



The IRC in Uganda

Country Program Overview | 2024/25

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, working across **6 sub-regions** in **urban and rural settings**, including Kampala. The IRC was **one of the first organizations to respond in 2016** at the onset of the South Sudanese refugee crisis and continues to be a leader in the refugee response as well as other crises including **epidemics, disease outbreaks** and **climate-related crises**. The IRC also invests in **long-term stability, self-reliance and resilience** of refugees and Ugandans through programs like immunization, family planning, legal services, human rights, 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**, and that we reach refugees in both **urban and rural settlement** environments. We also support the **transition of services** and infrastructure (e.g. health facilities) to district governments and build the capacity of government actors and local organizations to **strengthen local systems and services**. To **promote self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees**, we build strong markets and livelihood opportunities involving refugees and host communities, promote **peaceful coexistence**, and advocate for **refugee inclusion** in Ugandan systems, structures and services.

Innovation, Evidence and Systems Strengthening

The IRC has been at the **frontier of conducting rigorous research and impact evaluations** in conflict, post-conflict and protracted contexts. For example, in Uganda, we have been researching effective forms of **micro-enterprise support** to build self-reliance of urban refugees; how **intergenerational models** of livelihoods and education support for families can improve early childhood development; and **self-care approaches** that can advance sexual and reproductive health outcomes. The IRC also supports other organizations to take up **best practices and innovations** in humanitarian and development programming.

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, government and local actors have the power and resources to drive lasting change. This includes creating **strategic partnerships** with a range of local actors, particularly those that are **women or refugee-led/focused**, and providing more **financial, material and human resources** to partners.

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	1,057 nationals 3 international
FY2024 Donors	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, IKEA Foundation, LEGO Foundation, Packard Foundation, Breakthrough Prize Foundation, BPRM, UNHCR, FCDO, USAID, ECHO, ECW, Elrha, Netherlands Embassy (EKN)
Partners	22 partnerships (20 local NGOs, 2 international NGOs)
Locations	Working across 6 sub-regions including 6 refugee settlements and host communities: West Nile (6 districts including Bidi Bidi, Imvepi, and Rhino Camp settlements) Acholi (Palabek settlement, Lamwo, Kitgum and Agago) Lango (Apac and Oyam) Western (Bunyoro region - Kiryandongo settlement) Tooro region - Kyaka II settlement) Central (Kampala)



Health

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

The IRC supports **31 health facilities** and is the primary health care provider for over **550,000 refugees** and surrounding host communities in Bidibidi, Imvepi, Rhino, Palabek, and Kiryandongo settlements. The IRC also **supports systems strengthening** and mentorship for government health facilities and district health teams in areas we operate as well as **epidemic preparedness, surveillance, and response**. Additionally, the IRC contributes to improving family planning outreach and education and sexual and reproductive health for refugees and host communities in multiple districts through direct service delivery, systems strengthening and **advocacy for favorable policies**, such as self-care.



Uganda hosts **nearly 1.7 million refugees**, the majority of whom live in settlements and an increasing number in urban areas including Kampala with **over 150,000** refugees. (UNHCR, 2024). *Photo by D. Ssemwogerere for the IRC*

Economic Recovery and 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 **cash transfers and continued, long-term support** through 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 such as vocational skills training, enterprise and business development assistance, and social empowerment programs, particularly for women and youth. The IRC also supports small-scale farmers with **climate-smart agriculture** 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
- Women & Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS)
 - Girl Shine | Women Rise | EA\$E program models
 - Engaging Men in Accountable Practices (EMAP)

The IRC is using evidence-based approaches to work with communities to **shift the social norms that underlie violence against women & girls**. To increase **accessibility to quality services for survivors** of gender-based violence (GBV), the IRC engages the WGSS model where a range of services are provided including **survivor-centered GBV case management, psychosocial support (PSS), referrals, and skills development** using IRC best-practice models such as Girl Shine (to support, protect, and empower adolescent girls), **Women Rise** (GBV PSS framework) and **EA\$E** (an economic empowerment program that increases women's decision making power and links to other livelihoods initiatives such as VSLA). The IRC's **EMAP** approach ensures that men & boys support these violence-prevention efforts.

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
- Access to ECD & Learning Opportunities
 - Quality Education & Training
 - Advocacy & Systems Strengthening

The IRC promotes access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and early learning through **proven methodologies** including **Learning through Play (LtP)** and **intergenerational approaches** that target both children and their caretakers to promote Early Childhood Care and Education and build income generation skills. The IRC also **engages community, school and ECD center structures** to strengthen their engagement and management of ECD and repair and/or equip learning spaces for a conducive learning and teaching environment. To increase access to early learning services, the IRC collaborates with the Ministry of Education and Sports and **advocates for supportive policies and systems**.



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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