



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

PRESS RELEASE

**PALABEK REFUGEE
SETTLEMENT,**
Lamwo District

20 June 2023

World Refugee Day 2023 Calls for Inclusion and Hope Amid Ongoing Conflicts and Displacement

As we observe World Refugee Day 2023, it is disheartening that the world is witnessing ongoing or resurfacing conflicts that continue to force people to flee their homes in search of safety.

In the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region where Uganda is situated, there is ongoing fighting in Sudan. We cannot forget the prolonged unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). There is unrest in Somalia. In South Sudan, the situation is unpredictable - the fragile security and harsh climate conditions continue to bring new arrivals into Uganda and other neighboring countries.

Globally, there are over 100 million displaced people, with 35.3 million of them being refugees. Uganda is hosting 1,535,000 forcefully displaced people, with South Sudanese constituting the largest number at 56 percent.

This year's World Refugee Day theme is ***Hope Away from Home – A world where refugees are included.***

Hope for refugees is more than a mere wish; it is grounded in tangible actions aimed at empowering refugees to regain control over their daily lives.

The Government of Uganda, UNHCR, and all partners involved in the Uganda Country Refugee Response come together with the global community to emphasize the shared responsibility we bear in nurturing hope for refugees and asylum seekers during their displacement. It is our collective duty to ensure that both Uganda and the world at large become inclusive environments for forcibly displaced individuals.

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Inclusiveness signifies that regardless of the duration of their stay in exile, refugees yearn to continue their lives by pursuing education, supporting their families, and fostering connections with hosting communities. It is through these endeavors that they can find the hope they desperately seek.

"World Refugee Day is a significant occasion, not only for celebrating the resilience of refugees who persistently flee conflicts and persecution in their countries. It is time to honor their strength and recognize our progressive refugee approaches, ensuring their safety and fostering a supportive environment. By addressing the root causes of these conflicts and striving to create conditions for their eventual return home, we can truly transform lives and build a more compassionate world." Stated Hon. Hillary Onek, the Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness, and Refugee.

Uganda, along with France, Niger, Colombia, Jordan, and Japan, will co-convene the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023. This forum is the largest international event dedicated to addressing refugee issues. Every four years, governments and private organizations gather to exchange successful approaches and provide financial aid, technical knowledge, and policy reforms to advance the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2018.

"This is an excellent opportunity to assess our achievements in the refugee response, as well as to identify areas of need and challenges where we require additional support," said Matthew Crentsil, the UNHCR Country Representative. "The Global Refugee Forum will serve as a forum for governments to engage in knowledge sharing and facilitate further discussions on the commitments needed to ensure greater sustainability in the refugee response."

In February 2023, Uganda initiated the roadmap to the Forum, and various activities, such as discussion roundtables, have been conducted to assess the refugee situation, preparing the country for the upcoming event.

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The Uganda refugee response continues to face persistent challenges stemming from inadequate funding. Sectors crucial to the well-being of refugees, including health, education, livelihoods, environment, and food and nutrition, are significantly impacted by the funding shortfall.

Over the past three years, the food ration has been gradually decreasing due to reduced donor funding, which has posed significant challenges for refugees. These changes, though difficult for refugees, are necessary to ensure the available resources are effectively utilized.

Additionally, other planned changes to food assistance are starting in July 2023, where new rations of food assistance will be provided by World Food Program (WFP) to different households based on their vulnerability.

“In the face of limited resources, it is important that we continue to work with the Uganda government to ensure that the response is inclusive and addresses the needs of the most vulnerable such as new arrivals, the disabled and elderly,” Marcus Prior, WFP Uganda Deputy Country Director said. “This World Refugee Day, WFP is committed to deepen investments in both emergency support and long-term resilience projects that enable refugees to survive and thrive.”

The Government, through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), will continue to allocate land to each newly arrived refugee family in the settlement for cultivating crops to supplement their monthly food ration distributed by WFP.

The imperative action to prioritize is the pursuit of lasting solutions for the refugee crisis. The global community continues to face a shortage of sustainable long-term measures, leaving millions of forcibly displaced individuals in a state of uncertainty.

For refugees to thrive within their host communities is key. However, it is equally important for stakeholders to work towards facilitating peaceful conditions that enable their return to their home countries and provide increased opportunities for resettlement elsewhere.

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