with observed household consumption reported to fall below the international poverty threshold.⁴⁴ Reductions in material support for refugees have increased precarity, undermining rather than supporting their autonomy.⁴⁵ For example, it has been argued that World Food Programme’s (WFP) aid prioritisations and reduction since 2021 — driven by the promotion of self-reliance but also funding shortfalls — pushed refugees into greater hardship.⁴⁶ Several have pointed out the negative effects of ration reduction on refugees’ food security and resilience⁴⁷ and at the resulting harmful coping mechanisms.⁴⁸ This is of particular importance considering that following the suspension of US funding in 2025, the WFP has been forced to make further cuts and suspend food assistance for over 1 million refugees in Uganda, while others have experienced up to 80% reductions in their rations.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Bhagat, 2020, Korosteleva, 2020, Omata, 2017, Evans and Reid, 2013 in Naohiko Omata, “The role of developmental ‘buzzwords’ in the international refugee regime: Self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion,” *World Development*, Volume 167, July 2023, 106248, at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000669#b0410>.

⁴² Naohiko Omata, “The role of developmental ‘buzzwords’ in the international refugee regime: Self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion,” *World Development*, Volume 167, July 2023, 106248, at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000669#b0410>; Sarah Doyel, “Paragon of ‘Self-Reliance’: A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda,” in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

⁴³ Naohiko Omata, “The role of developmental ‘buzzwords’ in the international refugee regime: Self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion,” *World Development*, Volume 167, July 2023, 106248, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000669#b0410>.
+ Easton-Calabria 2020; Easton-Calabria & Omata 2018; Hunter 2009 in Sarah Doyel, “Paragon of ‘Self-Reliance’: A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda,” in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

⁴⁴ <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/wbkwbrwps/10679.htm>.

⁴⁵ Dryden-Peterson & Hovil 2004; Hovil 2007, 2018; Hunter 2009; Kaiser 2005, 2006, 2008; Meyer 2006; Oliver & Boyle 2019 in Sarah Doyel, “Paragon of ‘Self-Reliance’: A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda,” in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

⁴⁶ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>; https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

⁴⁷ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

⁴⁸ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf; <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2023/12/15/exclusive-investigation-wfp-food-aid-revamp-gone-wrong-refugees-uganda>.

⁴⁹ WFP Uganda social media in The Guardian, 8 May 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/may/08/trump-aid-cuts-halts-food-supplies-million-refugees-uganda-repatriation-fears-un> accessed 13 June 2025.

The same World Bank paper highlights that the transfer of responsibility to refugees and host communities - without adequate support - may have exacerbated tensions between refugees and host communities, who end up competing in already restrained economic markets.⁵⁰ For example, refugees and hosts in Nakivale Refugee Settlement often undertake the same economic activities (e.g. growing similar crops), leading to a greater perception of competition between host and refugee communities.⁵¹ These dynamics have reinforced calls for inclusive planning and more equitable resource distribution.

Finally, depending on how it is communicated and approached, the self-reliance concept itself, may or may not contribute to the perpetuation of power asymmetries in the global governance system. Framing refugees through narratives of dependency and responsibility, rather than rights and autonomy⁵² is not neutral: it ignores structural constraints they face and minimises the importance of international solidarity in overcoming barriers to self-reliance. An alternative is to ground self-reliance in refugee agency and dignity and highlight the importance of international humanitarian aid in achieving and sustaining self-reliance.

Self-reliance and global geopolitical interests

Analysts applying a sociological theory model have noted that the growing emphasis on self-reliance in refugee policy can reflect broader geopolitical interests. In particular, they argue that linking refugee assistance to development agendas in host countries — while it could offer important opportunities — may also align with the interests of some high-income countries aiming to limit refugee movement towards their own borders.⁵³ This underscores the importance of ensuring that self-reliance policies remain rooted in the rights and aspirations of refugees themselves, and that host countries receive adequate international support for the responsibilities they take on.

Mitigating these concerns

These perspectives underscore the importance of adapting self-reliance strategies to local realities, ensuring equitable access to services, and combining policy ambition with adequate resource allocation. Some analysts and practitioners have advocated for different applications of self-reliance approaches,⁵⁴ including, for example, expanding local markets and generating economic demand for both refugees and host communities or shifting to demand-side strategies. This can promote private sector growth and investment in infrastructure to create employment, as opposed to supply-side interventions like vocational training and microfinance which are only effective when local economies have adequate job opportunities.⁵⁵ This brief highlights the approach that is increasingly being prioritised in Uganda.

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<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>

51 UNHCR, UN Habitat, *Nakivale Settlement Profile*, July 2020, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83311>.

52 Sarah Doyel, "Paragon of 'Self-Reliance': A Critical Analysis of Refugee Policy Narratives in Uganda," in *New Sociological Perspectives*, Vol.2 Issue 1, 2022, <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

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<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>; Chimni 2009: 12; see also Chimni 1998 in <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

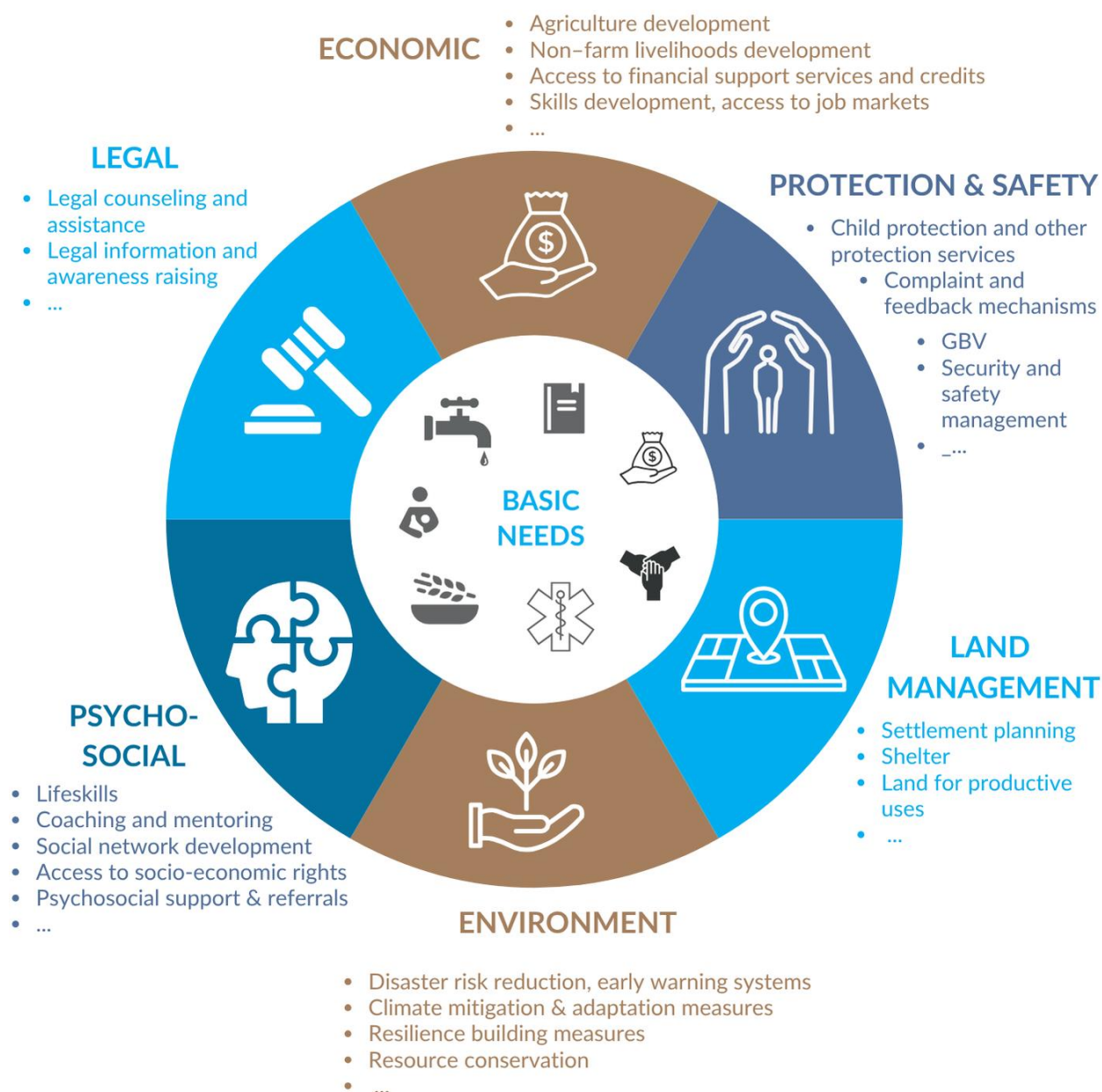
54 https://www.eqmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

55 Naohiko Omata, "The role of developmental 'buzzwords' in the international refugee regime: Self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion," *World Development*, Volume 167, July 2023, 106248, at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X23000669#b0410>.

3. Overview of current self-reliance programmatic practice in Uganda's refugee response

Although Uganda's policy framework and response coordination structures for self-reliance are still primarily focused on livelihoods — albeit with some links to interconnected themes — the multidimensional nature of self-reliance programming has been recognised as an ideal direction and good practice globally.⁵⁶ In fact, in Uganda, a growing number of multidimensional self-reliance programmes are emerging. This section groups self-reliance programmatic practice in Uganda's refugee response into two categories: 1) Economic livelihood development, and 2) social, legal, and additional self-reliance interventions.

Figure 4: Overview of self-reliance programming in Uganda by dimension



⁵⁶ RSRI State of evidence, *Supranote* 6.

3.1. Economic livelihood development

Globally, economic livelihood development refers to activities that focus on diversifying livelihood strategies, creating alternative income-generating activities, providing financial services, and strengthening markets.⁵⁷

Like the concept of self-reliance itself, the economic dimension of self-reliance has evolved over time. Initially tied to self-sufficiency and meeting basic needs — particularly through nutrition and food security programmes — self-reliance programming shifted towards a focus on livelihoods and income generation. Today, there is growing recognition that livelihood interventions alone are not sufficient to achieve self-reliance. As a result, economic self-reliance programming now includes broader strategies such as financial inclusion.

Not all livelihood interventions are conducive to self-reliance. Short-term or one-off interventions, such as the distribution of agricultural inputs or vocational trainings that are not linked to market demand, may have limited long-term impact. These approaches often fail to address structural barriers like limited access to land, low capital, or employment markets, and can result in limited or unsustainable income generation. According to the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI), holistic market-based interventions aimed at providing decent, sustainable and diversified livelihoods are more effective in supporting self-reliance.⁵⁸

In Uganda, five main types of economic livelihood development programmes with a self-reliance objective can be identified:

1. Agriculture development;
2. Off-farm development;
3. Access to financial support services and credits;
4. Skills development, access to job markets - including entrepreneurship and innovation;
5. Examples of holistic livelihoods programs.

Most of the time, these categories are interlaced; programmes increasingly embrace systemic approaches that address interconnected aspects of economic self-reliance.

Figure 5: Five main types of economic livelihood development programmes with a self-reliance objective in Uganda



⁵⁷ UNOPS, *Lives in Dignity Grant Facility, Strategy 2020-2025*, December 2021, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/livesindignity_grant_facility_strategy_updated_dec_2021_en.pdf.

⁵⁸ Simar Singh, Solenne Delga, Alli Gillespie, "Refugee Self-Reliance: The State of the Evidence," in *RSRI*, March 2024, <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/blog/state-of-evidence>.



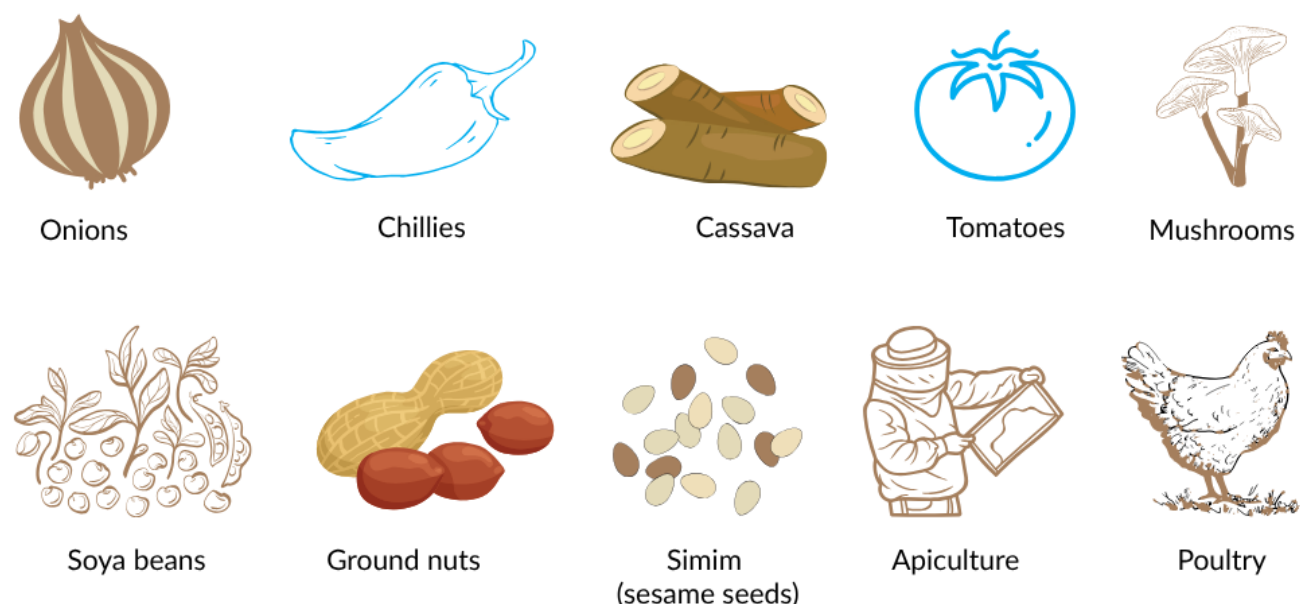
Agriculture for self-reliance

Farming is the primary source of livelihood for refugees living in settlements.⁵⁹ However, most refugees lack access to knowledge, tools, and technologies to move beyond subsistence production and generate income.⁶⁰ Agriculture-related interventions with a self-reliance objective, seek to create jobs and generate income. In other words, they are moving away from focusing exclusively on value chains that are beneficial for food security to include those that can bolster income-generation.

Value chain diversification

An increasing number of programmes are prioritising value chains that are likely to increase farmers' income - such as chilies, simsim (sesame seeds), poultry, soya beans, onions and other horticulture value chains, apiculture and more.⁶¹ Activities include: uptake of improved varieties and quality inputs; promotion of refugees' access to capital; access to new technologies; improvement in value chain governance to support off-taking, value addition at local level and marketing for value chains; access to post-harvest equipment and expertise; and creation of aggregation/bulking centres.⁶² Resilience-oriented agriculture programmes have also focused on improving post-harvest techniques and outcomes, including processing options to diversify commercial opportunities. For example, efforts have been made to advance production and processing of value chains such as cassava by facilitating new or improved marketing channels for products, such as chips, in Uganda and neighbouring countries.⁶³

Figure 6: Value chains prioritised by the LRSWG in 2023 for the Uganda refugee response⁶⁴



⁵⁹ Nicholas Crawford, Kerrie Holloway and Christina Lowe, "The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. Progress in Uganda," in *Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI*, September 2019, <https://odi.org/documents/6065/12936.pdf>.

⁶⁰ FAO and OPM, *Food security, resilience and well-being: analysis of refugees and host communities in Northern Uganda*, FAO resilience analysis report No. 19, 2018, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/48857cf3-a056-45c5-a031-d33aa776ab85>.

⁶¹ U-Learn, *Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper*, May 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/agricultural-value-chains-strategic-positioning-paper/>.

⁶² U-Learn, *Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper*, May 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/agricultural-value-chains-strategic-positioning-paper/>.

⁶³ U-Learn, *Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper*, May 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/agricultural-value-chains-strategic-positioning-paper/>.

⁶⁴ U-Learn, *Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper*, May 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/agricultural-value-chains-strategic-positioning-paper/>.

Capacity-building and extension activities

Agriculture programmes include training to reinforce farmer to farmer knowledge and know-how in more sustainable, resilient, productive, and commercially oriented agriculture practices; they also strengthening skills needed to identify and address market demands. This may include training on post-harvest techniques and processing (e.g. grinding maize flour). In addition, some programmes embrace a more systemic approach by targeting extension services in refugee-hosting areas to institutionalises knowledge and expertise.

Material asset transfer

Many programmes (e.g. under the graduation approach, see

Box 7) include the transfer of material assets such as livestock or agricultural equipment to help participants kick-start their work, especially if geared towards self-employment.⁶⁵

Linkages to agricultural markets

Agriculture programmes aimed at promoting self-reliance also seek to address the numerous barriers farmers face in accessing markets, such as limited market information and understanding, physical obstacles like inadequate transportation and road infrastructure, weak engagement from the private sector, and consequently, farmers' limited negotiating power and capacity.⁶⁶ The International Labor Organization (ILO) emphasizes that sustainable livelihoods for refugees are best achieved by advancing market-based interventions that strengthen market linkages with host communities and leveraging exportable services and value chains to access national and regional markets. However, many interventions for job creation in the refugee hosting areas still focus on the supply-side development (e.g. training people) as opposed to the demand-side (e.g. what and where the markets need bolstering exports).^{67,68}

Examples of market linkage activities include:⁶⁹

- Assisting producers in improving their market linkages and expanding the range of buyers for their harvests

⁶⁵ Example: Early Childhood and Graduation Programming 2022-2025, Imvepi Refugee Settlement, Odupi Sub- County, Terego District, West Nile, funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and implemented by BRAC.

⁶⁶ U-Learn, *Value Chain Assessments in Refugee Hosting Districts in Uganda – A desk review*, November 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/value-chain-assessments-in-refugee-hosting-districts-in-uganda-a-desk-review/>.

⁶⁷ ILO, *Rapid Market Assessment of Five Value Chains in Nakivale Refugee Settlement and Host Community Isingiro District*, August 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/rapid-market-assessment-five-value-chains-nakivale-refugee-settlement-and-host-community-isingiro-district-august-2022>.

⁶⁸ MSD programmes are different, focusing on both supply and demand as per section e).

⁶⁹ U-Learn, *Value Chain Assessments in Refugee Hosting Districts in Uganda – A desk review*, November 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/value-chain-assessments-in-refugee-hosting-districts-in-uganda-a-desk-review/>.

- Improving communication between value chain actors by helping to establish multi-stakeholder platforms;
- Strengthening contractual relationships between buyers and producers, particularly through cooperatives, aggregation centres, or aggregation agreements with buyers. For example, Feed the Future suggests increasing contracts through cooperatives with businesses for production, sale, and export of products or facilitating linkages with bulk producer buyers such as the WFP. Another example is the AVSI's Sustainable Market Inclusive Livelihood pathways to Self-Reliance (SMILES) project which partners with national agri-input suppliers and buyers to expand the commercial potential of refugee and host community farmers in value chains such as maize, beans, and horticulture;⁷⁰
- Designing risk guarantee mechanisms or co-financing to incentivise private sector actors to invest in refugees hosting areas;⁷¹
- Enhancing cross-border trade relationships by formalising farmer's cooperatives;
- Advocating for local governments and partners to improve the road network to connect communities and markets.

Box 3: Spotlight: Asili agriculture⁷²

Asili is the biggest maize and soybean producer in East Africa. It supports refugees in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, collaborating with smallholder farmers as both customers and suppliers. The Kiryandongo cluster is one of Asili's highest-performing clusters, with a sizeable portion of its purchases from refugee farmers supplying WFP with grain. As a result, Asili sees a lot of potential to expand its partnership with refugee farmers into other parts of the country.⁷³

Access to technologies and innovation

Agricultural support programmes increasingly seek to maximize technologies and innovations to tackle challenges farmers face, including climate change, improve agricultural techniques, and/or accelerate post-harvest and processing techniques to optimize agricultural productivity (e.g. facilitation of greenhouse technologies, irrigation).

Climate resilience

The interconnections between self-reliance and climate change have become increasingly evident in Uganda's refugee response.⁷⁴ As such, an increasing number of agriculture programmes include a climate change component, for example, by:

- Promoting climate smart agriculture (CSA) techniques or methods that can prevent, mitigate, and/or address the negative impact of climate change on agricultural practices and outputs;;
- Investing in early climate disaster warning systems to avoid or reduce the damages caused by climate hazards;;

⁷⁰ U-Learn, *Graduation Compendium: Building a Common understanding of Graduation Programmes in the Uganda Refugee Response*, August 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>; U-Learn, *Market Systems Development (MSD) in the Uganda Refugee Response: A compendium of programmes using the MSD approach in Uganda's refugee hosting areas*, November 2024, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/market-systems-development-msd-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

⁷¹ ILO, *Rapid Market Assessment of Five Value Chains in Nakivale Refugee Settlement and Host Community Isingiro District*, August 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/rapid-market-assessment-five-value-chains-nakivale-refugee-settlement-and-host-community-isingiro-district-august-2022>.

⁷² Asili Agriculture, <https://asili.aq/> (last accessed December 4, 2024).

⁷³ RSRI, *Refugee-Led Organization (RLO) Involvement in Local Decision Making: Challenges and Opportunities*, RLO-Led Self-Reliance Learning Exchange Series, May 2024, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/66be73749592441d71f96ab0/1723757430633/RLO+Learning+Exchange+Report+++May+2024+++Uganda.pdf>.

⁷⁴ This was one of the themes prioritized by RLOs in discussion on self-reliance priorities; RSRI, *Refugee-Led Organization (RLO) Involvement in Local Decision Making: Challenges and Opportunities*, RLO-Led Self-Reliance Learning Exchange Series, May 2024, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/66be73749592441d71f96ab0/1723757430633/RLO+Learning+Exchange+Report+++May+2024+++Uganda.pdf>.

- Leveraging technologies such as use of solar powered irrigation pumps.

Box 4: Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) - various approaches in the Uganda refugee response

A variety of partners implement CSA. Four main types of interventions that include a “climate-smart” dimension have been identified:

- 1- Agricultural production and management;;
- 2- Natural resources management;;
- 3- Agrifood systems and value chains;;
- 4- Institutional support and services.

A recent desk review by U-Learn, [Application Of Climate-Smart Agriculture Approaches In Uganda's Refugee Response](#) presents more details on each intervention types and summarizes barriers and recommendations from the literature.⁷⁵



Off-farm activities support for self-reliance

Although most livelihood programmes with a self-reliance objective have, thus far, primarily focused on agricultural value chains in Uganda, an increasing number of programmes seek to develop off-farm support activities to respond to the growing interest of a large proportion of the refugee population, and youth in particular. In fact, agriculture is increasingly perceived as a limited livelihood option,⁷⁶ especially considering increased climate change vulnerabilities. Building on the complementarity of development partners and activities to maximize refugees’ diverse interests, resources and skillsets, some scholars and practitioners in Uganda have highlighted the need to move away from the dominant focus on agriculture; they advocate for alternative livelihood pathways.⁷⁷

Off-farm interventions include the same type of interventions than agricultural programmes: capacity building, material asset transfer, linkage to markets, and access to technologies and innovation.

Non-agricultural/non-farm activities

A rapid market assessment of five value chains in Nakivale Refugee Settlement and host community in Isingiro District conducted by the ILO in 2022 identified five high-potential non-agricultural value chains: plastic waste management, soap production, textile production, and handicrafts production.⁷⁸

Another example found in graduation programmes is the development of last-mile distribution networks with clean energy enterprises to expand solar pay-as-you-go business models for household lighting, and solar-powered irrigation.⁷⁹

However, non-agricultural livelihoods (such as crafts/textiles) programming also face challenges such as lack of, or poor quality of, markets.

⁷⁵ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/application-of-climate-smart-agriculture-approaches-in-ugandas-refugee-response/>.

⁷⁶ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

⁷⁷ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

⁷⁸ ILO, *Rapid Market Assessment of Five Value Chains in Nakivale Refugee Settlement and Host Community Isingiro District*, August 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/rapid-market-assessment-five-value-chains-nakivale-refugee-settlement-and-host-community-isingiro-district-august-2022>.

⁷⁹ U-Learn, *Graduation Compendium: Building a Common understanding of Graduation Programmes in the Uganda Refugee Response*, August 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>.



Access to financial support, services and credits:

Cash-based interventions

Under the Uganda Refugee Response Plan 2018-2022, international partners and the local government prioritized shifting the response “from care and maintenance to inclusion and self-reliance.” Cash-based interventions were identified as a priority as cash has been perceived as supporting self-reliance because of its effect on local economies and multiplier effect. As such, partners have committed to shift from in-kind assistance to cash-based interventions where possible. Financial service providers play an important role in most cash and voucher assistance programmes in Uganda because they facilitate cash transfer.⁸⁰ Additionally, many programmes (e.g. under the graduation approach, see

Box 7) include financial transfer components that may be used to accelerate wage employment or support a business.⁸¹

Savings groups

For rural populations (95% of the refugee population in Uganda), access to formal financial services is extremely challenging due to long distances, high costs, and general financial exclusion. As such, community-based savings groups have been an inherent part of refugee response actors’ efforts to promote self-reliance.⁸² A savings group is an informal mechanism that helps individuals securely save and borrow money. For many families, savings groups often represent their only safety net and can also be a source of financing for micro-businesses.⁸³

⁸⁰ Uganda Cash Working Group, *Assessment of Financial Service Providers – Cash and Voucher Assistance in Uganda*, November 2021, <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/assessment-of-financial-service-providers-cash-and-voucher-assistance-in-uganda/>.

⁸¹ Example: Graduating to Resilience Activity (G2R), 2017-2024, Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement and surrounding host community, Kamwenge District, South-West 13,829 households - 50% refugee and 50% host Funded by USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, implemented by the AVSI Foundation, along with Trickle Up and American Institutes for Research (AIR).

⁸² U-Learn, *Digital Savings Groups in Uganda – A Learning Brief*, July 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/digital-savings-groups-in-uganda-learning-brief/>.

⁸³ SEEP Network, *Creating a Resilient New Normal for Savings Groups*, February 2021, <https://seepnetwork.org/Blog-Post/Creating-a-Resilient-New-Normal-for-Savings-Groups>.

Figure 7: Members of the Twetungure group A. VSLA, Nakivale. U-RIL 2024



There are five different types of savings groups in Uganda. Rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), accumulating savings and credit associations (ASCAs), village savings and loans associations (VSLAs), and savings and internal lending communities associations (SILCs) are informal community-based savings groups, each with different contribution, loan, saving, and interest modalities. Savings and credit cooperative society associations (SACCOs) are member-based financial institutions run by professional management and, unlike the other four groups, are formally registered legal entities.⁸⁴

As of March 2022, there were almost 66,000 active groups, made up of almost 1.8 million. Refugees accounting for around 6,000 of these groups, with around 150,000 members – i.e. around 10% of Uganda's refugee population.⁸⁵

Digital finance services

Over 64% of refugees use mobile money, which, alongside direct cash, is the preferred delivery mechanism for both humanitarian assistance and commercial uses.⁸⁶ The Ugandan government has recognised the need to increase the penetration and use of ICT services for social and economic development.

Many stakeholders in Uganda's refugee response are exploring digital savings groups.⁸⁷ This shift is still in its early stages, and faces many challenges, including in terms of sustainability. About 13 FinTechs⁸⁸ are currently active in the refugee response and include those who digitise the savings groups' records and combine other features such as linking to

⁸⁴ U-Learn, *Digital Savings Groups in Uganda – A Learning Brief*, July 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/digital-savings-groups-in-uganda-learning-brief/>.

⁸⁵ U-Learn, *Digital Savings Groups in Uganda – A Learning Brief*, July 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/digital-savings-groups-in-uganda-learning-brief/>.

⁸⁶ U-Learn, *Digital Savings Groups in Uganda – A Learning Brief*, July 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/digital-savings-groups-in-uganda-learning-brief/>.

⁸⁷ U-Learn, *Digital Savings Groups in Uganda – A Learning Brief*, July 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/digital-savings-groups-in-uganda-learning-brief/>.

⁸⁸ Examples include: OKO, maalicard, Akello Banker, Fynixwave, MTN, Dreamsave, ensibukko, simbuka, airtel money, akaboxi, chomoka, True African, Grameen Foundation.

mobile money or an e-wallet and provide access to larger credit opportunities, extension services, or insurance.

Financial literacy training (FLT)

In Uganda, FLT provides participants with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to manage their money, and is recognised as being one element leading to financial inclusion and self-reliance. The FLT landscape is nascent but organically growing. It includes the government, private financial sector, FinTech/microfinance businesses, social businesses, I/NGOs, and intergovernmental agencies.⁸⁹ FLT is mostly delivered as part of wider programmes (e.g. cash-based interventions, group saving activities or as part of financial institutions' activities). In 2023, Minimum Standards for FLT were launched by the CWG and the Bank of Uganda as a starting point for ensuring consistent, coherent, and equitable financial literacy training for all refugees.⁹⁰



Skills development & access to job markets

Uganda's labour market is overwhelmingly informal. Refugee skills and training often do not match available formal jobs.⁹¹ As such, many programmes have focused on various skilling strategies to help refugees access job markets, including waged employment and self-employment. Strategic objective 4 of Uganda's 2021 JLIRP focuses on "skilled refugees and host communities capable of harnessing employment opportunities in the country by 2025."

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

TVET's primary objective is to train individuals on labour market-ready skills. Investment in TVET activities for refugees is recognized as pivotal to refugees' longer-term resilience and self-reliance.⁹² As such, as part of the Skilling Uganda Strategy implementation, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and humanitarian donors have supported TVET activities to tackle unemployment by increasing vocational training access for the most vulnerable refugees and host communities. As of 2023, there were almost 1,000 TVET centres in Uganda.⁹³

TVET is provided by refugee response actors through three main channels:

1. **Bringing refugees to vocational training institutions (VTIs)** by facilitating daily transport or financing residential training.
2. **Taking VTIs to the refugees** by building VTIs in refugee settlements. For example, in 2016, Finn Church Aid built a training centre in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. In 2012, Windle Trust established the Nakivale Vocational Training Centre and in 2019, the Don Bosco Vocational Centre was established in Palabek Refugee Settlement.⁹⁴
3. **Community-based training through temporary satellite TVET centres (Mobile TVET)** move TVET closer to communities who are unable to access traditional TVET sites. In recent years, various mobile TVET activities were successfully piloted including by Africa Non-profit Chore's (ANCHOR), Youth Alive, Caritas, and NRC under the Support to Skilling Uganda Strategy project (SSU) project; by AVSI with its Kyangwali

⁸⁹ U-Learn, *Digital Savings Groups in Uganda – A Learning Brief*, July 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/digital-savings-groups-in-uganda-learning-brief/>.

⁹⁰ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/uganda-refugee-response-financial-literacy-training-minimum-standards/>.

⁹¹ African Center for Economic Transformation, *Strengthening Education and Learning Systems to Deliver a 4IR-ready Workforce*, Uganda Country report, 2022, https://acetforafrica.org/?smd_process_download=1&download_id=23309.

⁹² U-Learn, *Mobile Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programming in the Uganda refugee response*, June 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Mobile-TVET-programming-in-refugee-response-Final.pdf>.

⁹³ U-Learn, *Mobile Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programming in the Uganda refugee response*, June 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Mobile-TVET-programming-in-refugee-response-Final.pdf>.

⁹⁴ U-Learn, *Mobile Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programming in the Uganda refugee response*, June 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Mobile-TVET-programming-in-refugee-response-Final.pdf>.

TVET programme; and by the World Bank-funded Uganda Skills Development in Refugee and Host Communities under the MoES.⁹⁵

Box 5: Uganda skilling exchange (USE)

Matching demand and supply of training opportunities : The Uganda Skilling Exchange (USE) is an interactive platform designed to address the fragmentation of skilling opportunities in refugee and host communities by consolidating programme information in one accessible hub. Despite the abundance of skilling initiatives, challenges around coordination, visibility, and access have limited their impact—USE helps bridge this gap. USE is providing up-to-date, location-filtered information, the platform empowers individuals to find relevant training and supports organisations in better aligning efforts to meet community needs.

Skills-job matching

After graduating from training and vocational programmes, many refugees still struggle to find work. As such, numerous programmes include matching components or link refugees to existing mechanisms that can further help them access job markets. These can include digital job platforms (e.g. Uganda Jobs, jobs.co.ug and jobmart, or FLIP Africa) or job centres (e.g. AVSI Foundation-supported Job Centres in partnership with ILO in refugee hosting districts).⁹⁶

⁹⁵ U-Learn, *Mobile Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programming in the Uganda refugee response*, June 2023, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Mobile-TVET-programming-in-refugee-response-Final.pdf>.

⁹⁶ U-Learn, *Matchmaker: Linking Refugee Talents to Jobs in Uganda*, May 2023, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d7fba1a7dc0f278f09832df/t/6486182dcf404f3d0971343a/1686509620461/Matchmaker-linking+to+Refugee+Talents+to+Jobs+in+Uganda_final_26052023.pdf.

Figure 8: A refugee woman with her tailoring business in Bidibidi refugee settlement. U-Learn 2023



Entrepreneurship and innovation

Promoting entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as an effective approach to overcoming refugees' challenges of economic and social inclusion. According to ILO, market-driven skilling for self-employment is the most appropriate channel through which refugees can gain employment.⁹⁷ Refugees have the same rights as Ugandans to start their own business. However, challenges persist for refugee entrepreneurs including language barriers, the remoteness of rural settlements, discrimination, lack of market knowledge, challenges to formalise businesses, lack of social capital and social networks, and limited access to financial capital.⁹⁸

Humanitarian and development actors are leading business development initiatives in the refugee response. Humanitarian aid directed towards micro and small business development can generate income and bolster self-reliance, help deliver social goods, promote the local integration of refugees, and increase the social and economic capacity of the local community to host refugees.⁹⁹ However, business development services often focus on pre-defined training or support packages (supply) without sufficient consideration of actual

⁹⁷ ILO, *Rapid Market Assessment of Five Value Chains in Nakivale Refugee Settlement and Host Community Isingiro District*, August 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/rapid-market-assessment-five-value-chains-nakivale-refugee-settlement-and-host-community-isingiro-district-august-2022>.

⁹⁸ U-Learn, *Refugee Entrepreneurship in Uganda, Desk review for the Uganda refugee response*, May 2023, <http://165.232.126.200/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Microenterprise-Desk-Review-Final.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Oscar M. Sánchez Piñero, "How Business Incubators Can Facilitate Refugee Entrepreneurship and Integration," *UNHCR*, April 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/how-we-can-use-business-incubators-for-refugee-integration/>.

market needs (demand).¹⁰⁰ Without sufficient consideration of actual market needs, the businesses supported have limited viability and sustainability. For example, many programs offer vocational training in trades like tailoring or soap-making without assessing whether there is sufficient local demand or market saturation, resulting in limited income opportunities and increased competition among beneficiaries.

Programmes/projects in Uganda with an entrepreneurship focus and self-reliance objective include the following components:

- **Business development services:** This includes training, consultancy, marketing, technology development and transfer, and business linkage promotion.¹⁰¹
- **Financial capital:** Some programmes provide startup kits and other financial means to help entrepreneurs kick-start their businesses. Refugees can also use NGO-supported village savings groups to gain startup capital. The private sector offers programmes to help refugees access the necessary financing. For example, Equity Bank's refugee programme helps refugees open bank accounts and issues loans.¹⁰² KIVA's World Refugee Fund lends to refugees by extending zero-interest and risk-tolerant funding to partner financial institutions. The Rural Finance Initiative is a cross-border microfinance institution offering services to refugees and local communities in Uganda and South Sudan. Digital financial solutions can also reduce risks for lenders and help facilitate access to financial products for refugees. Some microfinance institutions, such as Numida, focus on lending to microenterprises.¹⁰³
- **Market integration support:** Various programmes focus on bolstering refugee businesses within value chains, for example by engaging partners to support last-mile truck logistics to transport goods from major distribution hubs to refugee settlements (or vice versa). Several businesses work with and for refugees and have leveraged the supply chain to support growth.¹⁰⁴
- **Online marketplace:** Technology may be used by refugee businesses to increase their customer base, engage partners, and enter new markets (e.g. the Ugandan companies Sellio, Glovo and SafeBoda). For example, programmes supporting entrepreneurs can partner with internet service providers or internet cafes in the settlements to increase entrepreneurs' access to digital selling platforms, where they can sell or market their products.¹⁰⁵

Uganda's innovation ecosystem is also becoming increasingly developed and structured.¹⁰⁶ The Website "Startup Commons" ranks the Ugandan ecosystem to be in the "Mapped & Vision" stage – more mature than many other ecosystems in the Global South, which are categorised as "awakening". One reason is that there are multiple connected actors in the Uganda ecosystem, but they are not yet following one direction to build the ecosystem further.¹⁰⁷ In a previous 2024 mapping exercise, 93 entrepreneurship support actors were identified as providers of services to refugees and host communities in Uganda.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ U-Learn, *Refugee Entrepreneurship in Uganda, Desk review for the Uganda refugee response*, May 2023, <http://165.232.126.200/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Microenterprise-Desk-Review-Final.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ Mercy Corps, *System Labour Market Assessment focused on microenterprises*, 2021 (unpublished), in *Ibid*.

¹⁰² U-Learn, *Refugee Entrepreneurship in Uganda, Desk review for the Uganda refugee response*, May 2023, <http://165.232.126.200/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Microenterprise-Desk-Review-Final.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Kiva, <https://www.kiva.org/impact/refugees> (last accessed December 4, 2024).

¹⁰⁴ U-Learn, *Refugee Entrepreneurship in Uganda, Desk review for the Uganda refugee response*, May 2023, <http://165.232.126.200/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Microenterprise-Desk-Review-Final.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ U-Learn, *Refugee Entrepreneurship in Uganda, Desk review for the Uganda refugee response*, May 2023, <http://165.232.126.200/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Microenterprise-Desk-Review-Final.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d7fba1a7dc0f278f09832df/t/65084af0c7d1e30f92ddaea6/1695042306039/Landscape+Analysis+of+the+Uganda+Innovation+Ecosystem+-+2023+-+final+report.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ Footnote 5 in

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d7fba1a7dc0f278f09832df/t/65084af0c7d1e30f92ddaea6/1695042306039/Landscape+Analysis+of+the+Uganda+Innovation+Ecosystem+-+2023+-+final+report.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/entrepreneurship-support-in-ugandas-refugee-response/>.

Figure 9: Stages in entrepreneurship development



Entrepreneurship support actors ((accelerators, incubators and labs) offer services such as strategic business planning, administrative services, technical assistance and guidance on intellectual property, connections with financing and networking activities, and sometimes direct provision of capital (e.g. equity or debt).¹⁰⁹ For-profit incubators offer new businesses rental space, capital, financing solutions, and business mentoring. Not-for-profit incubators seek to empower economically disadvantaged groups or support entrepreneurial journeys. In Uganda, the most common types of incubators are university incubators, independent commercial incubators and internal company incubators.¹¹⁰

Incubators are mostly located in Kampala and other larger cities and towns, which means that their impact on refugees in settlements is limited. However, 11 incubators highlighted targeting refugees as a primary audience for their services. An example of for-profit entrepreneurship enabler is the Uganda-based firm, Relevant Ventures, which offers early-stage entrepreneurs flexible capital and business services to get them ready for larger investments and scaling opportunities.¹¹¹ Most entrepreneurship support organisations are sector agnostic - with fewer of them focusing on specific sectors, including education, IT (and software as a services), agriculture, health, finance and others.¹¹²



Holistic livelihoods programmes

Some livelihood-oriented self-reliance programmes in Uganda include many of the activities described above. Market System Development programmes for instance are examples of holistic livelihoods programmes and are increasing in the Uganda refugee response. Other examples exist too (see Box 6).

Market Systems Development (MSD)¹¹³

The market systems development (MSD) approach focuses on improving market systems to work more effectively and sustainably for the poor. It aims for large-scale, systemic change by influencing multiple market players.¹¹⁴ Given the significant barriers limiting refugees' full participation in market systems, there is a compelling case for actors to implement MSD approaches in Uganda's refugee response.

Activities in MSD programmes can include:

¹⁰⁹

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d7fba1a7dc0f278f09832df/t/65084af0c7d1e30f92ddaea6/1695042306039/Landscape+Analysis+of+the+Uganda+Innovation+Ecosystem+-+2023+-+final+report.pdf>

¹¹⁰

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d7fba1a7dc0f278f09832df/t/65084af0c7d1e30f92ddaea6/1695042306039/Landscape+Analysis+of+the+Uganda+Innovation+Ecosystem+-+2023+-+final+report.pdf>

¹¹¹ Relevant Ventures, <https://relevant.is/> (last accessed December 4, 2024).

¹¹²

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d7fba1a7dc0f278f09832df/t/65084af0c7d1e30f92ddaea6/1695042306039/Landscape+Analysis+of+the+Uganda+Innovation+Ecosystem+-+2023+-+final+report.pdf>

¹¹³ U-Learn, *Market Systems Development (MSD) in the Uganda Refugee Response: A compendium of programmes using the MSD approach in Uganda's refugee hosting areas*, November 2024, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/market-systems-development-msd-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

¹¹⁴ BEAM Exchange, *Glossary, Market systems approaches: principles and characteristics*, <https://beamexchange.org/market-systems/glossary/> (last accessed December 4, 2024).

- Making market linkages
- Skilling beneficiaries and private sector actors
- Improving transportation/distribution networks
- Improving access to financial services
- Providing training, mentorship and/or business development services to private sector actors and participants
- Developing inclusive business models
- Enabling access to clean energy for beneficiaries and/or private sector actors
- Providing seed capital or subsidies
- Incentivizing the private sector to engage in refugee markets
- Enabling access to mechanisation in agricultural value chains
- Providing (information on) insurance schemes and climate change

As of November 2024, U-Learn identified 8 'visible' MSD programmes. Of these, seven programmes target agricultural markets. Two target off-farm livelihoods markets. One targets the energy and financial services markets. Two (DREAMS & SMILES) also implement a graduation approach. The eight programmes and their implementers are as follows:

1. [Building Resilience through Market-led Livelihood Opportunities \(Uthabiti\)](#), implemented by Save the Children, Swisscontact, Grameen Foundation, Response Innovation Lab, & Innovation Village;
2. [Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems \(DREAMS\)](#), implemented by Mercy Corps & Village Enterprise;
3. [Resilience and Emergency Response \(BRIDGE\)](#), implemented by Mercy Corps with GADC, Fuzu, CTEN, ICRAF, Village Enterprise, Innovation Village and HYT;
4. [Northern Uganda - Transforming the Economy through Climate Smart Agriculture Market Development \(NU-TEC MD\)](#), implemented by Palladium, Swisscontact, AgDevCo, Mercy Corps and OPM;
5. [Sustainable Market Inclusive Livelihood Pathways to Self-Reliance \(SMILES\)](#), implemented by AVSI with DAI Global, REPARLE, IPA, and Makerere University Kampala;
6. [Feed the Future Uganda Inclusive Agricultural Markets \(IAM\)](#), implemented by DAI Global with Market Share Associates & Technoserve, Inc.;
7. [Matching Grant Intervention implemented under the PROSPECTS programme for Sesame Value Chain Development Project, using the Approach to Inclusive Market Systems \(AIMS\)](#), implemented by ILO in collaboration UNHCR and Ag-Ploutos;
8. [Climate Smart Jobs \(2023 - 2027\)](#), implemented by Palladium with Swisscontact, CABI and Stanbic Uganda Holdings Ltd.

Box 6: Security, Protection and Economic Empowerment (SUPREME) project: From skills development to economic empowerment ¹¹⁵

Objective: Empowering youth through skills development, entrepreneurship support, and access to finance.

Approach: The SUPREME project has four thematic areas: (i) sustainable and inclusive markets, (ii) social and financial inclusion, (iii) sustainable agriculture and (iv) decent youth employment. The approach includes skills development, job matching via internships, technical skills development, access to finance, mentoring, coaching and leadership development. Implementors apply a market systems development approach (see box 3) to connect trained youth with market opportunities. This enables youth to identify support structures, role models and enhance their technical and leadership skills. The SUPREME project incorporates a private sector inclusive business pico-investment and market facilitation approach, under which agricultural and non-agricultural value chains are supported through co-investment financing and business development services in areas that ensure youth employment and entrepreneurial participation.

Results: As of March 2023, the project showed 37% of youth had entered employment opportunities. By then, the project had supported 30 private sector businesses, 83 agro-input dealers, and 600 savings and development cluster farmer groups.

¹¹⁵ SNV, From skills development to economic empowerment: lessons from Uganda, March 2023, <https://www.snv.org/update/skills-development-economic-empowerment-lessons-uganda>.

3.2. Social, legal, and additional self-reliance interventions in Uganda's refugee response

Over time, self-reliance programming has evolved from a purely economic focus to a multidimensional approach that integrates social and legal dimensions.¹¹⁶ These include individual-level protection, community-level conflict or resource management, and system-level legal and policy advocacy, alongside traditional households' socio-economic goals.¹¹⁷

In addition to economic livelihood development, five other categories of self-reliance programming can be identified:¹¹⁸



Social inclusion programming

This refers to social protection and social empowerment, including building social capital and improving social cohesion between displaced and host communities.¹¹⁹ Social inclusion can also extend to larger protection programming in development such as strengthening national protection systems, access to various socio-economic rights, registration and identity management, issuing documentation, counselling and psychosocial support, and the inclusion of protection into national development plans.¹²⁰ A relevant example in Uganda is the social empowerment components of the graduation approach (see Box 7) such as referrals to services; social development and networking; family support (home visits, psycho-social support); life skills development; promotion of positive and healthy practices; as well as individual or group coaching and mentoring.¹²¹



Legal inclusion

This is typically pursued via advocacy efforts to improve policy frameworks for refugees and help refugees claim their rights.¹²² In Uganda, legal aid components can be embedded into livelihood interventions.¹²³ This may include the provision of legal counselling and assistance, such as support with documentation or business registration;¹²⁴ the dissemination of legal information and awareness raising about rights; support to help refugees navigate complex administrative and legal environments (e.g. get their diplomas and certifications recognised); awareness-raising on legal matters with potential employers on decent work standards and inclusive hiring practices. For example, the Amahoro Coalition sensitises private sector partners on refugee issues and supports firms with hiring practices and internship placements. Amahoro also liaises with refugee-led organisations (RLOs) on private sector engagement, including policy barriers like business registration

¹¹⁶ Evan Easton-Calabria, et.al., *Refugee Self-Reliance - Moving Beyond the Marketplace*, Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre, Research in Brief 7, 2017, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/refugee-self-reliance-moving-beyond-the-marketplace>.

¹¹⁷ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/649384155bf3162e720ac75c/1687389226701/SRER_Defining+Self-Reliance_final.pdf.

¹¹⁸ UNOPS, *Lives in Dignity Grant Facility, Strategy 2020-2025*, December 2021, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/livesindignity_grant_facility_strategy_updated_dec_2021_en.pdf.

¹¹⁹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/6493844297e4431ac6bbf358/1687389251373/SRER_Programming+Self-Reliance_final.pdf.

¹²⁰ UNOPS, *Lives in Dignity Grant Facility, Strategy 2020-2025*, December 2021, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/livesindignity_grant_facility_strategy_updated_dec_2021_en.pdf.

¹²¹ See examples in <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>

¹²² https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/6493844297e4431ac6bbf358/1687389251373/SRER_Programming+Self-Reliance_final.pdf

¹²³ Bernu, Rachel (2016) "Local Integration Focus: Durable Solutions Framework, Uganda 2016," ReDSS, p.32

¹²⁴ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/66be73749592441d71f96ab0/1723757430633/RLO+L_earning+Exchange+Report+-+May+2024+-+Uganda.pdf.

and work permits, and supports refugees in talent mapping and skills assessments.¹²⁵



Spatial planning, housing and settlement

This refers to strategies shaping future spatial distribution activities to create more logical land use organisations and their connections, balance development demands with environmental protection and achieve social and economic development objectives. This may include, for example, upgrading or connecting a settlement to a city or major marketplace (e.g. by reinforcing the roads and transport systems).¹²⁶



Integrated service delivery

This refers to the integration of social and public services for both refugee and host populations. Examples include partnerships with the private sector to improve access to certain services (e.g. WASH) that will help refugees be more self-reliant; interventions helping refugees better integrate education systems; activities aimed at improving national services that can help refugees with their businesses (e.g. reinforcing veterinary infrastructures and services to help refugees expand poultry farming to commercial capacity¹²⁷).



Disaster management and climate change

Addressing the impacts of disasters and climate change on human activities includes various proactive and reactive activities aimed at prevention, mitigation, and adaptation, and can include disaster-risk reduction, resilience-building, climate change adaptation and supported planned relocation activities.

4. Lessons learned analysis

4.1. Implementing self-reliance programming

Encouraging multi-dimensional programming over single-sector interventions

Programmatic approaches that integrate a range of social and economic inclusion components are increasingly recognised as more effective than single-sector interventions.¹²⁸ Multidimensional approaches emphasises how various dimensions of self-reliance are interconnected and go beyond only livelihoods. They prioritises coordinated cross-sectoral services, often through referral pathways linking different activities. A relevant example is RefugeePoint's Self-Reliance Runway approach in Nairobi, Kenya, which operates as a 'one-stop shop' offering integrated services such as housing, food, healthcare, psychosocial counselling, education, and livelihoods to support highly vulnerable refugees.¹²⁹

There is also growing acknowledgement that self-reliance programming extends beyond individual and household-level interventions and tackles structural barriers that affect refugees through system-level strategies. According to the Self-Reliance Initiative that reviewed global practices, including in Uganda, effective self-reliance initiatives require

¹²⁵ <https://amahorocoalition.com/>

¹²⁶ UNOPS, *Lives in Dignity Grant Facility, Strategy 2020-2025*, December 2021, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/livesindignity_grant_facility_strategy_updated_dec_2021_en.pdf.

¹²⁷ U-Learn, *Value Chain Assessments in Refugee Hosting Districts in Uganda – A desk review*, November 2022, <https://ulearn-uganda.org/value-chain-assessments-in-refugee-hosting-districts-in-uganda-a-desk-review/>.

¹²⁸ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/61af5905fc334c5c2cfaf301/1638881544335/SR_Evidence_Review_Findings.pdf.

¹²⁹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/6493844297e4431ac6bbf358/1687389251373/SRER_Programming+Self-Reliance_final.pdf

system-level interventions, i.e. initiatives influencing the policy and macroeconomic environments to create conditions enabling refugees' self-reliance. Multidimensional programming also recognises that self-reliance does not imply total independence from all support systems: social, psychosocial, legal services, or safety nets in case of shocks may still be needed. Debates persist about which types of systems refugees can depend on while still being regarded as self-reliant.

In Uganda, the multidimensional nature of self-reliance programmatic practice is increasingly becoming more evident in practice through approaches like graduation programmes (see

Box 7).¹³⁰

¹³⁰https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/61af5905fc334c5c2cfaf301/1638881544335/SR_Evidence_Review_Findings.pdf.

Box 7: Example of a multidimensional approach - The graduation approach in the Uganda refugee response¹³¹

The graduation approach is perceived as an effective way to overcome refugees' (as well as other population groups) challenges of economic and social inclusion; it is one of the multi-dimensional approaches used to achieve self-reliance. It is a priority goal for the Government of Uganda.¹³²



Graduation programmes traditionally have four components:

- 1. Social protection:** Because these programmes often target people living in (extreme) poverty, they first provide basic consumption support (e.g. asset transfer) during a certain programmatic period when participants work toward gaining a stable income.
- 2. Economic empowerment:** programmes include activities (e.g. training) aimed at developing viable and sustainable livelihoods either through agricultural or off-farm interventions.
- 3. Financial inclusion:** They include activities to enhance participants' capacity to operate their livelihoods, manage their savings, build financial and digital literacy skills, etc.
- 4. Social empowerment:** Regular mentoring sessions help individuals/groups develop agency, self-confidence, and social capital. Beyond individual and household-level interventions, graduation programmes also identify **structural barriers** impacting participants and design system-level interventions.

Evaluations show that graduation programmes increase per capita consumption per month by an average of USD 5.58.¹³³ 66% of participants in a graduation programme in Uganda report being able to "bounce back" from shocks and thus be resilient.¹³⁴ Growing evidence shows that programmes targeting the very poor and operating at the household level can increase purchasing power. However, concerns remain about these programmes' capacity to operate at scale given their high costs.

A U-Lean compendium on graduation programmes in Uganda's refugee response identified 7 ongoing graduation initiatives (September 2024):

1. WFP's Uganda refugee resilience model
2. BRAC's Early childhood and graduation programming
3. DRC's Building self-reliance and resilience programme in West Nile
4. Village Enterprise and Mercy Corps' Delivering resilience microenterprise and market systems (DREAMS) program
5. AVSI's Graduating to economic resilience program
6. AVSI and partners' Sustainable market inclusive livelihood pathways to self-reliance (SMILES)
7. AVSI's Graduating to resilience activities (G2R)

¹³¹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>

¹³² The Government of Uganda, *Global Refugee Forum; Pledges by the Government of Uganda*, 2023.

¹³³ Abhijit Banerjee et al., 'Banerjee, Abhijit, et al. "A Multifaceted programme Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries', Science, 2015.

¹³⁴ AVSI Graduation to Resilience Programme data in <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>.

Audience targeting

An ongoing discussion amongst refugee actors in Uganda is to determine the target audiences of self-reliance interventions: whether they should target the poorest and most vulnerable people like in graduation programmes, and/or those with proven productive capacities.

Adequate targeting that considers intersectionality with gender, age, social and economic status, disability and other socio-economic and demographic factors is a crucial step in self-reliance programming because groups with different needs and self-reliance baselines require adapted combinations of social, legal, and economic activities.¹³⁵ In Uganda, different programmes have placed particular emphasis on women, youth (including those with existing skills), and the very poor (e.g. through graduation approaches).

Gender

Gender and the role of women's empowerment was identified by refugee-led organisations and other local actors as a priority of self-reliance programming.¹³⁶ Research highlights that initiatives that focus on women or heads of households in areas such as livelihoods, financial inclusion, and social empowerment can be particularly effective because women often bear primary responsibility for their families and are central to household resilience.¹³⁷ Some examples of gender-sensitive self-reliance activities include offering childcare (or funding for childcare) and facilitating access to safe transportation.¹³⁸ Some graduation programmes in Uganda also integrate mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection components (e.g. establishment of Village Poverty Reduction Committees to address conflicts and GBV; programmes that challenge harmful gender and social norms).¹³⁹ Creating single-gender spaces, such as women's groups or collectives, has also proven effective in promoting social empowerment.¹⁴⁰

While taking gender into account can support self-reliance, it can also have unintended negative consequences. Self-reliance programmes, especially activities that end prematurely or teach skills misaligned with labour market needs, can have harmful gendered outcomes such as compounded debt for refugee women and/or women feeling increased pressure to provide for their families. Additionally, improving women's socioeconomic positions may also heighten the risk of domestic violence.¹⁴¹ Co-designing gender-responsive programming with women (and with men's engagement as well) helps ensure that initiatives effectively promote their socio-economic development while mitigating negative outcomes. For example, WFP Uganda's self-reliance model provides nutrition-sensitive cash transfers for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 2.¹⁴²

Under the Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative (URRI), partners support community dialogues on gender norms, promote joint household decision-making in areas like climate-

¹³⁵ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/65b7ed6f32dd4e20f68ae4e8/1706552688385/SRER-Programming+Self-Reliance_contexts.pdf

¹³⁶ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/66be73749592441d71f96ab0/1723757430633/RLO+Learning+Exchange+Report+-+May+2024+-+Uganda.pdf>

¹³⁷ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/65b7ed6f32dd4e20f68ae4e8/1706552688385/SRER-Programming+Self-Reliance_contexts.pdf

¹³⁸ Krause-Vilmar, Jina (2011) "The Livin' Ain't Easy: Urban Refugees in Kampala," Women's Refugee Commission, p. 29 in <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/67080512df3dea1618be1e77/1728578835329/Self-Reliance+Evidence+Review.pdf>

¹³⁹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/graduation-compendium-building-a-common-understanding-of-graduation-programmes-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>

¹⁴⁰ De Vriese, Machtelt, "Refugee livelihoods: A review of the evidence," UNHCR, 2006, <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/sites/uk/files/legacy-pdf/4423fe5d2.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Krause-Vilmar, Jina (2011) "The Livin' Ain't Easy: Urban Refugees in Kampala," Women's Refugee Commission, p. 29 in <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/67080512df3dea1618be1e77/1728578835329/Self-Reliance+Evidence+Review.pdf>

¹⁴² WFP Uganda's Self-Reliance Model, 2024-2026, Bidibidi, Lobule, Rhino - West Nile; and Nakivale, Oruchinga - South-West, Funded by Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom and implemented in close collaboration with NGO partners, the Office of the Prime Minister and District Local Governments.

smart agriculture, and collaborate with partners to integrate gender analysis into programme design—ensuring inclusive participation and more equitable outcomes.

Children

Fifty-five per cent of the refugee population in Uganda is under 18 - i.e. over a million refugee children.¹⁴³ As such, some programmes in Uganda integrate, or even prioritise, children as a foundation for long-term self-reliance and this lens is likely to become increasingly relevant. Some graduation programmes include modules on child protection and well-being, good nutrition, and family support.¹⁴⁴ Taking a step further, BRAC's Early Childhood and Graduation Programming embraces a children-focused self-reliance framework and combines the construction and operation of Early Childhood Development centres for vulnerable and marginalised children and their families with livelihoods promotion and financial inclusion activities.¹⁴⁵ Other programmes specifically target girls. For example, Her Dreams Count, a Uganda-based organisation, offers digital skilling opportunities (e.g. learning to code) to refugee girls vulnerable to early marriage as alternative pathways to stability, employment, and self-reliance.¹⁴⁶

Youth (18-30 years)

Given current age structure of refugees,¹⁴⁷ youth is a critical demographic for self-reliance programming.¹⁴⁸ Core activities include social networks development, education, and transferable skills for refugee youth through, for example, strategies integrating refugee and local youth in programmes, offering mentorship opportunities, and fostering social capital (e.g. participation in civil society to combat marginalisations and to build confidence and agency).

Socio-economic status

Some programmes focus on the most vulnerable refugee groups (e.g. graduation programmes).¹⁴⁹ Others, like entrepreneurship programmes, target refugee populations deemed most likely to attain self-reliance without additional support. While valuable, this approach risks isolating a large number of refugees who are not yet at that point, but who, with some support, could become viable as small business owners, entrepreneurs, or workers. In 2019, almost half of refugees did not have enough resources to satisfy the minimum daily caloric requirements and basic non-food needs, which further raises the question of self-reliance targeting.¹⁵⁰

This concern has become even more acute recently as WFP had to make significant cuts in its food and cash assistance in Uganda and prioritises aid for the most vulnerable households, thereby phasing out "self-sufficient refugees".¹⁵¹ According to some observers, this approach has resulted in unequal aid allocation.¹⁵² This may mean that more refugees risk missing critical self-reliance support if the conditions for participation, for example in

¹⁴³ <https://opm.go.ug/refugees/>.

¹⁴⁴ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/graduation-compendium-building-a-common-understanding-of-graduation-programmes-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

¹⁴⁵ Early Childhood and Graduation Programming, 2022-2025, Imvepi Refugee Settlement, Odupi Sub-county, Terego District, West Nile, Funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and implemented by BRAC; <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ <https://herdreamscount.com/>.

¹⁴⁷ Youth (15-24 years) comprise **25%**, those under 18 years' account for **55%**, according to OPM (2024): <https://opm.go.ug/refugees/>.

¹⁴⁸ Schiltz, Julie, Ilse Derluyn, Wouter Vanderplasschen, and Sofie Vindevogel (2018) "Resilient and Self-reliant Life: South Sudanese Refugees Imagining Futures in the Adjumani Refugee Setting, Uganda," *Children & Society*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/chso.12304>.

¹⁴⁹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/graduation-compendium-building-a-common-understanding-of-graduation-programmes-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

¹⁵⁰ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

¹⁵² https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.

graduation programmes, are defined based on who is and is not receiving food assistance.¹⁵³ In fact, some research indicates that the categorisation of refugees by vulnerability levels in Uganda has been arbitrary, thus negatively impacting livelihood opportunities.¹⁵⁴ Refugees themselves have expressed concern over the negative effects of ration reduction on their food security and resilience.¹⁵⁵ These concerns are being further exacerbated by the additional funding gaps following USAID's cuts which will heavily reduce food assistance to refugees.¹⁵⁶

Figure 10: A refugee woman selling her farm produce at a local market in Palabek refugee settlement. Save the Children 2024



A [2020](#) Vulnerability and Essential Needs Assessment in Uganda concluded that the large number of highly vulnerable refugees makes it difficult to provide guidance for targeting and prioritisation of assistance.¹⁵⁷ This highlights the importance of effective allocation of resources and coordination amongst agencies, to make sure that different programmes and partners address, in parallel, diverse socio-economic and demographic needs, and that self-reliance programmes do not create or exacerbate socio-economic divisions.

¹⁵³

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf;

[https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2023/12/15/exclusive-investigation-wfp-food-aid-revamp-gone-wrong-refugees-uganda.](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2023/12/15/exclusive-investigation-wfp-food-aid-revamp-gone-wrong-refugees-uganda)

¹⁵⁵ [https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf.](https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2024/06/Nina-Soudan_Policy_Brief_346_vFinal.pdf?type=pdf)

¹⁵⁶ https://repository.impact-initiatives.org/document/impact/922e002e/REACH_Impact-of-Reduced-Funding_Uganda-brief.pdf

¹⁵⁷ [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2023/12/15/exclusive-investigation-wfp-food-aid-revamp-gone-wrong-refugees-uganda.](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2023/12/15/exclusive-investigation-wfp-food-aid-revamp-gone-wrong-refugees-uganda)

Rural settings: In addition to supporting agricultural-based livelihoods, practices have focused on diversifying livelihoods opportunities, including through value chain development. The Self-Reliance Initiative (SRI) recommends that, beyond livelihoods, interventions should facilitate access to enablers of holistic and multidimensional self-reliance that are often less prevalent in rural areas, such as social and financial services.

Urban settings: Most humanitarian financing still focuses on settlements, but some examples include the Koboko Municipal Council (KMC) which implemented several health, education, and economic empowerment projects for urban refugees and host communities. The Islamic Development Bank's 'Skills Training, and Education Programme' in Uganda embraces a needs-based approach that may therefore include urban refugees.¹⁵⁹ According to the RSRI, programming in urban settings should tackle structural issues in urban markets, including through systems-level interventions that can bolster wage employment opportunities for refugees. Interventions should also help refugees navigate the complexity of urban systems to access services.¹⁶⁰

Informal markets: Refugees often resort to informal job markets with poorer working conditions. Advancing decent jobs and livelihoods (e.g. through the promotion of workers' rights and access to social protection) is a critical component of self-reliance programming.

Multi-stakeholder involvement beyond humanitarian actors

Despite humanitarian actors' predominant role in self-reliance programmes in Uganda's refugee response, other actors such as private sector actors, national and local governmental authorities, innovation-support actors, development agencies, and civil society actors hold a central position in advancing sustainable and financially viable programmes and outcomes. Humanitarian programming aimed at improving refugee self-reliance is indeed directly linked to efforts by other actors towards local economic development and poverty alleviation in refugee-hosting areas. The Self-Reliance Initiative (SRI) argues that "self-reliance programming can [...] only be achieved through strategic partnerships [amongst these actors]."¹⁶¹ Such partnerships are pivotal given the critical interplay between microeconomic factors (i.e. support to individuals, households) and the macroeconomic dimensions to self-reliance (e.g. infrastructure development, market systems development).

4.2. Measuring self-reliance programming

While agencies have been conducting self-reliance programming for many years, systematic efforts to rigorously measure and share the impact of these interventions remain limited.¹⁶² Evaluations may have been conducted but they are not necessarily publicly available. According to the RSRI, this accessibility gap limits sector-wide knowledge-sharing and learning.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/65b7ed6f32dd4e20f68ae4e8/1706552688385/SRER_Programming+Self-Reliance_contexts.pdf.

¹⁵⁹ <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>.

¹⁶⁰ <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>.
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/65b7ed6f32dd4e20f68ae4e8/1706552688385/SRER_Programming+Self-Reliance_contexts.pdf.

¹⁶¹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/6493844297e4431ac6bbf358/1687389251373/SRER_Programming+Self-Reliance_final.pdf.

¹⁶² <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/blog/state-of-evidence>.

¹⁶³ <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/blog/state-of-evidence>.

Important efforts to develop self-reliance measurement frameworks are however underway both globally and in Uganda.

Globally

In 2020, [RefugePoint](#), the [Women's Refugee Commission](#) and partners from the [Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative \(RSRI\)](#) launched the [Self-Reliance Index \(SRI\)](#) – a global tool that aims to assess and measure how refugee households move towards self-reliance.¹⁶⁴ The SRI seeks to provide “a holistic picture of a refugee family’s journey to becoming self-reliant and tracks changes over time”..¹⁶⁵ The index is made up of twelve domains that cover the economic and social dimensions of a refugee household’s life, including housing, education, health, financial resources, employment, social networks, and safety. The tool has so far been used by 65 agencies in 32 countries.¹⁶⁶

Figure 11: Screenshot of SRI question

Part 2: Scored Domains (cont'd)

DOMAIN 7: EMPLOYMENT

Purpose: To determine whether the household is engaged in income-generating activities.

The Employment score should consider any income-generating activity: self, wage, formal/informal employment, seasonal, part-time, small businesses, etc. Score the highest possible score attained by any adult member of the household (e.g. if one adult is employed full-time and another part-time, score full-time). Part-time or full-time employment could be made up of a number of different jobs.



Guiding question:

How would you describe the income-generating activities that household members are engaged in, in the last 3 months?

1. No employment
2. Temporary, irregular, seasonal
3. Regular part-time (including self-employment)
4. Full-time (including self-employment), without necessary legal documentation
5. Full-time (including self-employment), with legal documentation, if necessary



- If two or more options fit the household's circumstance, select the highest applicable score.
- “Part-time” is defined as less than 35 hours per week. Full-time is 35+ hours per week.

Include any important comments here especially if there is a situation of child labor:

Good practices (according to RefugePoint):¹⁶⁷

- In partnership with the [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#), the RSRI has also developed an adapted version of the SRI designed to support agencies implementing the graduation approach programming.
- The SRI does not require specialised monitoring and evaluation expertise to implement and is accessible to both small and large agencies.
- The SRI is shifting perspectives for agencies deploying the tool:
 - “Partners regularly report that by applying the SRI, they are getting a richer and more comprehensive understanding of their clients than before. [...] It can also help partners facilitate referrals to other agencies or identify areas where there are gaps in the broader humanitarian response.”
 - “Some partners are reporting that use of the SRI is helping reorient the mindset of both staff and refugee clients from focusing solely on needs and vulnerabilities to emphasizing strengths and skills within refugee families.”¹⁶⁸

Challenges and possible limitations of the tool:

- **Assessment fatigue:** The tool should be used every 3 to 6 months during and after a programme. This may overwhelm communities; creative ways to engage the community must be sought.
- **Conscious and unconscious biases:** The tool guidance stipulates that “*The SRI is a tool to aid an assessor in making an educated evaluation of the household’s status across the domains.*” The subjective notion of “educated evaluation” may lead to different interpretations based on the evaluator’s conscious and unconscious biases, thereby skewing the analysis. The role of local organisations and RLOs is crucial to tackle this challenge.
- **Possible skewed results:** The tool guidance indicates that “*a Chief Respondent should be identified for each household, but that person need not be the traditional head of*

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/sri>.

¹⁶⁵ Simar Singh and Ned Meerdink “Self-reliance index; Using Data to Improve Refugees’ Lives”, *Refuge Point*, 2021 <https://www.refugepoint.org/using-the-self-reliance-index/>.

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/sri>.

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/sri>.

¹⁶⁸ Simar Singh and Ned Meerdink “Self-reliance index; Using Data to Improve Refugees’ Lives”, *Refuge Point*, 2021 <https://www.refugepoint.org/using-the-self-reliance-index/>.

household.” Within a household, perspectives of realities may differ across gender, ages, status etc. Focusing on one respondent may isolate certain perspectives thus generating skewed results.

- **Analysis limitations:** Agencies may rely only on this tool to inform programming, thus decreasing the use of other powerful analytical tools (e.g. gender analysis, market assessments).
- **Pre-existing assumptions in the tools:** Some questions imply a certain bias or assumptions from the start and may influence the answer, e.g. *"How many months in the last 3 months have you not been able to pay rent?"* is formulated with the underlying assumption that a respondent may not have paid rent.

In Uganda, SRI testing was conducted by the Danish Red Cross (in Imvepi, West Nile) and the NGO AVSI (in Rwamwanja, Southwest).¹⁶⁹ Trickle Up also began the application of the SRI in Graduation Approach programming.

InI Uganda

One of Uganda’s GRF pledges in 2023 was to develop a unified government-led measurement framework to assess self-reliance of both refugee and host communities. Since then, the self-reliance reference group (SRRG), under the JLIRP, has developed minimum standard indicators and the Uganda Self-reliance Index (UG-SRI) to measure refugee self-reliance and determine the minimum livelihood investment package for households. The process utilised some SRI parameters as well as additional criteria used by other implementers including AVSI and BRAC.¹⁷⁰ These new self-reliance indicators will standardises how participant profiles are assessed for all Uganda-based graduation programmes and other self-reliance programmes.

The minimum standard self-reliance indicators cover seven interconnected sectors i.e., food security and nutrition, health, education, shelter, social cohesion, WASH and economic capacity. A self-reliance household questionnaire was developed to measure these indicators across the seven sectors.

These efforts underscore the Government of Uganda’s robust commitment to further institutionalises and advance self-reliance programming for both refugee and host communities. The tool provides a good foundation to guide and frame additional future measurement frameworks, thereby ensuring a certain level of institutional uniformization and encouraging coordination. The tool reflects the multidimensional nature of self-reliance programming, especially around social and economic considerations. Legal considerations are, however, not assessed. There is also no reference to climate considerations. In addition, it primarily focuses on individual and household self-reliance but does not assess the more systemic enabling environment.

4.3. Financing self-reliance programming

Many refugee actors in Uganda are increasingly inclined to work on self-reliance programming as it is a topic of growing interest with available funding.

A major question at the heart of the reflection on self-reliance programming is whether it is financially feasible, viable, and scalable. Holistic and multidimensional programming is intensive and long. Traditional short-term and sectoral humanitarian funding streams are not well-suited for long-term multidimensional self-reliance programming.

The aforementioned 2024 World Bank paper on the costs and benefits of investing in refugee autonomy in Uganda argues that “investing in the financial autonomy of refugees

¹⁶⁹<https://ulearn-uganda.org/graduation-compendium-building-a-common-understanding-of-graduation-programmes-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

¹⁷⁰<https://ulearn-uganda.org/graduation-compendium-building-a-common-understanding-of-graduation-programmes-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

today reduces the need for international assistance in the future”.¹⁷¹ In other words, the more income refugees earn, the less they will depend on external aid. The paper estimates the annual savings of full refugee economic inclusion to be US\$225 million for humanitarian aid. With the savings, the paper argues, more investment can be made in bolstering refugees’ productivity.¹⁷²

However, the high costs of self-reliance programmes limit their reach and hinder scalability. Analysing and comparing programmes costs can be challenging due to the great diversity of interventions and general reluctance of implementers to disclose metrics like cost per household in a competitive funding environment. However, programme costs of Graduation or MSD interventions in Uganda can reach several millions of dollars USD in annual budgets, for tens of thousands of households. This raises concerns about scaling to reach the hundreds of thousands of households in refugee settings.¹⁷³ The development of a minimum investment package and an associated envelope by the SRRG may determine common standards and associated costs in the response. In Rwanda, in the non-refugee context, the National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation estimates the cost of supporting one household towards graduation over 2-3 years to be between RWF 800,000 (USD 650) and RWF 1,685,000 (USD 1,400) depending on the household’s pre-existing capacities..¹⁷⁴

To address these interconnected financial and scalability challenges, various directions can be envisaged, including reducing costs; leveraging the influence of those already supported to foster organic community growth, including job creation and community-driven projects; or adding income-generating streams in programmes.

The following approaches may unlock funding for self-reliance:

1. **Promoting changes in donors’ mindset and practices:** Shift priorities to invest more in refugee self-reliance through multi-year programmatic cycles or use funding to attract other types of funding (e.g. private capital through blended finance mechanisms).
2. **Bringing more funding from development actors:** Many observers have called for more development-focused investments to increase refugees’ income earning capacity.¹⁷⁵ For example, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) called on Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to embrace a “people-first” strategy (as opposed to a “government first” approach) that reaches the most vulnerable communities including displaced populations. This would require funding and formalising partnerships with civil society and local actors, including city authorities. In 2023, the World Bank committed to work more closely with civil society as part of its “Evolution Roadmap”.¹⁷⁶ According to the World Bank, “Uganda provides an ideal environment to demonstrate how development investments in refugee earning capacity can bring about savings in future assistance.”¹⁷⁷
3. **Exploring complementary financial channels to diversify funding sources:** There is an increasing acknowledgement that complementary financing channels and methods are needed to address the shifting nature of humanitarian programming and funding gaps. According to the Refugee Investment Network (RIN), the global refugee crisis demands creative private capital solutions and sustainable investments.¹⁷⁸ Because of its central

¹⁷¹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>.

¹⁷²

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>.

¹⁷³ U-Learn Graduation Compendium: <https://ulearn-uganda.org/graduation-compendium-building-a-common-understanding-of-graduation-programmes-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/> and U-Learn MSD Compendium: <https://ulearn-uganda.org/market-systems-development-msd-in-the-uganda-refugee-response/>.

¹⁷⁴ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/rwanda-strategy-for-sustainable-graduation-an-overview/>.

¹⁷⁵ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>; <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>;

¹⁷⁶ <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>.

¹⁷⁷

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099825401222436103/pdf/IDU16a019d351e7a014fca1a36d11e801ee4a2d0.pdf>.

¹⁷⁸ “Paradigm shift: How investment can unlock the potential of refugees,” *The Refugee Investment Network*, October 2018, <https://rin.wpengine.com/resources/paradigm-shift/>; and practitioners’ survey for this mapping.

economic development component, self-reliance programming offers a unique opportunity to capitalise on aid funding to attract other sources of funding and actors such as the private sector with aligned impact and commercial interests. As such, innovative financing mechanisms are increasingly being tested some of them in Uganda (see Box 9).

Box 9: Potential complementary financial channels to support self-reliance programming

Result-based funding: Conditional financing based on verified service delivery outcomes has increased in popularity over the past two decades and can be a useful tool in promoting self-reliance programming.

Refugee lens financing: This approach highlights refugees as full contributors of social and economic growth by leveraging their untapped economic, social, and cultural potentials through creative financing investment schemes that can mitigate perceived risks. Refugee investments support refugee-owned enterprises, refugee-led enterprises, or refugee-supporting enterprises. However, the nascent refugee investment field remains underdeveloped and still perceived as risky by investors.¹⁷⁹

An example of refugee lens financing in Uganda is the **Refugee Investment Facility** - an initiative from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and iGravity. Its objectives are to increase refugees' employment,, enhance refugees' financial inclusion,, and increase access to relevant products and services from and for refugees. DRC provides loans to private sector partners at an interest rate based on performance against agreed upon indicators. The result-based loans allows businesses to maintain or build their focus on refugee and host communities, grow, and be financially rewarded for the impacts they have on the refugee and host communities through reduced interest rates.¹⁸⁰

Development impact bonds for refugees: Innovative financial models aimed at fostering self-reliance among refugees and host communities whereby social investors fund programmes, and outcome funders repay them if specific social outcomes are achieved.¹⁸¹ However, critics highlight several concerns: reliance on traditional donors, increased costs, benefits to private investors, potential accountability gaps for aid agencies and risk burdens on beneficiaries. To mitigate these risks, some propose penalties for aid agencies if projects fail.¹⁸² Up to today, a very limited number of agencies have adopted this model, and none in Uganda.

Community philanthropy: The global community philanthropy movement emphasises leveraging local assets instead of relying solely on external aid. Community philanthropy leverages the power of community foundations, women's funds, and environmental funds, along with innovative financing methods such as participatory grant making and giving circles.¹⁸³ By contributing their own resources, communities become co-investors, fostering a sense of ownership, accountability, and

¹⁷⁹ "Paradigm shift: How investment can unlock the potential of refugees," *The Refugee Investment Network*, October 2018, <https://rin.wpengine.com/resources/paradigm-shift/>; and practitioners' survey for this mapping.

¹⁸⁰ <https://pro.drc.ngo/what-we-do/innovation/innovative-finance/the-refugee-investment-facility/>.

¹⁸¹ <https://www.refugeeimpactbond.org/>.

¹⁸² Ben Parker, "Saving lives and making money: Can humanitarian impact bonds marry the two?," *The New Humanitarian*, 15 August 2019, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/08/15/humanitarian-impact-bonds>.

¹⁸³ "Why (and how) philanthropy must shift accountability toward communities," *Global Giving*, January 28, 2020, <https://www.globalgiving.org/learn/community-led-philanthropy>.

collective action.¹⁸⁴ In Uganda, community philanthropy organisations exist but with limited engagement with the humanitarian sector.¹⁸⁵

Climate financing: Climate financing can be explored to support self-reliance programming that includes climate change components. For example, some humanitarian activities may be eligible for carbon credits, e.g. the distribution of clean cookstoves and solar lamps.¹⁸⁶ The climate angle can also attract new funding actors, e.g. private finance, and companies seeking to highlight their contributions to climate action.

Income-generating avenues: Refugee actors can add income-generating avenues a social enterprise arm to complement their philanthropic strategies by leveraging their organisational assets and/or programmatic resources. This strategy can both help organisations add complementary sources of funding and attract global funders interested in supporting viable business models for NGOs. For example, in Uganda, the Dutch NGO, Stichting SYPO and its social enterprise arm "SYPO Uganda Ltd. developed a business model to reach women in very remote areas with low-cost business loans, relying on "lean" principles, mobile money and online technology systems. Interest and fees create revenue that can partially fund SYPO's humanitarian and development programming.¹⁸⁷

4.4. **Self-reliance and localisation**

The development of self-reliance policy and programmatic frameworks provides an opportunity for refugees and local actors to lead a process that concerns them.

In Uganda, self-reliance efforts have been led by the national government with the support of international partners. Further structured engagement of refugees and local actors could be pursued to align with [Grand Bargain](#) principles.¹⁸⁸ This observation reflects a broader trend in global literature, which consistently highlights a lack of information regarding refugees' perspectives on self-reliance.¹⁸⁹ reliance

Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative consultations with RLOs conducted in May 2024 examined RLOs' role in local decision-making and policy engagement in the refugee response with a focus on local policies' contribution to self-reliance outcomes. The process found that: *"Despite the acknowledged value of their contextual insights and roles as responders and service providers within their communities, the input of RLOs is often missing from discussions related to policy decision-making, resource allocation and prioritisations, and programming."*¹⁹⁰

During the 2023 GRF, the Government of Uganda also pledged to "strengthen the role of local and national responders" and is in the process of developing a Localisation Strategy for the Uganda refugee response, which started through a series of district consultations in 2024. The ongoing parallel work on self-reliance and localisation in the refugee response is an opportunity to create a coherent and inclusive strategic direction for all stakeholders.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ The Global Fund Community Foundations, Supranote ccx.

¹⁸⁵ Examples include [Civil Collective](#), [Grassroot Development Fund](#), [RLO-to-RLO fund](#), [Kabale Municipality Development Foundation](#), local associations such as local Rotary clubs, or diaspora networks.

¹⁸⁶ "Taking sustainable energy to the next level: from challenge to transition," *ICRC*, 21 January 2021, <https://blogs.icrc.org/inspired/2021/01/25/taking-sustainable-energy-to-the-next-level-from-challenge-to-transition/>

¹⁸⁷ <https://microbanker.com/about/about-us/>.

¹⁸⁸ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/localisation-evidence-brief-strengthening-localisation-in-ugandas-refugee-response/>

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/blog/state-of-evidence>.

¹⁹⁰ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/66be73749592441d71f96ab0/1723757430633/RLO+L+earning+Exchange+Report+-+May+2024+-+Uganda.pdf>.

¹⁹¹ Additional information on localisation can be found in <https://ulearn-uganda.org/localisation-evidence-brief-strengthening-localisation-in-ugandas-refugee-response/>

Box 10: Examples of good practices on refugees' engagement in policy in Uganda¹⁹²

The Refugee Engagement Forum (REF): The REF is a unique, participatory mechanism designed to systematically ensure refugee voices are taken into account. Through a representative system, elected REF members directly advocate on behalf of their communities at the highest level of Uganda's refugee response coordination structure. It is the first of its kind. It has proven to be a successful model for sustained refugee participation in national decision-making.¹⁹³

The Kampala Capital City Authority worked with the INGO IRC to consolidate opportunities for municipal-level engagement of urban refugee populations in Kampala.¹⁹⁴

The ReBuiLD programme collaborates closely with local partners, e.g. Platform for Vendors (PLAVU) in Kampala, to facilitate the integration of refugee communities and enhance their engagement with city authorities. The programme also helps RLOs connect with existing community networks.¹⁹⁵

IRC's innovative finance team has developed guidance for Multilateral Development Banks and other investors operating in refugee-hosting communities to partner with local humanitarian agencies. This approach ensures that refugee and host communities are meaningfully engaged in the development of financing projects. Similarly, Refugees International has advocated for the World Bank to further engage with RLOs for the design and implementation of refugee responses.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/66be73749592441d71f96ab0/1723757430633/RLO+Learning+Exchange+Report+-+May+2024+-+Uganda.pdf>.

¹⁹³ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/refugee-engagement-forum-in-uganda-good-practice-study/>.

¹⁹⁴ <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>.

¹⁹⁵ <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>.

¹⁹⁶ <https://rebuild.rescue.org/policy-briefs/how-donors-can-better-support-urban-refugees>.

5. Summary of challenges & recommendations

Challenge: Definition and policy efforts

Robust efforts are underway to harmonise self-reliance definition and policy frameworks. Interconnections between self-reliance and other themes (e.g. localisation, climate and environment) are being highlighted. However, the multidimensional nature of self-reliance is still not fully reflected in the recent GRF pledges or existing frameworks; they are still essentially livelihood-centred.

Recommendation

To **policymakers and regulatory bodies** in Uganda, including the OPM (DoR & CRRF), the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the SRRG:

- Ensure that the multidimensional nature of self-reliance is fully integrated (e.g. economic, social, legal, environmental dimensions) both at the micro levels (e.g. individuals, households, and communities) and at the macro levels (e.g. enabling systems and policies).

Guarantee the equitable engagement and leadership of refugees and local actors in the process (see below).

Challenge: Multisectoral coordination

No organisation can address the multidimensional scope of self-reliance programming (and funding) alone. There needs to be genuine and effective communication and collaboration channels between various sectors beyond the focus on livelihoods as well as with actors other than traditional humanitarian agencies.

Recommendation

To the stakeholders leading or contributing to refugee response coordination, including the CRRF Steering Group, the OPM DoR, UNHCR, the NGO Forum, the Humanitarian International NGO Network (HINGO), refugee actors in general, and DLGs:

- Encourage programmatic coordination and collaborations across diverse sectors of activities, industries, and types of organisations (e.g. humanitarian agencies, private sector, finance actors, innovation enablers) beyond traditional siloes, to 1) advance more systemic programmatic approaches and outcomes, and 2) capitalize on diverse sources of funding.
- Convene the SRRG and the Localisation Task Team representatives for a joint strategic reflection on integration of self-reliance and localisation matters.

Challenge: Funding/financing

Traditional humanitarian funding is not sufficient (and not shaped) for longer-term multidimensional self-reliance programming.

Recommendation

To **funders of the Uganda refugee response**:

- Invest in refugees' productivity by advocating with development actors to pursue "people first" approaches that include refugees.¹ Donors could consider supporting efforts such as the World Bank's IDA Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WRH) which links financing to policy progress on refugee inclusion and integration.¹
- Meaningfully and equitably involve refugees/RLOs in self-reliance financing discussions to identify realistic ways forward.
- Adapt the funding streams to new realities (e.g. multi-year funding, capitalising on donors' funding to attract different sources).

To the **LSRWG and organisations implementing self-reliance programmes**:

- Pilot innovative financing schemes to move beyond financing models that exclusively rely on philanthropy.
- Incorporate "income-generating models" into traditional programming (this is already done in the water sector).
- Diversify funding sources by capitalising on traditional funding to attract different sources of funding (e.g. private sector, development sector).
- Advocate with donors for adequate funding and continue demonstrating the results of self-reliance programming to strengthen the investment case.

Challenge: Scalability

Concern is regularly raised on the limited scalability of self-reliance programmes due to their multidimensional nature, high costs and limited funding, and a continued lack of awareness about refugees in host systems.¹

Recommendation

- See above recommendations on finance.
- Raise awareness about the importance/viability/ commercial interests of refugee markets and businesses to attract the private sector and other investors. Leverage the role of RLOs in the process.

Challenge: Meaningful engagement of refugees and localisation

Refugees' engagement and local leadership in policy definition and decision-making remains limited, despite REF contributions and a wealth of local resources and capacity in Uganda.

Recommendation

To **actors implementing self-reliance programmes:**

- Partner with local actors, including RLOs, to design and deliver services. Partnership must not only engage local actors but also advance equitable leadership mechanisms in which refugees can shape processes that concern them.
- Connect local actors to existing platforms for coordination and engagement.

To **policymakers, regulatory bodies and stakeholders coordinating the refugee response** (as listed above):

- Establish processes to integrate refugees' and local actors' input into development and evaluation of self-reliance policies, possibly leveraging the REF and connecting with the NGO Forum and the Localisation Task Team.
- Advance mechanisms to provide information to RLOs at both district and national levels on policy development.¹

To **funders, in particular development donors (e.g. MDBs):**

- Embrace a needs-based approach to reach the most vulnerable communities and include refugees in national development strategies.
- Fund and formalize partnerships with local civil actors and authorities (e.g. city councils).¹

Challenge: Impact measurement

Significant efforts are under way to harmonize self-reliance measurement frameworks. Some multidimensional aspects of self-reliance may be missing from current frameworks (e.g. legal aspects, environment and climate impact).

Recommendation

To **the SRRG:**

- Ensure that current policy efforts have clear communication and collaboration channels to incorporate refugees' perspectives and create the foundations of strong learning processes between entities.
- Include measurement indicators and methods to assess how the system (e.g. policy, market, coordination) adapts to, and enables, self-reliance programming. Consider system-level indicators in addition to household-level indicators.
- Integrate all dimensions of self-reliance in the measurement framework to fully reflect and measure the multidimensional nature of self-reliance. Consider adding environmental and legal indicators.

6. Annexes

6.1. Scope and methodology

Scope

The technical brief covers self-reliance policy and programming in refugee settings in Uganda. It primarily focuses on practices and reflections within the Uganda context. However, when relevant, examples are drawn from global analysis and practice in other forced displacement settings. Recognising the importance of nexus approaches, this technical brief covers a wide range of actors in the refugee response: humanitarian, development, innovation and private sector.

Methodology:

1. **Internal desk review:** Review of relevant U-Learn resources pertaining to livelihoods, entrepreneurship and other related topics.
2. **External desk review:** Review of literature and policy efforts on self-reliance in Uganda's refugee context.
3. **Strategic discussions with U-Learn and partners:** Discussions about mainstream practices and trends.
4. **Factual and lessons learned analysis:** Gathering of lessons learned including current practices, challenges and gaps.
5. **Wider analysis** on the state of affairs and ways forward.
6. **Technical review** by Uganda refugee response stakeholders.

6.2. Key terminologies

Table 2: Key terminologies

Terminology	Definition
Self-reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "The ability of individuals, households, or communities to meet their essential needs in a sustainable manner and to live with dignity" (UNHCR).¹⁹⁷• "The social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet its essential needs in a sustainable manner" (RSRI).¹⁹⁸
Self-sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-sufficiency is not totally the same as self-reliance. Self-reliance was initially equated with self-sufficiency and the 'means of meeting basic needs', which included a focus on nutritional needs and food security programming. Eventually, self-reliance programming shifted to focus on the 'means of making a living' and livelihoods programming – which highlights the nuanced differences between the two concepts.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/58ca4f827.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ Definition agreed upon by the self-reliance community of practice: <https://www.refugepoint.org/our-work/self-reliance-initiative/>.

¹⁹⁹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/649384155bf3162e720ac75c/1687389226701/SRER_Defining+Self-Reliance_final.pdf.

Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The ability of communities and households to endure stresses and shocks [...] Resilience is therefore an end state that implies that vulnerable communities and households have: 1) the capacity to maintain basic functions and structures during stresses and shocks; 2) access to a range of skills and resources that allow them to adapt to changing circumstances; 3) the ability to anticipate, prevent, prepare for and respond to stresses and shocks without compromising their long-term prospects” (UNOCHA, CERF).²⁰⁰ • “The ability of an individual, a community or a country to cope with, adapt and recover quickly from the impact of a disaster, violence or conflict. Resilience covers all stages of disaster, from prevention (when possible) to adaptation (when necessary), and includes positive transformation that strengthens the ability of current and future generations to meet their needs and withstand crises” (EU).²⁰¹ • Both self-reliance and resilience build upon the resources and capacities of individuals, communities and states, with the objective of ensuring safe and productive futures for all those impacted by a crisis. Self-reliance and resilience are interconnected and fuel each other: self-reliance can lead to resilience, while resilience is necessary to ensure progress towards self-reliance.²⁰²
Economic inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The achievement of decent work and income commensurate with one’s skills. To create the conditions necessary for economic inclusion, a wide range of barriers that refugees typically face - including legal, administrative, practical, discriminatory, and social barriers - must be removed and/or lowered. Economic inclusion is a necessary step towards greater long-term integration for refugees in their host communities (IRC).²⁰³ • “Economic inclusion implies giving all members of society, including non-citizens and vulnerable and underserved groups, access to labor markets, land, financial services, entrepreneurial expertise, jobs, and economic opportunities. Refugees who enjoy economic inclusion are more likely to be self-reliant and resilient, to meet their needs in a safe, sustainable and dignified manner, to avoid depletion of their assets and reverting to aid-dependency and negative coping mechanisms, to contribute to their host economies, and to be prepared for the future” (UNHCR).²⁰⁴
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

²⁰⁰ https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/OCHA%20Position%20Paper%20Resilience%20FINAL_0.pdf

²⁰¹ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/resilience-and-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus_en

²⁰² <https://ulearn-uganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/GraduationCompendiumv2.pdf>

²⁰³ <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/4994/locked-down-left-behind-refugees-economic-inclusion-covid.pdf>

²⁰⁴ <https://emergency.unhcr.org/emergency-assistance/education-and-livelihood/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion>

<p>Sustainable livelihoods; Economic livelihood development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihood: A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.²⁰⁵ • Sustainable livelihood: A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from the stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future without undermining the natural resource base.²⁰⁶ • While livelihoods programming is a necessary component of economic inclusion, it alone is not sufficient to enable self-reliance.²⁰⁷ • Economic livelihood development: This refers to livelihood protection and promotion of activities for displacement-affected persons that include, but are not limited to, infrastructure repair, rehabilitation, and improvements implemented through food- or cash-for-work or some other means, replacement of assets such as tools, boats and seeds, as well as interventions focusing on "diversifying livelihoods strategies; creating alternative income-generating activities; providing financial services, such as loans and insurance; and strengthening markets."²⁰⁸
<p>Humanitarian-development nexus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming that aims to link the humanitarian response to longer term development activities. • Approach that aims at bringing closer together humanitarian and development partners, beyond traditional sectoral siloes, to prioritize reducing risks and vulnerabilities, before, during and after crises and eventually eliminating needs.
<p>Development-led approaches to forced displacement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept considers that forcibly displaced and their hosts are economic agents of change, who make choices and respond to incentives. It also pays particular attention to institutions and policies. It relies on partnerships with and between governments, the private sector, and civil society.²⁰⁹ • Refugee self-reliance is one approach that has long formed part of developmental approaches to refugee assistance.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ (Chambers & Conway 1988).

²⁰⁶ <https://www.fao.org/4/x9371e/x9371e22.htm>

²⁰⁷ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b96ee1f36099b138a86b3d9/t/649384155bf3162e720ac75c/1687389226701/SRER_Defining+Self-Reliance_final.pdf.

²⁰⁸ LID

²⁰⁹ Inspired from Forcibly Displaced, World Bank 2017, p.4-5.

²¹⁰ <https://nsp.lse.ac.uk/articles/56>.

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