

Monitoring urban refugee influxes due to food assistance changes in Uganda - Round 2

September 2023
Uganda

KEY MESSAGES

- It appears as though any **movement caused by changes in the food assistance in the settlements has slowed down** in the month after the changes were enacted.
- Concerns were raised about the **immediate needs of newly arrived refugees**, particularly in relation to medical needs, clean water, and food.
- The **pressures of urban refugee populations and urban movement on social services** remain a key concern for the interviewed stakeholders and local governments.

SCOPE

Map 1: Locations where data collection was conducted



CONTEXT & RATIONALE

As of the start of July 2023, General Food Assistance (GFA) to refugees in Uganda is being prioritized according to the **third phase prioritization** model developed by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In conjunction with the prioritization of the GFA, considerable **food cuts** due to funding gaps have also been implemented. The considerable decrease in food rations available to refugees has caused concerns about the impacts on refugee well-being, social cohesion, and movement.

IMPACT Initiatives, through its REACH initiative, has developed a **monitoring system to determine if there is an increase in the number of refugees moving to the urban centres from the settlements**. REACH plans to collect data through a minimum of 3 rounds at 3 week intervals.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection has been conducted through a structured tool, with several open questions to allow for feedback. In each location, 5-10 key informants (KIs) were pre-selected based on their knowledge of their area and connections to the refugee communities present in that location. For more on the rationale and methodology, please see the [assessment TOR](#).

For round 2, **data collection took place between the 21st of August and the 1st of September**. Key informants were asked about the previous two weeks during the interview. The data and analysis can be found [here](#).

It is important to note that **the data is based on KIs' perspectives, and the presented figures are purely indicative**.

NEW ARRIVALS

Table 1: Reported number of new refugee arrivals from settlements in Uganda, in the two weeks prior to data collection, by number of KIs

District	Location	No new arrivals	100 or less new arrivals	Between 100-200 new arrivals	Between 200-500 new arrivals	Between 500-1000 new arrivals	More than 1000 new arrivals	Total
Adjumani	Adjumani Town	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Arua	Arua City	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
Gulu	Gulu City	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
Hoima	Hoima City	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
Kabarole	Fort Portal City	6	2	0	0	0	0	8
Kiryandongo	Kiryandongo Town	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Kitgum	Kitgum Municipality	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
Koboko	Koboko Municipality	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Mbarara	Mbarara City	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Moyo	Moyo Town	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
Mubende	Mubende Municipality	1	4	0	0	0	0	5
Yumbe	Yumbe Town	3	1	1	0	0	0	5
Total		31	30	1	0	0	0	61

Half of the KIs reported that they had noticed newly arrived refugees from the settlements in their urban location in the two weeks prior to data collection (31). During the first round of data collection in late July and early August, this was considerably higher as 57 out of 71 KIs reported new arrivals in their location (see Round 1 findings [here](#)). These findings indicate that **any movement caused by food ration changes may have already slowed down** after the first weeks following the implementation of the Phase 3 prioritization and food cuts. There are a few locations where the majority of KIs did report inflows of refugees, particularly in Mubende, Koboko, Mubende, and Gulu.

REASONS FOR MOVEMENT

All KIs who reported an influx of refugees from the settlements were asked what reasons were driving this movement. KIs were able to give multiple reasons. **The majority of KIs reported that both employment opportunities and changes in the GFA were driving the movement to urban centres.**

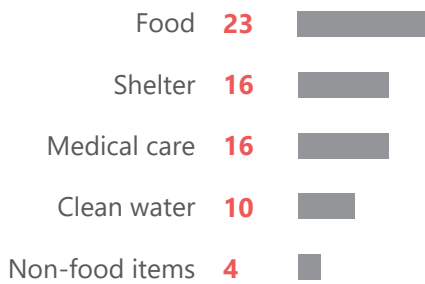
The distribution of answers from KIs who reported movement from refugees into their location aligns broadly with the findings from the first round. It appears that employment opportunities in urban centres are at least as important of a push/pull factor as the changes in the food assistance in the settlements.

Graph 1: Most commonly reported reasons for refugee movement to urban centres, by number of KIs



NEEDS UPON ARRIVAL

Graph 2: Most commonly reported urgent needs of newly arrived refugees in urban centres, by number of KIs



The 31 KIs who reported influxes of refugees in their location were additionally asked if newly arrived refugees had any immediate needs. Overall, **29 KIs reported that newly arrived refugees in their location had urgent needs.** In terms of the kinds of needs that newly arrived refugees were reported to have, the most commonly reported were food, shelter, and medical care.

Compared to the findings from the first round of data collection, shelter was less commonly reported as an issue this round. Instead, the KIs during this round more commonly noted **medical needs and clean water needs among newly arrived refugees** in their location.

GENERAL CONCERNS

At the end of the interview, KIs were given the space to provide general insights regarding urban refugees and migration from the settlements into urban centres. The concerns raised largely correspond with the two main themes that emerged during Round 1.

Firstly, KIs again noted that **there are newly arrived urban refugees who have urgent needs** that need to be addressed. KIs in various locations, including Arua and Kitgum, noted that newly arrived refugees were struggling to access sufficient food for their household. In other locations, KIs noted that the refugees should be aided to build up their livelihoods in these urban locations. As one KI in Hoima noted, refugees will likely continue to move to urban centres for various reasons, so **there is a need to find a sustainable solution** to meet their needs. The first three quotes on the right illustrate some of the needs of urban refugees, as reported by the KIs.

Secondly, the concerns regarding **the pressures that urban migration is putting on local services** was reiterated by many KIs. These concerns are not directly related to any current influxes, but rather illustrate the long-term pressure that urban migration appears to be causing. Various KIs noted issues with resource gaps to provide for the refugee population. In Arua, Hoima, Adjumani, Gulu, and Moyo, KIs noted that **services were overwhelmed and at times congested.** A KI in Moyo argued that a comprehensive assessment of the refugee population in the town would be needed for the government to plan properly.

PLANS FOR ROUND 3

Data collection for Round 3 will employ the same tool with the same KIs as the first two rounds. The objective will be to understand whether any influxes have occurred since the first rounds of data collection. Data collection is planned for 18 - 29 September. The factsheet for Round 3 is scheduled to be published in the second half of October.

“**There is need to support the new refugees with food items. There is need to give refugees free legal access in case they have issues.**”

- KI in Arua City

“**As refugees, right now we have no land to farm. We no longer get food from the camp. So we are suffering.**”

- KI in Fort Portal City

“**Majorly, these new arrivals are supported by their fellow refugees whom they find in Mubende.**”

- KI in Mubende Municipality

“**Services are being strained by this population and the government needs to be supported.**”

- KI in Hoima City

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).



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