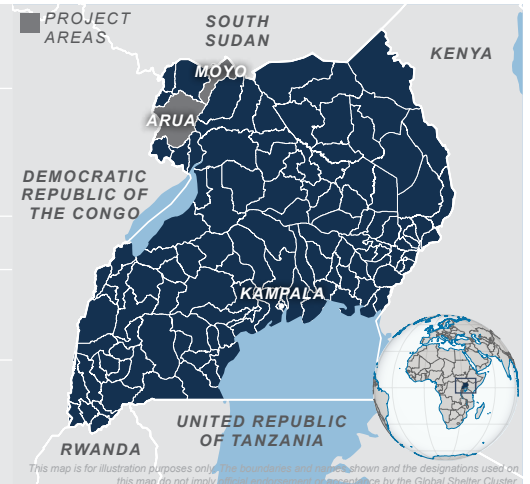


CASE STUDY

UGANDA 2017–2018 / SOUTH SUDAN CRISIS

KEYWORDS: Shelter construction, Community engagement, Local techniques / capacity, GBV risk mitigation

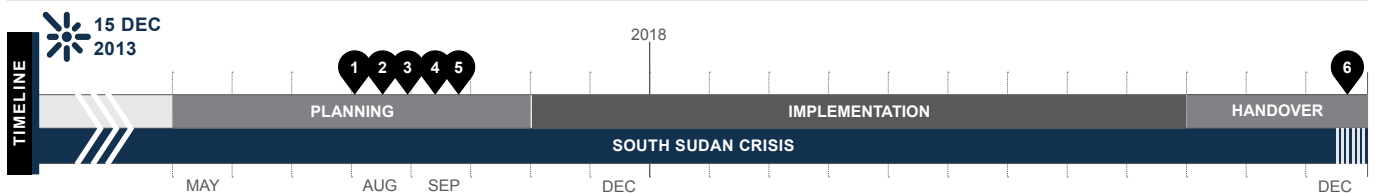
CRISIS	South Sudan Civil War (refugees in Uganda), December 2013–onwards
TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES*	1.06 million South Sudanese refugees in Uganda 2.48 million total South Sudanese refugees in six neighbouring asylum countries
PROJECT LOCATION	Rhino and Palorinya settlements (Arua and Moyo districts)
REFUGEES IN PROJECT LOCATIONS	181,657 individuals as of 30 Jun 2017 (the vast majority from South Sudan)
NEEDS IN PROJECT LOCATIONS	Rhino (July 2017): Shelter needs: 27% of profiled households 14,861 people with special needs identified Palorinya (May 2016): 4,010 people with special needs
PROJECT BENEFICIARIES	1,020 households with persons with special needs
PROJECT OUTPUTS	1,020 semi-permanent shelters and latrines 870 youth participated in cash-for-work activities
SHELTER SIZE	25.4m² (Rhino) and 17.6m² (Palorinya)
SHELTER DENSITY	5.1m² per person (Rhino) and 3.5m² (Palorinya)
MATERIALS COST PER HOUSEHOLD	USD 1,676 (Rhino) and USD 913 (Palorinya)
PROJECT COST PER HOUSEHOLD	USD 1,884 (Rhino) and USD 1,146 (Palorinya)



PROJECT SUMMARY

Two organizations working in two different refugee settlements built 1,020 semi-permanent shelters and latrines for South Sudanese refugees. The project targeted households with vulnerable individuals, such as elderly people, survivors of gender-based violence, and people with disabilities. Two different shelters were constructed using traditional techniques and locally available materials. Both refugee and host community youth were actively engaged through a cash-for-work component.

* Figures as of 31 Oct 2017. South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan 2018.



- 1 Aug 2017: The number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda surpasses one million after steady growth since the start of the conflict.
- 2 Aug 2017: The organization requests additional funds to include a shelter component to the emergency response.
- 3 Aug 2017: Project planning and shelter designs completed. Selection of the most vulnerable households in the settlements.
- 4 Sep 2017: Project start. Community mobilization and presentation of project objectives. The government and host communities approve and hand over land for brick production and construction work.
- 5 Sep 2017: Selection of non-skilled and skilled youth. Start of brick making and testing. Construction of a prototype and collection of the beneficiaries' feedback.
- 6 Dec 2018: 1,020 semi-permanent shelters completed.



The project provided semi-permanent shelters and latrines to refugees.

STRENGTHS

- + Effective coordination improved efficiency.
- + Use of local materials and building cultures.
- + Engagement of youth.
- + Income opportunities and market revitalization.
- + The community supported the most vulnerable in the construction.
- + Including host communities strengthened peaceful coexistence.

WEAKNESSES

- Procurement and logistical delays.
- Allocation of insufficient funds limited project targets.
- Continuous staff turnover.
- Plans should have considered access and weather constraints.
- Issues of quality and engagement in the rendering process.
- Time for planning and community engagement was not considered.



In Rhino the organization built larger, two-room shelters with CGI roofing.



In Palorinya, a partner organization constructed smaller traditional shelters.

BACKGROUND

For more background information, see overview A.23 in *Shelter Projects 2015-2016* and A.6 in this edition.

More than three years since the beginning of the South Sudan crisis, Uganda hosted over one million South Sudanese refugees. Approximately 87 per cent of them were women, children and youth, many of whom fled across the border alone and arrived weak and malnourished.

SITUATION BEFORE THE CRISIS

Prior to the conflict, most of the settlements that later hosted refugees were rural, underdeveloped, and marked by high rates of poverty. Existing infrastructure (such as schools, health centres and roads) was damaged due to seasonal weather patterns, conflict or neglect.

SITUATION IN 2017

Between January and October 2017, due to renewed hostilities in South Sudan, nearly 348,000 refugees arrived to Uganda. Most refugee settlements were located next to small villages, quite isolated and far from towns and markets.

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

The Uganda refugee policy discouraged camps and promoted the integration of refugee settlements within the host communities, granting refugees the right to livelihoods, education, freedom of movement, access to documentation and land for agricultural use.

Up to 2016, the shelter response consisted mainly of distribution of emergency shelter items supported by cash-for-work activities. Shelter sizes and designs varied between agencies and projects. Minimal support was provided to households for the construction and maintenance of these shelters. While effective in the short term, this model was not adapted to the protracted nature of the displacement. Emergency shelter solutions did not take into consideration the wide range of family sizes and required regular maintenance due to wear and tear. After six months of use, emergency shelters no longer protected occupants from the elements, requiring additional materials and repairs, which had significant cost implications.

By the end of 2016, the Shelter Working Group developed a new eight-year strategy and asked partners to stop upgrading emergency shelters. Instead, the strategy proposed to build larger semi-permanent shelters with local materials, with a lifespan of three to five years, especially targeting vulnerable households arrived between 2016 and early 2017.¹

Following the government's refugee strategy,² the organization and a partner chose to target both the host community and the refugees in their shelter interventions. They also collaborated with the district local government authorities to incorporate the needs of refugees in their District Development Plan and the ongoing implementation of local services.

TARGETING

The initial beneficiary list was prepared by community mobilization teams through assessments specifically designed to identify people with special needs. Multi-stakeholder committees composed of representatives from the government and the sector lead agency provided additional inputs and validated the lists.

In addition to prioritizing new arrivals, vulnerability criteria were used, such as youth at risk, single women, elderly and persons with serious health conditions, disabilities or physical protection needs.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

TEAM AND APPROACH. Between the two partners, 40 staff were involved in implementing shelter activities in two different locations. Staff members from one of the organizations' office in Tanzania went on an exchange mission to Uganda to share the experience and lessons learned from a similar project. Instead of using contractors, the two partners trained and employed youth from the host and refugee communities to construct semi-permanent shelters and latrines for vulnerable households using a cash-for-work modality.

Land for shelter and agricultural use was allocated by the government and two different shelter prototypes were approved and built in each district. Before early 2018 there was no sector-level agreed design.

Throughout the project, the two organizations conducted extensive community mobilization activities, including hazard mapping and village planning.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH. A sensitization campaign was carried out in the project locations to identify young people interested in construction work and brick production. Several meetings were carried out with refugee and host community members to discuss the goals and benefits of the project. Refugee welfare committees (established settlement leadership structures) played a key role in the mobilization of youth and registration of beneficiaries.

¹ UNHCR, 2018–2025 Uganda Shelter Strategy.

² The Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHOPE) Strategy.

Local youth were divided into teams, based on an assessment of their basic skills. The teams specialized in different tasks, such as brick production and carpentry. Youth groups were composed of at least 10 people, including minimum two women, a mason and a carpenter and evenly represented both refugee and host community members. The organization ensured there was a mix of skills in the groups, to promote informal learning. Each group was placed under the leadership of a skilled foreman. Young people with no prior basic construction or carpentry skills were mentored by masons and carpenters through on-the-job trainings. The teams were paid through cash for work according to the number of shelters constructed.

The advantage of using cash-for-work groups led by foremen selected by the organization was that local people benefited from employment opportunities more than through the traditional contractor-led approach. Contractors typically bring in people from their own villages, whereas the foremen had to first select people from the area where shelters were being constructed. Other workers could be brought in only if there were not enough skilled labourers in the target village.

RENDERING PHASE. Refugees contributed labour to finish their shelters by rendering the raw bricks with mud. In some cases, when people were physically unable to smear the walls, they received help from family members. Where family ties were lacking, in a few locations others provided support due to their common background or previous ties. When the extra support could not be granted, project staff assisted households in the rendering.

COORDINATION

The two partner organizations already had a well-established relationship with the district local authorities, line ministries and police in the targeted areas. During implementation, all work plans and updates were shared with district authorities and operational partners. Monthly coordination meetings with all the stakeholders -- co-chaired by the government and sector lead agency -- improved project performance and identified gaps in the implementation of activities between the local government and the implementing partners.

MAIN CHALLENGES

ACCESS CONSTRAINTS. Poor road networks in the settlements hindered the delivery of materials, equipment and tools, as some plots of land were inaccessible to heavy trucks, resulting in the need to use alternative equipment. For the future, the organization considered coupling shelter interventions with minimal road improvement projects.

ADMIN AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES. It was more challenging to manage multiple different contracts with foremen and construction groups for each stage, as opposed to hiring a single large contractor. This also made monitoring of construction quality more complex, so the payments were disbursed only based on shelters built. Additionally, in some cases the agreements with foremen had to be terminated, because they either did not hire local community members or charged a percentage of the workers' earnings.

GBV RISK REDUCTION

The project targeted people who, due to their vulnerability, were at higher risk of exposure to gender-based violence (GBV), which was one of the most prevailing protection issues in the refugee settlements. Linked to gender inequalities rooted in the culture, forms of GBV included child marriage, domestic violence, and emotional and psychological abuse. Long distances to service points, idleness among the youth and community at large, poor vigilance among the community and insufficient lighting in the settlements all contributed to GBV risks.

Before the start of this project, the organization established GBV taskforces throughout the settlement to facilitate the reporting of GBV cases and had dedicated case workers to build trust and help overcome the stigma associated with sexual assault. Community watch groups were also formed in seven villages and gender trainings provided to the welfare committees. Lastly, the organization in collaboration with the sector lead agency started the roll-out of a community mobilization approach, which aimed to stimulate reflection on social norms and challenge power imbalances within refugee communities.

To encourage participation in the project, activities were scheduled at appropriate times, women were actively sought out and minimum quotas of women were respected in the construction groups.



Shelters were built with locally available materials through the engagement of local youth groups who were divided in different teams based on their skills.



Mud bricks were mainly sourced from the local community, and partly through MoUs with landowners. Timber frames were prepared in workshops within the settlement.

DESIGNS AND TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

Shelter and latrines were built using local typologies and materials, and following national and international standards. One organization built rectangular shelters with corrugated iron roofing, two rooms and lockable doors. The other adopted a traditional typology, which included the use of three layers of grass for the roofing, and 12 support poles to bear the axial load of the roof. The two-room design was preferred, as it allowed greater privacy and flexibility in living arrangements. However, beneficiaries often did not like having two doors in the same room, as this supposedly made it harder to control theft and reduced the wall space to use for storage.

The shelter and latrine designs were adjusted depending on the nature of the soil and the water table. Foundations were either made of burnt bricks or reinforced concrete, and walls were made of unburnt bricks.

In the project areas, latrines were usually raised with untreated poles cast on mud and wattle (highly prone to termite attack). Instead, to reinforce the foundations and plinth, the footing was cast in concrete and walls used cement-sand mortar for the first layers. Latrines used concrete slabs cast in situ and reinforced with iron bars, and ventilation pipes.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLY

Through the cash-for-work scheme, local youth produced unburnt bricks, which were more environmentally friendly than burnt bricks. Timber and other manufactured materials were sourced through suppliers.

As most of the good-quality soils were used for cultivation, service contracts were signed with landowners who, in exchange for a small financial compensation, provided land for a specific period. Contracts specified that landowners were responsible for backfilling any holes before being paid.

However, since the bricks produced were not enough, the organization decided to purchase bricks directly from the local community at a 30 per cent higher rate than in its moulding sites (where contracts had been signed). Brick moulders set up small sites either on their own land or through private agreements with landowners. Most bricks in Rhino were provided in this way rather than through service contracts. However, the latter provided greater control over labour conditions and environmental impact, as well as eased the administrative burden (as less contracts were involved).

During the rainy season, plastic sheets were used to protect walls and bricks. During the dry season, water trucking was introduced to supplement the water fetched by women locally, in order to ensure the work could progress as scheduled.

Hardware materials, such as nails, iron sheets, iron bars and cement, were sourced in bulk from national manufacturers to reduce costs. Bids were advertised on local platforms, in public areas, newspapers and local radios, and were then received and analysed by a procurement committee. The project also supported the economic empowerment of women, who were culturally responsible of cutting the grass and sold it to suppliers of their choice.

On the other hand, the fact that suppliers bought grass and bamboo poles from the community contributed to deforestation. It also had the potential to fuel tensions between hosts and refugees due to the increased pressure on natural resources near settlements and the impact on the availability of grazing area for livestock. To prevent conflicts around land and resource utilization, the refugee welfare committees and the government organized meetings and community dialogues on the subject.

WIDER IMPACTS

As materials were local, transport costs were reduced and cash was injected into the local economy. This provided some economic compensation to the host community.

The participation of refugees helped foster a sense of ownership, and the involvement of youth through cash for work created or strengthened their skills, laying the foundations for future livelihood opportunities. Trained youth could then be employed for maintenance or repair works and future projects, and some stated that they would apply the skills when returning to their home country. Owing to the income they earned, youth opened businesses and were able to achieve better household dietary diversity.

Furthermore, brick moulding significantly increased in the settlement since the start of the project, attracting buyers from afar. This contributed to reducing deforestation, as host communities started using more bricks rather than timber.

MATERIALS AND LABOUR FOR A SHELTER IN RHINO			
Items	Units	Qty	Total cost (USD)
Mud bricks production	Pcs	4,000	88.39
Water supply	Litres	15,000	207.17
Transportation of bricks	trips	4	138.11
Damp Proof Course	Lm	37	20.44
Pre painted roof sheet 30G	Pcs	19	236.17
Ridge cap	Pcs	5	20.44
Water gutters	Pcs	5	20.44
Roofing nails	Kg	7	14.50
Assorted wire nails	Kg	12	23.20
Rubber washers	Pcs	150	20.72
Hanging clips for gutters	Pcs	10	9.67
Timber trusses, rafters and purlins	Pcs	25	82.87
Fascia board	Pcs	8	50.83
Doors – timber & iron sheet	Pcs	2	44.20
Windows – timber & iron sheet	Pcs	3	49.72
Welded mesh	Pcs	1	14.36
Pad bolts	Pcs	3	6.63
Hinges	Pcs	10	12.43
Tower bolts	Pcs	5	6.91
Labour (lump sum)	LS	1	222.09

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED



The project involved host community households via cash for work, which helped foster integration and allowed refugees to access more land for livelihoods.



The project engaged local youth throughout the construction process. In some cases, the rendering phase presented some challenges for the beneficiaries.

STRENGTHS

+ **Effective coordination between all actors** which improved efficiency, saved resources and time. Notably, this led to greater inclusion of the most vulnerable people, thanks to referral mechanisms and the use of common tools and vulnerability criteria.

+ **Local materials** were chosen to ensure their availability and make repair and maintenance more affordable. Environmental impact and costs were also contained, thanks to the reduced need for processing and transport. **The shelters were designed respecting the local building cultures** and incorporating communities' feedback, which contributed to promoting their cultural heritage.

+ **The project built on existing community strengths and resources** via the involvement of youth from both refugee and host populations.

+ **The project provided income opportunities** to local youth, injected cash in the local markets and contributed to the revitalization of brick making in the target areas.

+ **Community members provided labour** to build shelters for those households who did not have the capacity to do so themselves.

+ **The inclusion of host community members as beneficiaries** of the cash-for-work component strengthened peaceful coexistence with the refugees and more access to land, which in turn also increased livelihood opportunities.

WEAKNESSES

- **The procurement and logistical procedures took longer than expected**, leading to the extension of the project. This was due to a combination of factors, such as having to deal with multiple foremen rather than with a single large contractor.

- **The funds budgeted for shelters and latrines were insufficient.** As a result, the project was only able to support a limited number of people compared to the needs.

- **Staff turnover** led to a constant and costly cycle of recruitment and ongoing training of staff.

- **Access and weather constraints were not well anticipated** (e.g. the onset of the rainy season), leading to challenges related to staff mobility, brick production and the timely completion of construction works. Better plans should have been made before the wet season and should have been flexible enough to adapt to different circumstances.

- **Some beneficiaries struggled with the rendering process** given that the houses were often much taller than the traditional typology. The render itself at times was badly mixed, as the earth varied in quality, mainly leaving the mud bricks exposed to weathering. A small number of people did not see the benefit of rendering and expressed that agencies should be responsible, which showed the ongoing need for community engagement.

- **The initial work plan was not realistic.** It did not adequately factor-in the six months needed for preparatory work and community engagement.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Joint monitoring** with shelter working group partners can help to address issues of quality and value for money, and can support with identifying solutions to various challenges.
- Although only based on anecdotal evidence, **involving the refugee welfare committees** in project activities – especially in the establishment of the youth groups – **enabled the voices of the wider community to be integrated in the project.** Their involvement was also a way to further legitimize and recognize their role and work in the communities.
- **The community mobilization approach can be greatly strengthened.** It is essential to have continuous inputs from protection and community mobilization teams, both in order to support appropriately the workers' groups and ensure that the training element is well implemented, but also to ensure that the most vulnerable fully benefit from the interventions.