



Migration Profile

UGANDA

A. Executive summary

Uganda is a landlocked country bordered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Tanzania. The country's population in 2020 was 45.7 million. Migration to Uganda has been driven by political factors, poverty, rapid population growth, and the porosity of international borders. Northern Uganda has had to address economic and security issues in recent decades. Some 1.7 million people in the Acholi region in the north have been displaced by more than 20 years of armed conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. Over the last decade the number of international migrants residing in Uganda has increased considerably. In 2010, the stock of international migrants in Uganda was 492,900 (1.5% of the Ugandan population). In 2015 it increased to 851,175 (2.2% of the population) and in 2019, to an estimated 1,734,200 (3.9% of the population). The migration corridor between South Sudan and Uganda is ranked third of the top 20 migration corridors involving African Countries and is second in terms of corridors between two African countries. The extent of movement from South Sudan to Uganda is the result of large-scale displacement due to conflict. Emigration of migrant workers from Uganda is commonplace. With the diversification of East African economies, such as the Kenyan and Rwandan economies, the demand for workers has increased (for example in the services industry) and has drawn migrant workers from other East African countries, including Uganda.

In 2019, Uganda had approximately 1,395,100 refugees and asylum seekers. This amounts to 80.4% of the total number of international migrants and 2.7% of Uganda's total population. In 2020, there were 1.4 million refugees in Uganda; most were from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Uganda is a Tier 2 country and does not entirely meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking despite significant efforts to do so. A number of International Organisations, civil society organisations, and faith-based organisations that work with migrants and refugees are active in Uganda, including JRS, Caritas, CRS, and the Salesians. The Ugandan government has put forward a welcoming narrative both domestically and internationally, based on the idea of helping 'brothers' in need and Pan-Africanism. This spirit of welcome also stems from the fact that many Ugandans, including senior government officials, have experienced displacement at some stage and thus understand the

plight of refugees. This welcoming messaging is broadly echoed by wider actors, including Uganda's media.

Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Kenya were the founding states of the East African Community (EAC). Uganda adopted, in 2009, the EAC Common Market Protocol, which allowed the free movement of persons and the free movement of workers through the EAC.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Uganda is a landlocked country bordered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Tanzania. Its capital city is Kampala. The country's population in 2020 was 45.7 million. The country's ethnic groups are Baganda (16.5%), Banyankole (9.6%), Basoga (8.8%), Bakiga (7.1%), Iteso (7%), Langi (6.3%), Bagisu (4.9%), Acholi (4.4%), Lugbara (3.3%), and other ethnicities (32.1%) (2014 estimate). English and Swahili are the official languages, while Ganda/Luganda is the most widely used Niger-Congo language. Demographics relating to religion in Uganda are: 45.1% Protestant (comprised of Anglican 32.0%, Pentecostal/Born Again/Evangelical 11.1%, Seventh Day Adventist 1.7%, Baptist 0.3%); 39.3% Roman Catholic; 13.7% Muslim; 1.6% other; and 0.2% none. Agriculture is a vital economic sector, employing 72% of the country's workforce. The Ugandan export market dropped drastically as a result of the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan, but has recently recovered, mainly due to record coffee harvests (16% of Uganda's exports), and increasing gold exports (10% of Uganda's exports).

II. International and Internal Migrants

The extent of international migrants in Uganda is largely due to the fact that Uganda hosts the highest number of refugees of any country in Africa, with approximately 1.4 million refugees living in the country. Most are from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Over the last decade, the number of international migrants residing in Uganda has increased considerably. In 2010, the international migrants in Uganda totalled 492,900 (1.5% of the Ugandan population). In 2015, the number increased to 851,175 (2.2% of the population) and in 2019, to an estimated 1,734,200 (3.9% of the population). Similarly, the number of refugees in Uganda rose substantially from 2010 to 2019. Accordingly, the percentage of international migrants that were refugees skyrocketed from 31.8% in 2010, to 60.3% in 2015, to 80.4% in 2019. In 2020, there were a total of 1,407,981 refugees and 23,496 asylum seekers in Uganda. Uganda's net migration rate has fluctuated over the last thirty years. The rate was positive in 1990 at 2.5 (approximately 200,000 more immigrants than emigrants). The rate then shifted below zero between 1995 and 2000 and continued to decline until it reached its lowest point in 2010 at -3.3, with approximately 500,000 more emigrants than immigrants. Thereafter, the net migration rate increased to -1.7 between 2010 and 2015 (-300 000), and then rose considerably to 4 between 2015 to 2020 (amounting to 843,500 more immigrants than emigrants).

Since 2000, the ratio of male to female international migrants has shifted, such that there has been a slightly higher proportion of female international migrants (0.4% more) than male international migrants, and the proportion has steadily increased since then. In 2010, 50.9% of the total number of international migrants were female (251,000 of international migrants) and, in 2015, this had reached 51.1% (435,300). In 2019, this same percentage was estimated at 51.9% (892,600). Some international migrant women and children in Uganda are particularly vulnerable and exposed to different forms of abuse, neglect, stigmatisation, malnutrition, and a high probability of being infected with communicable diseases.

International migrant children (defined by UNICEF as those under the age of 18) amounted to 54% of international migrants in 2019, while those who are 19 and under (in accordance with the UN DESA definition) amounted to 57.5% of the international migrant population in 2020. Since 1990, the proportion of children in Uganda's migrant population has increased consistently every five years, with the exception of the period between 2005 and 2010 when the proportion of children dropped by 4.4%.

Most international migrants in Uganda come from neighbouring or nearby African countries. In 2019, the main countries of origin of international migrants in Uganda were South Sudan (1.1 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (approximately 320,000), and Rwanda, Sudan, and Burundi, each constituting about 60,000 to 70,000 of the total population of international migrants.

The migration corridor between South Sudan and Uganda is ranked third in the IOM 2020 World migration report list of the top 20 migration corridors involving African Countries, and is second in terms of corridors between two African countries. The extent of movement from South Sudan to Uganda is the result of large-scale displacement due to conflict.

In 2002, Uganda's Bureau of Statistics held a national household survey, in which data on internal migration was presented using the term "recent domestic migrants." A recent internal migrant is defined as a person who was born in Uganda, whose previous residence was in Uganda, and who had stayed in the district for a period not exceeding five years at the time of the census. There were 1,349,400 recent internal migrants in 2002. Approximately 65.9% of this number lived in urban areas, suggesting migration is predominantly rural to urban migration. The number of female domestic migrants was higher than that of male internal migrants in both urban and rural areas. The largest share of internal migrants was 15-29 years (603,600), followed by those 15 years or under (501,500). 56.5% said they were working, 39.1% were unemployed and 4.4% were looking for work. According to a study by the University of Makerere (Kampala), insecurity has been a significant factor in determining migration to Northern Uganda, while in the central region, the reason for migration has often been economic. Voluntary internal migration was mainly to seek employment and other motivations, particularly for migrant women including internal migration for marriage and related social movements.

There has been an increase in internal migration involving children, particularly from the Karamoja region to urban centres. The main motivation for migration to urban settings is to earn money in accordance with children's actual or perceived responsibility to contribute to their households. The children live in extreme poverty and are very vulnerable. Their reasons for migration are linked to the decrease in the number of livestock in their region of

origin and the lack of livelihood opportunities, which makes children unable to contribute to the family's income. Children then leave for urban centres to earn a living in various ways, yet their migration is often circular in nature. In time children frequently return home with their earnings and then eventually migrate again to earn more. The relatively large number of children migrating to urban areas to earn money, with or without the agreement of their parents, often resort to begging or theft.

The Ugandan government has put forward a welcoming narrative both domestically and internationally, based on the idea of helping 'brothers' in need and Pan-Africanism. This also stems from the fact that many Ugandans, including senior government officials, have experienced displacement at some stage and thus understand the plight of refugees. This messaging is broadly echoed by wider actors, including Uganda's media.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

With the diversification of East African economies, such as the Kenyan and Rwandan economies, the demand for workers has increased (for example in the services industry) and has drawn migrant workers from other East African countries, including Uganda. The East African Common Market Protocol, allowing for the free movement of labour, has assisted to facilitate labour migration within the East African subregion. Several countries have ratified the Protocol and some have already abolished work permits for East African citizens, making it easier for people to work across the subregion.

The most important factor causing Ugandans to migrate within and outside their country is employment, as economic opportunities in Uganda are limited. In 2010, there were 731,800 Ugandan emigrants, which had risen to 786,200 by 2015. In 2020, the estimate was 781,400 Ugandan emigrants. In 2015, the main destination countries were Kenya (333,789 emigrants), South Sudan (145,607 emigrants) and the United Kingdom (72,256 emigrants). A high number of Ugandans have also moved to Europe and North America. In recent years, Ugandans are also emigrating to the Middle East for work. Between 1990 and 2013, the number of emigrants increased by 153%. In 2017, 2% of migrants leaving Uganda were under the age of 18.

Another driving force for emigration is high population growth, which is especially evident among the younger population. High population growth influences employment opportunities. The rate of youth unemployment in Uganda is one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, fluctuating between 64% and 70%. The lack of attractive work options and the difficulty of young people in accessing land and natural resources are significant underlying reasons.

Accordingly, the main pull factor in the destination countries is the demand for labour. Due to the aging population in most OECD countries and the growing demand for health personnel, many Ugandan health workers emigrate abroad. The emigration of such professionals is considered one of the reasons for the decline of health care in government facilities in Uganda. Healthcare professionals earn 12 times more in the UK and four times more in Kenya. The emigration of workers in the fields of science, technology, and agri-food is also considered a brain drain in Uganda. Additionally, there is high demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour for jobs such as cleaners, sex workers, and security guards in the

Middle East and Asia. The high number of Ugandan emigrants abroad implies a strong demand for free or extremely cheap labour, which can be misused and exploited for profit.

IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers and Refugees)

In 2010, there were 140,000 internally displaced persons due to conflicts and violence in Uganda. In 2015, this number was 30,000, while in 2016 it rose to 53,000. In 2017 the number had decreased to 24,000, and rose again to 32,000 in 2018. In 2020, there were 33,000 IDPs as a result of natural disasters and 1,000 IDPs as a result of conflicts. The number of internally displaced persons decreased steadily from 2007 to 2015, and increased slightly between 2016 and 2018. In 2016, there were 23,000 newly displaced people, as members of the Bakonzo and Bamba ethnic groups in the Western region of Rwenzori clashed following the disputed local elections and political infighting. In 2018, there were 9,000 newly displaced persons, due to three events triggered by clashes in communities and territorial differences between the local population and the government. Internal displacement has recently decreased because the Lord's Resistance Army, which engendered thousands of IDPs at its height, is no longer a threat in Uganda. Nevertheless, the IOM notes that a decrease in internally displaced persons does not necessarily mean that they have successfully returned or reintegrated into their communities of origin, but only that they no longer live in the camps.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), there were 164,000 newly displaced persons due to natural disasters in 2018. This was mainly due to a large flood in May 2018, which displaced a total of 150,000 people. The number of new displacements due to both conflict and disaster was 2,300 in 2019, and 79 in 2020.

Uganda has been an important host country for asylum seekers and refugees, and still is to this day. In 2015, the number of refugees was 512,966, including asylum seekers. According to UNICEF in 2017 the number had risen to 1,351,000 refugees in Uganda, 62% of whom were under the age of 18, as well as 45,000 asylum seekers. In 2019, Uganda had approximately 1,395,100 refugees and asylum seekers, amounting to 80.4% of the total number of international migrants and 2.7% of Uganda's total population. In 2020, there were 1.4 million refugees. Most of them were from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Uganda is also home to refugees from Burundi, Sudan, and Somalia, among other countries. Refugees from South Sudan fled the civil war that began in 2014. More than 80% of newly arrived refugees are women and children.

Moreover, between 2008 and 2020 there were approximately 7,500 refugees from Uganda. According to IOM in 2012, most Ugandan citizens applied for asylum in South Africa (1,913), followed by the UK (400), Sweden (254), Kenya (240), and the US (189).

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Between 2008 and 2013, the IOM Uganda helped a total of 538 victims of trafficking return to their countries of origin. During the same period, the IOM assisted a total of 72 Ugandan-born victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation to return to Uganda. However, it is difficult to establish the actual number of victims of trafficking, as the population is largely hidden.

In 2019, approximately 251 human trafficking victims were exploited in Uganda in 2019, of which almost 57% came from the DRC, 41% from Uganda, and 1.99% from other countries. Overall, 66% of the victims exploited in Uganda are women and 72% are minors. Labour exploitation is by far the most common form of exploitation in Uganda.

In terms of governance, Uganda passed the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act in 2008. This law includes specific types of exploitation such as forced marriage, child marriage, harmful child labour, the use of children in armed conflicts, a victim involved in illegal activities, human sacrifice, organ withdrawal, the selling of body parts, and harmful ritual practices. Children who are not accompanied by their parents are statistically more vulnerable to human trafficking.

Uganda is a Tier 2 country and does not entirely meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, despite significant efforts to do so. Yet in 2019, the government reported the lowest number of investigations in the 5 years prior. There was also a substantial decrease in the number of prosecutions and no reports of training immigration and law enforcement officials, which had been taking place during the four previous years.

VI. National Legal Framework

The most important law governing immigration to Uganda is the Citizenship and Immigration Control Act of 1999, amended in 2009. This law regulates the entry and residence of migrants in Uganda, as well as the issue of citizenship. It does not discuss emigration or return migration. The IOM states that the legal framework is rather fragmented and does not address all aspects of migration. Uganda's Employment Act provides the same job opportunities for immigrants as for national citizens. The Refugee Act (2006) and the Refugee Regulations (2010) guarantee freedom of movement for refugees and access to social services. They also allow refugees to apply for permits for family reunification. Upon registration, refugees receive a plot of land for settlement and agriculture.

The National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons (2004) and the National Disaster Preparedness and Management Policy (2010) concern internally displaced persons, while the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008 is the key legislation on trafficking in human beings. These were developmental frameworks designed to solve the problems that characterised the IDP camps, such as overcrowding, lack of employment and income opportunities, deterioration of social norms, increasing rates of suicides, gender-based violence, and poor sanitary, healthcare, and educational infrastructures.

Uganda is a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Status of Refugees 1951, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as the additional provisions of the ILO Convention on Migrant Workers and the Conventions on Statelessness. Uganda is also a party to the African Union Convention for The Protection And Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Kenya were the founding states of the East African Community (EAC). Uganda adopted in 2009, the EAC Common Market Protocol, which allowed the free movement of persons and the free movement of workers through the EAC.

Uganda's Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2008) is the first positive step towards the fight against human trafficking in Uganda. However, the Act does not provide clear explanations on how victims of human trafficking will be rehabilitated and reintegrated within communities.

In a move to engage the diaspora in national development initiatives, the National Diaspora Policy of 2013 was designed as a strategy to mobilize and utilize diaspora resources in the country's development agenda.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for the identification and census of the population. The National Council for Citizenship and Immigration and the Directorate for Citizenship and Immigration Control are responsible for monitoring the entry and residence of foreigners in the country, the registration of Ugandan citizens, the issue of passports and travel documents, and border control. The Diaspora Department (within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) manages relations with the diaspora. The National Coordination Mechanism on Migration is a formal inter-ministerial coordination mechanism, established in 2015, composed of government agencies, international organisations, civil society, and academia, led by the Office of the Prime Minister. The Minister for Disaster Preparedness and Refugee Management also plays a significant role regarding displacement.

International Organisations

The most important international organisations dealing with migration include the IOM (International Organization for Migration), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Other migration-related United Nations agencies in Uganda include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Norwegian Refugee Council, Justice Defenders, International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI), and War Child International are international organisations that assist refugees and migrants in Uganda. The UNDP provides support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for capacity building, focusing on the management and policy of the diaspora. The UNHCR guides and coordinates international action to protect refugees and solve refugee problems globally and in Uganda, where the emphasis is on protecting refugees. UNICEF focuses on internal migration of children especially from Karamoja to different urban areas and helps families keep their children in school. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Uganda focuses on assistance to immigrants, healthcare, refugee resettlement, humanitarian assistance, labour migration, and migration policies and research. It also assists in border management.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Uganda has a series of projects and organisations that assist migrants and refugees, including Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, and Salesian Missionaries. JRS accompanies, serves, and advocates for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS works in Kampala and Kitgum. In Kampala, it assists asylum seekers, new arrivals, and the most vulnerable refugees by providing information, social assistance, medical assistance, transport, psychosocial support, skills training, and English language lessons. In Kitgum, JRS helps previously internally displaced persons (IDPs) with capacity building by providing agricultural and literacy training, peace education and psychosocial support.

Salesian Missionaries have a series of programs in Uganda, which give Ugandan students – including migrants, IDPs, and refugees – a space for learning, and also helps them meet their basic needs. Feeding programs are offered at primary and secondary schools. In 2020 and 2021, Salesian missionaries at the Palabek Refugee Resettlement Camp in Uganda were involved in information sharing and the provision of food aid and other critical supplies.

Female religious congregations are also involved in assisting refugees in Uganda, including the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Through their Ministry With the Poor Fund, they have assisted refugees in the Kyaka II refugee camp in the district of Kyegegwa, as well as the Rwamwanja refugee camp in the district of Kamwenge. They have focused on the areas of education, health and nutrition, and skills training. With the help of grants from the Pulte Family Foundation, Africa Faith and Justice Network, the Congregation's Justice Office and the Ministry With the Poor Fund, the Sisters of the Holy Cross are raising awareness against human trafficking and providing counselling and medical assistance to victims of human trafficking.

Caritas Uganda has a wide-range of programmes and campaigns across Uganda to address the serious economic and social development challenges that have resulted from the 20-year civil war that left 1.7 million refugees. For example, in Uganda's largest refugee camp, Bidi Bidi, Caritas Uganda assists South Sudan refugees, distributing hand tools for farming, as well as food handouts and vegetable seeds to improve their nutrition. Some other areas that Caritas is involved with include health, food security, advocacy, promotion of good governance, and climate change.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Uganda works with and through local partners, specifically the Catholic Church in Uganda, towards sustained development solutions, helping Ugandans to identify and address the root causes of poverty and injustice in their lives. One of its core programs is Emergency Response and Recovery. Since January 2017, CRS has operated this program in the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Yumbe District. Emergency efforts currently focus on water, shelter, livelihoods, and school construction. In partnership with refugee and host communities, CRS works to promote peaceful co-existence and ensure respect for human dignity.

Other Organisations

The East African Forum for Migrant Rights (EAFMR) is based in Uganda, as an NGO that deals with the rights of migrants in the country. Its mandate derives from the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Other organisations that assist migrants and refugees in Uganda include: the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI); the Foundation People for Peace and Defense of Human Rights (Foundation PPDR); The Refugee Law Project (RLP); and the COBURWAS International Youth Organisation to Transform Africa (CITOYA).

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