FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION CORRIDORS
IN WEST NILE, UGANDA

The Forced Displacement and Migration Corridors in West Nile, Uganda project will provide access to financial services to refugees, IDPs, and vulnerable host communities residing in cities. Maternal and mental health centres in the Oli Subdivision of Arua will be refurbished and equipped. Health professionals, community workers, and schoolteachers will receive dedicated training, sensitising them to mental health counselling so that they can act as a first point of contact for both host communities and refugees while performing their daily work.

Key experts will be trained and integrated within existing infrastructures, including health centres and schools, to respond to the needs and demands of counselling for refugees and host communities.

The project will also organise at least six dialogues to advance the role of secondary cities in managing migration and refugee situations.

The West Nile Region has:

A population of **3.8 million** (UBOS 2020 Statistical Abstract).

A poverty level of **34.9%**, the second highest in Uganda.

59% of the refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda, with most coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan.

11 districts, **15** local governments, and **116** lower local governments.

Implementing Partners: South Sudanese Refugees Association (SSURA), in partnership with Arua City Council, Oli Health Centre, West Nile Development Agency (WENDA), Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) Department of Refugee Management, Equity Bank Uganda Limited, and Youth Initiative for Protection and Empowerment (YIPE).

Location:
West Nile Region, Uganda

Duration:
April 2023 – March 2026

The West Nile region is a major refugee-hosting area in Uganda that borders the DRC and South Sudan. The people of the West Nile region share many similarities in language, culture, and history with their neighbours in these two countries – critical factors explaining the refugee influx into the region.

A general decline in financing for refugee operations in West Nile has driven migrants and refugees to relocate from settlements to the surrounding urban areas. In Arua City Centre, self-settled refugees make up 11 per cent of the total population; the estimates are even higher outside of the city centre where the rent is more affordable.

The pattern of this movement has never been regulated or organised, and many of the migrants and refugees are unregistered and undocumented. This means that they are not included in the national census or factored into the different local government planning and budget processes.
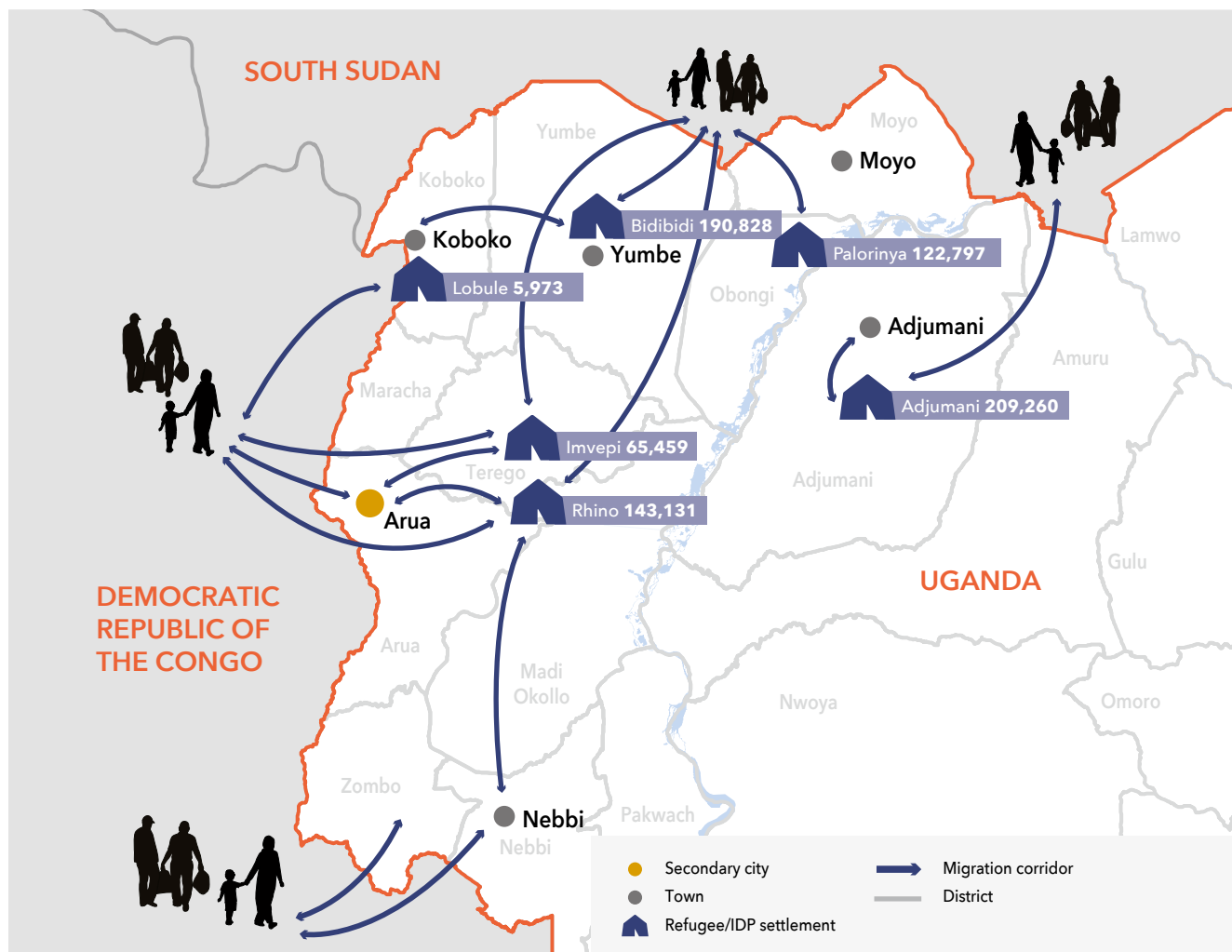
As a result, West Nile cities face severe pressure on key public services and infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, water, and sanitation. Without clear financing and planning modalities, local authorities are unable to meet the service needs of both refugees and host communities.

Other issues have also emerged across the region. Informal settlements are proliferating rapidly because housing prices are too high for refugees and the host community. Unaccompanied children living without their parents are engaging in petty crime, which has also increased. In addition, the lack of waste management and an increasing demand for fuel have caused environmental and forest degradation.
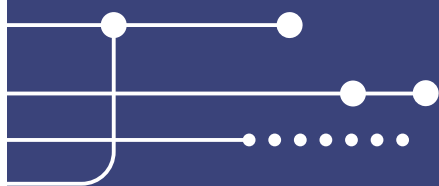
Uganda's West Nile Region

The West Nile region of Uganda is a destination for migrants, refugees, and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) moving across borders and into refugee/IDP settlements and urban areas.

Source: UNHCR May 2023 – https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101193

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

A more organised approach to managing refugees will help alleviate concerns about poverty, access to basic services, environmental damage, and mental health. This project builds on activities supported by SDC from 2018–2022 and the first enumeration of urban refugees by the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) in a secondary city (Arua).

This initiative also aims to empower local and refugee-led organisations and foster dialogue among local authorities, the private sector, and civil society on key issues for greater social cohesion.

Result 1: Improved labour market integration for migrants, displaced persons, and host communities in the West Nile region.

- At least **14,000 migrants**, forcibly displaced, and vulnerable host community persons benefit from services that enable them to access new or better work opportunities in the West Nile region.

- Equity Bank will work with SSURA to provide financial services to vulnerable host communities, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons. These include training in financial literacy and business development, as well as providing loans to women and youth groups and training for new agents. All beneficiaries will be enrolled in the bank's digital platforms to access better financial services.

- Up to **3,000 beneficiaries** will experience new or better work opportunities as a result of the project.

- Two local multi-stakeholder initiatives and dialogues will be held. Koboko will host the first dialogue on remittances and engaging diasporas, and Arua will host the second on impact investment.

Result 2: Improved gender-responsive, climate-resilient, and sustainable provision of basic services for migrants, displaced persons, and host communities in the West Nile.

- At least **15,000 migrants**, forcibly displaced, and vulnerable host communities will access basic municipal services due to local initiatives in Arua City and Koboko Municipality.

- The project will refurbish and enhance medical equipment at the Oli Health Centre IV in Arua, with a focus on maternal health services and medical staff dormitories.

- Up to **9,600 women** per year will benefit from a renovated and equipped Oli Health Centre IV for maternal health services.

- A new trauma/counselling centre will be established at the Oli Health Centre, enhancing access to mental health services in Arua and Koboko.

- **130 professionals** will be trained in trauma counselling, with some based at a new health centre in Koboko.

- Champion and dialogue clubs, with **204 members** in four groups, will be established on gender and climate resilience to foster inclusion and social cohesion.

- Four national multi-stakeholder initiatives and dialogues will be convened to advance the recognition of urban refugees in secondary cities in the West Nile region and beyond and to foster the mandate and financial capacity of local authorities for greater inclusion and social cohesion at the local level.

Result 3: Persistent gender inequalities addressed in West Nile cities.

Migration and forced displacement are highly engendered phenomena, and gender analyses and theories of change will inform locally appropriate gender-transformative action in urban contexts. The youth organisation YIPE will raise awareness and foster dialogue on gender, gender-based violence, reproductive health, and environmental management through its youth clubs.

THE RESILIENT SYSTEMS OF SECONDARY CITIES AND MIGRATION DYNAMICS PROGRAMME

This project is part of the Resilient Systems of Secondary Cities and Migration Dynamics programme supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The programme supports initiatives designed by secondary city stakeholders to provide migrants, forcibly displaced people, and host communities with equal access to quality public services, labour market integration, and economic opportunities. It seeks to advance global thinking on how secondary cities in developing countries can manage and seize the opportunities arising from migration and displacement.

The programme operates in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, working with systems of secondary cities in Guatemala, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Somalia, and Uganda that are experiencing substantive migration and forced displacement.

It facilitates regional collaboration on urban planning and advocacy and fosters local partnerships among diverse city stakeholders and national and international actors to implement approaches that are locally relevant and work for all residents.

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