



The IRC in Uganda

Country Program Overview | 2023/24

90 years after Albert Einstein helped create the IRC, the number and intensity of humanitarian crises across the globe warrant a dose of Einstein-inspired innovation.

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Uganda** is a lead responder to humanitarian and development needs of refugees and host communities through quality, client-centered, inclusive, and integrated health, livelihoods, protection, and education services that promote sustainability, resilience, peaceful co-existence, and partnerships.

A History of Impact in Uganda

The IRC **began programming in 1998** in northern Uganda in response to mass displacement wrought by the Lord’s Resistance Army. Since then, the IRC has expanded to provide critical services for refugees and vulnerable Ugandans throughout the country. The IRC started supporting refugees and vulnerable individuals in Kampala in 2012 and was **one of the first organizations to respond in 2016** at the onset of the South Sudanese refugee crisis. In 2019, the IRC entered Tooro region to support refugees while also providing **epidemic preparedness and response services** throughout the region. In addition to emergency support, the IRC also invests in **long-term stability** for refugees and Ugandans through programs like immunization, family planning, legal services, women’s empowerment, education, and livelihoods.

Working Across the Arc of Crisis

The nature of displacement is changing globally, and the IRC recognizes that more deliberate long-term planning is needed. Therefore, the IRC is invested in developing integrated programs that work across **the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding nexus**. In Uganda, this means that our assistance is designed to benefit both **refugee and host community members**, that we reach refugees in both **urban and settlement** environments, that we plan for our investments in infrastructure (e.g. health facilities) to be handed over to district governments, that we promote peaceful coexistence, that we build the **capacity of government actors and local organizations**, and that we build strong markets and livelihood opportunities between refugees and host communities.

Innovation, Evidence and Systems Strengthening

The IRC has been at the **frontier of conducting rigorous research** in humanitarian settings and is one of few response organizations conducting impact evaluations in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In Uganda, we have been evaluating **community-based and mobile-technology-based approaches** to increasing immunization coverage, investigating community perceptions during Ebola responses, conducting political economy analysis of evidence use in government, and researching barriers and opportunities for feedback mechanisms. The IRC also supports other organizations take up **best practices and innovations** in humanitarian response.

Expanding through Local Partnerships

The IRC recognizes that local civil society, government, and private sector are closest to the crises that we tackle, and therefore, they are the main agents of response and recovery with sustainable outcomes for impact and scale. At the IRC we ask ourselves, - **‘why not partner?’**; and **strive to partner as equals**, so that our clients and local actors have the power and resources to drive lasting change. By 2024, we are committed to dedicating **10% of our funding** going to local partners for service delivery and to establish **five strategic partnerships**, of which three would be **women-led or focused actors**.

The IRC in Uganda | AT A GLANCE

Sectors	5 sectors - Health; Economic Recovery & Development; Protection & Rule of Law; Women’s Protection & Empowerment; and Education
Staffing	1,243 national 6 international
FY2023 Donors	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, ECHO, ECW, Elrha, FCDO, IKEA Foundation, LEGO Foundation, NY Times Neediest Cases Fund, Parkard Foundation, PRM, Signpost, UNHCR, UNFPA, USAID
Partners	22 partnerships (20 local NGOs, 2 international NGOs)
Locations	<p>Offices across 6 sub-regions and 6 settlements:</p> <p>West Nile (Bidi Bidi, Imvepi, and Rhino Camp settlements and host communities)</p> <p>Acholi (Palabek settlement and host communities)</p> <p>Western (Bunyoro region - Kiryandongo settlement</p> <p>Tooro region -Kyaka II settlement and respective host communities)</p> <p>Karamoja (host community)</p> <p>Central (Kampala -refugee and host communities)</p>



Health

- Signature Activities
- Primary Health Care
 - Epidemic Preparedness and Response
 - Sexual and Reproductive Health

The IRC supports **37 health facilities, 05 border health posts** and is the primary health care provider for over **550,000 refugees** as well as surrounding host communities in Bidibidi, Imvepi, Rhino, Palabek, and Kiryandongo settlements. The IRC also **supports systems strengthening** and mentorship for government health facilities in areas we operate. Additionally, the IRC provides **epidemic preparedness, surveillance, and response**. The IRC also contributes to improving family planning outreach and education, while also supporting sexual and reproductive health for refugees in multiple settlements through direct service delivery, systems strengthening and **advocacy for favorable policies**.



Uganda hosts **over 1.5 million refugees**, majority of whom live in settlements and an increasing number in urban areas including Kampala with over 110,000 (UNHCR, 2023).

Economic Recovery & Development

- Signature Activities
- Financial Inclusion & Cash Transfers
 - Enterprise & Business Development
 - Agriculture with Market Linkages

The IRC's **entrepreneurship and employment programs** provide several pathways to economic success. Financial inclusion for instance provides **continued, long-term support** through the savings and loans associations that ensure that members can start and grow small businesses. These associations serve as a platform for **integrated programming** and are often connected to IRC's follow-on support through vocational skills training, enterprise, and business development. The IRC also supports small-scale farmers to **increase yields**, add value, and reach markets **while conserving the environment**. Through the IRC's **block farming approach** groups in settlements band together to lease shared farmland from the host community.

Women's Protection and Empowerment

- Signature Activities
- Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP)
 - Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS)
 - Girl Shine Program

The IRC is using evidence-based approaches to work with communities to **shift the social norms that underlie violence against women and girls**. The IRC's EMAP approach can ensure that men support these violence-prevention efforts. To increase **accessibility to quality services for survivors** of gender-based violence, the IRC engages the WGSS model and the Girl Shine program where a range of services are provided including **psychosocial support** and skills development. The IRC also acknowledges that access to **financial resources enables women's independence and equity**. Therefore, we facilitate women to access financial services through various approaches including VSLA.

Protection and Rule of Law

- Signature Activities
- Legal & Protection Case Management
 - Peaceful Co-existence & Dispute Resolution
 - Advocacy, Adaptation & Systems Strengthening

The IRC advances rule of law strategies which link and strengthen national, sub-national, and informal systems to **prevent and respond** to violence, exploitation, abuse, conflict, crisis, discrimination, and exclusion faced by **vulnerable persons**, including female-headed households, persons with disabilities, the elderly, marginalized youth, children and persons without legal identity or legal status. Driven by principles of **local ownership, social inclusion and gender equality**, the IRC empowers vulnerable persons to access protective and legal services, understand and exercise their rights, claim entitlements and remedies, and influence decisions and practices for greater safety and protection.

Education

- Signature Activities
- Learning through Play Methodologies
 - Mobilization & Advocacy
 - Thought Leadership for Refugee Education

Through the 5-year **PlayMatters Project**, the IRC aims to improve holistic learning and wellbeing outcomes for school going children aged 3-12+ years. The IRC also started implementation of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation funded 3-year **Kulea Watoto (Nurturing Children) Initiative**, focusing on ECD and transforming livelihoods delivered through a unique two-generation integrated approach that targets children under five years and their caregivers. Additionally, the IRC in 2023 initiated the **Watoto Wasome (Children Learn) project** in partnership with Save the Children International and funded by the UN Global Fund for Education in Emergencies - Education Cannot Wait (ECW).



Mission: The mission of the IRC is to help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster, including the climate crisis to survive, recover, and gain control of their future.

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