



**PILOTING THE GRANT  
AGREEMENT WITH  
ORGANIZATIONS LED BY  
FORCIBLY DISPLACED  
AND STATELESS PERSONS  
IN UGANDA**

**A Promising Practice  
in Community Engagement  
in Uganda**



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**Cover photograph:** Distribution of masks by I CAN in a school in Bidibidi, Uganda

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**Title:** Piloting the grant agreement with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Uganda

**Type of practice:** Emerging Practice

**Programme objective:** To enhance participation and inclusion of the people UNHCR work with and for, and directly partner with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons and community-based organizations through a grant to support these organizations' projects

**Dates:** October – December 2021

**Population groups:** Organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Uganda, and the communities they work in, including refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and host community members

**Partners:** Youth Arise Network (YAN), Triple T Studio, Community Psychosocial Support Organization (CPSO), Youth Empowerment Foundation, I CAN South Sudan

## Programme overview

Uganda is one of the eight countries globally that piloted the [grant agreement with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons](#). In line with the organization's efforts to enhance participation and inclusion of the people UNHCR work with and for, the agreement allows UNHCR operations all over the world to directly partner with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons and community-based organizations through a grant to support these organizations' projects. In order to assess the effectiveness of the initiative in meeting the needs of displaced and stateless people, in 2021 UNHCR piloted the grant agreements with 15 projects across eight countries, namely Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Mali, Uganda, Malawi, Switzerland and Greece. From working with arts in Chile to empowering women in Malawi, the supported projects covered different areas, including physical and mental health, environment, livelihoods, and shelter. The participating organizations were asked to provide feedback on their experience and the lessons that were drawn from implementation were reflected in the revised grant agreement related material prior to its global rollout.

UNHCR in Uganda piloted the new grant agreement for community-based organizations (CBOs) and refugee-led-organizations (RLOs) from October to December 2021. Under this pilot, UNHCR Uganda provided US\$ 4,000 to five selected RLOs, some of which were youth-led, across five refugee settlements in Ramwanja, Kyaka II, Palorinya, Pagirinya I & II (Adjumani) and Bidibidi. The projects implemented through these grants ranged from empowerment of communities and youth, prevention and response to suicide, to the promotion of decent work opportunities for both host communities and refugees.

This practice is intended to document the experience of the UNHCR Uganda operation in piloting the grant for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. This case study is intended to contribute understanding and learning on the implementation of the grant agreement initiative.

## Context

Following the launch of the updated [UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\) Policy](#) in 2018, the Division of International Protection (DIP) and the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR) went to Uganda in early 2019 to assess progress and challenges in implementing the 10 core action areas of the policy. This was followed by the development of an AGD action plan by the country operation. In 2020, the CBP unit in the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes (EHAGL) regional bureau rolled out the AGD self-assessment tool across the region. Findings from the assessment in Uganda combined with those of the 2019 mission show great progress in the implementation of the AGD Policy core actions related to Accountability to Affected People (AAP) on transparency and communication and feedback and response. There were, however, glaring gaps in strengthening participation and inclusion of diverse groups of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in UNHCR programming

and decision-making, as per the localization agenda. From 2020 to date, the Uganda country operation has therefore taken steps to ensure that displaced persons and host communities meaningfully participate in decisions and initiatives affecting their lives, in collaboration with refugee-led and host community-led organizations, including mapping of community-based structures, capacity strengthening, improving UNHCR's feedback and response mechanisms.

Until the launch of the grant agreement, despite a long history of partnerships, the Uganda operation had only one RLO it directly implemented activities with. Uganda was chosen after applying to pilot the grant agreement, and received US\$ 20,000.



*I CAN South Sudan staff posing before products during a workshop in Bidibidi, Uganda*  
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## Programme background

Uganda is one of the countries targeted by the Prospects Partnership Project, a multi-year programme that covers the period from July 2019 to June 2023. The aim of the partnership is to develop a new paradigm when responding to forced displacement crises that sees the involvement of development actors in a result-based and country-led approach. The partnership also provides a platform to show the benefits of innovative approaches that can enhance impact on the ground, including but not limited to, fostering synergies and strategic coordination across partnering organizations, focused on education, employment and protection. More specific themes under the protection chapter are child protection, youth empowerment, peaceful co-existence, support to persons at heightened protection risk including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and registration. The funding is allocated with the specific aim of supporting the implementation of the AGD Policy to the operations targeted by the partnership as well as supporting learning from practices on AGD mainstreaming across the region. Within this, a specific focus has been on interventions targeting youth, and in relation to skills building and employment.

To enhance the leadership and meaningful participation of displaced and stateless persons, in 2021 UNHCR introduced a grant agreement that allows operations to partner directly with refugee-led organizations (RLOs) or other organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, and community-based organizations (CBOs) without intermediary non-governmental organization

(NGO) partners. The UNHCR Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR), together with the EHAGL Regional Bureau invited operations in the region to pilot the grant agreement before its global roll out in 2022. A series of documents were specifically developed to guide operations in the implementation of the grant.

Following a review of the Uganda AGD action plan in 2021, the country operation decided to pilot the grant agreement as a means of further advancing the meaningful participation of displaced persons and host communities in programming complementing what was already achieved under the Prospect Partnership Project. With funding from the Prospect Partnership Project, the Uganda team led the call for proposals, the selection of organizations and projects to be funded, and the allocation of grant funds.

Multiple channels of communication and information sharing are regularly used by the UNHCR Uganda operation to inform various stakeholders about these initiatives, including community-based organizations, community radio, and [bodaboda talktalk](#).

At the same time, the Uganda operation runs an inter-agency Feedback, Referral and Response Mechanism (FRRM) that enables refugees and host communities to share feedback on the programmes and services provided. These channels are available to all people served by UNHCR under all programme initiatives, including the projects funded under the grant agreement.

## ➤ Resources and partnerships

According to the available guidance on the implementation of the UNHCR grant agreement, each applying organization can receive up to US\$ 4,000 per project and up to a total of US\$ 12,000 over a year for diverse project activities. The grant agreement targets non-profit, grassroots organizations whose activities are based primarily on volunteer efforts and provide advocacy, protection and assistance services at community level. To be eligible, organizations should be established by refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees, stateless persons and any other persons who fall under UNHCR's mandate. In addition, displaced and stateless persons should comprise more than 50 per cent of the organization's leadership.

In Uganda, a total of US\$ 40,000 was made available by the EHAGL Regional Bureau from the Prospect Partnerships Multi-Annual Global and Regional Programme, for enhancing AAP and gender equality in the region. Of this sum, US\$ 20,000 was allocated to Uganda for the grant agreement pilot project.

The operation has continued to explore other opportunities for funding RLOs in Uganda, to ensure that gains from the pilot are not lost. This includes funding from the UNHCR NGO Innovation Award, the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) funded project on 'Advancing Young People's Engagement and Meaningful Participation' through the Prospects Partnership opportunity fund.



*Cultural leaders taste portions of the exhibited food on International Peace Day.*  
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## Process and activities

UNHCR put out a call for proposals at the operation's sub-offices levels, which were screened by a multi-functional team. From the proposals received, five organizations were selected by the UNHCR Representative in Uganda.

The following table is an overview of the five RLO proposals that were selected for the grant agreement:

	Location	Organization	Project title	Focus
1	Rwamwanja	Youth Arise Network (YAN)	Community Empowerment to Resilience	Women and girls, Gender-based violence (GBV), mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)
2	Kyaka II	Triple T Studio	Inclusive Youth Empowerment Through Music and Art	Youth; Information-Education-Communication (IEC)
3	Palorinya	Community Psychosocial Support Organization (CPSO)	Response to suicide prevention and management in Palorinya Refugee Settlement and in the host community	MHPSS
4	Pagirinya I & II (Adjumani)	Youth Empowerment Foundation	Fixing shelter for 12 Vulnerable persons in Adjumani refugee settlements	Shelter
5	Bidibidi	I CAN South Sudan	Retooling Refugees and Host Community for decent work opportunities in quality mask production	Livelihoods, women



### Peaceful co-existence among refugees and host communities

In Kyaka, Triple T Studio empowered youth to use music and art to engage refugees and host community members to promote peaceful co-existence. The organization provided music and media production training to a number of talented young people selected from both the refugee and host communities, in order to foster peaceful co-existence. This resulted in improved understanding of the diverse cultures and the challenges that each group faces. It also led to some important behavioural and attitudinal change towards refugees. For

example, following this project, members of the host community started sharing boreholes with refugees; and school children started mingling with and sitting next to refugee children, which they did not do earlier. Youth were also trained on music and media production and new talents were discovered from the settlement, which should be further sustained and promoted. The project was implemented by refugees and host community members, who, with a deep understanding of the challenges faced in their communities, created positive change.





*Beekeeping is an important activity for the Benet community, both for livelihoods and medicine.*  
©UNHCR/ Esther Ruth Mbabazi



## Promoted use of locally available materials

In Adjumani, the Youth Empowerment Foundation (YEF) was able to provide shelter to 12 households with persons at heightened protection risk, improving their living conditions. The construction project worked with local suppliers to support the host community. However, the RLO noted the difficulties in reporting when buying from local vendors and grass collectors who have no accounting documents. Longer lead-in period and closer coordination with the RLO is needed. The RLO in Pagirinya, Adjumani reported improved relations in the settlement but

expressed additional needs, as the project was not able to assist all those in need of repaired shelters. Lack of resources for toilet and bathing facility repairs for persons with specific needs was also noted. The pilot project on shelter was suggested by UNHCR Adjumani to complement the efforts made on shelter repair by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), whose budget for this is quite limited. The RLO can implement other small-scale projects in Pagirinya with support from UNHCR – based on the needs identified by the community.





## Strengthened community capacity on MHPSS

Training and awareness-raising on suicide prevention implemented by the RLO Community Psychosocial Support Organization (CPSO) in Palorinya was intended to create and progressively strengthen a community-based support mechanism for responding to and preventing the high number of suicides in the community. This was expected to help communities identifying, referring, and managing those suspected of suicidal tendencies, leading to an expected reduction in suicide cases. A total of 443 men, women, girls and boys from the refugee and host community were trained on basic

suicide response and prevention management mechanisms, among which there were also suicide survivors. As a result of the intervention by the RLO, five suicide survivor support groups were formed, with a total of 49 members (32 females and 19 males). Working with RLOs, as well as with survivors, in responding to protection risks and preventing severe depression leading to suicide in refugee settlement is a very effective and sustainable approach. UNHCR will create impact in community-based protection if it builds on community knowledge, experience, innovation, and skills.



## Strengthened RLO capacity

Prior to this grant, some of the RLOs had established offices, training centres, and were already running projects with their own funding and with much focus on activities that did not require funding. However, the RLOs were not able to implement activities due to lack of access to funding, which limited their capacity to directly implement. With the grants provided, the RLOs were able to strengthen their expertise in certain areas through engagement of professional facilitators and practical learning working with community members. An example is the Youth Arise Network (YAN) in Rwamwanja that works with GBV survivors and youth, and which had already pre-identified individuals in need of support. This facilitated the pre-screening of the intended 40 individuals with whom to work with throughout the project. The RLO relied on the services of professional facilitators to carry out their activities, especially

training. The group formation was a key area that showed unity regardless of ethnicity and other diversities in Rwamwanja.

Another RLO that enhanced its capacity over time was in Bidibidi, and more specifically the mask-production project promoted by I CAN South Sudan, which was implemented with high quality. Over 3,000 face masks were produced by refugee and host community tailors, trained and empowered refugee women tailors, and over 300 reusable sanitary pads were produced and are awaiting the certification for use by refugees and host community members. Training by UNHCR could not take place because of the limited time available for implementation. It is recommended to undertake a training needs assessment of the participating RLOs to assess the areas in which they may need to build their capacity.

## ➤ Achievements, results and impact

Besides the immediate benefits each implemented project had on the targeted population, as per the above description, this first round of community-based initiatives proved effective in establishing a new way of working for UNHCR, and set the foundations for more investment in community-led structures.

Following the successful implementation of the grant agreement in Uganda, UNHCR, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), applied to the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs for funds under the framework of the PROSPECTS partnership project to engage with youth-led organizations.



*A Congolese refugee in Uganda finds healing in empowering others as a successful entrepreneur and an inspiration for fellow refugees. She checks on her newly set-up fish breeding pond in Kyangwali Refugee settlement.*

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## Lessons

Despite this being a relatively new practice, some interesting lessons can already be drawn, particularly in relation to the process, the selection of organizations and the grant allocation.

Among them, the importance of engaging with senior management and all staff and units involved, from the beginning, to ensure a common understanding of the grant agreement from the outset, to avoid delays and ensure smooth implementation. In some locations in fact, the late onboarding of some team members delayed the signing of the project.

Across all projects, members of the RLOs reported feeling empowered by the experience and the funding received by UNHCR and the partners. They also expressed the need for such initiatives to be extended and replicated, to allow them to build trust and reinforce collaboration within the communities on the work they perform. They all reported a positive attitude by community members vis-à-vis the organizations and the activities implemented, which allowed RLOs to carry out activities directly for the benefit of their communities.

**Time management** could be improved, particularly the time necessary for the finalization of the agreement and the release of the instalment. Among the reasons identified for the delay was the time lag between various stages of the selection process. In fact, although the initial selection was made at Sub-Office level, it took some time for proposals from the various settlements to reach Kampala for the final selection stage. Moreover, while the operation managed to submit all the necessary documents for preparation of the agreements rather quickly, due to the administrative procedures, the finalization and release of the instalment were significantly delayed. Time was also needed to clarify budget-related issues, which were not initially included in the guidance material. Finally, time is critical to ensure capacity and support for the organizations that receive the grant.

**Availability and management of resources** Another issue that deserves some further consideration is the grant amount, which is now set at US\$ 4,000 (with a possibility to receive up to three grants, for a total of US\$ 12,000). While in the context of the pilot, this was combined with other funding streams, for the future this may not be sufficient to cover the costs of the projects. One issue experienced in relation to the resources was that the SOP developed to guide the implementation of the Grant Agreement lacked clarity on whether the Partner Integrity Capacity and Support Cost (PICSC), which is four per cent for RLOs, should have been included in the budget of US\$ 4,000. It was only after seeking guidance from Implementation Management and Assurance Service (IMAS) that this question was clarified. Finally, greater support may be required by UNHCR on the management of funds.





*Nuer cultural group prepares for a traditional dance on International Peace Day*  
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**Selection process** A few challenges were experienced in relation to the selection process of organizations, which are worth further reflections and informed some of the above learning. For example, in the South-West, the initial selection of the project was made at Sub-Office Mbarara level with proposed projects coming from the Field Offices from settlements, but some of the selection committee members were the same colleagues as those presenting their projects from their respective settlements. In order to ensure impartiality, the selection committee should not include anybody related to the organizations submitting the grant proposals.

In Adjumani, there were challenges associated with the limited number of refugee-led organizations operating in the area. With exception of the Refugee Welfare Committees and some operational partner NGOs, the RLOs are not visible in the settlement base camps in Adjumani. Moreover, the organization that was selected did not meet some of the (minimum) administrative requirements, such as having a regular bank account.

## Tips for replication and scaling up



The following are some recommendations moving forward that were identified during the piloting of the grant agreement in Uganda. As for the reflections on the whole experience reported above, some are related to the process and internal mechanisms and procedures, while others are more specific to the realities of the projects in Uganda.

- ☑ Consider the possibility of increasing the amount allocated and the timeframe to enhance the reach and impact at community level. Ideally, the partnership with the RLOs should last for at least 12 months to effectively assess the capacity of partner organizations and proper utilization of the funds.
- ☑ Following feedback from RLOs, prioritize capacity development on programme management and community-based protection.
- ☑ Systematically engage RLOs, other organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, and CBOs in UNHCR's service delivery, to best address the needs of displaced and stateless persons, as well as host community members.
- ☑ Build the capacity of organizations to conduct activities at scale and with the required standards of quality. One example of this is to scale up the empowerment of tailors and testing and improvement of the reusable pads as mask production is going to be downscaled.
- ☑ Ensure background checks are conducted before engaging with new RLOs, including through gathering the perceptions of the refugees themselves.
- ☑ For UNHCR Uganda, actively search for more CBOs and RLOs, build capacity of existing ones, and support the establishment of new ones where possible and needed, and offer a higher number of small grants. One option could be for Refugee Welfare Committees to become recipients of direct grants – following some capacity building and mentoring on grant writing, implementation and financial issues.

## Next steps

The lessons from the pilot in Uganda informed the Prospects Youth Engagement Opportunity Fund and other UNHCR initiatives in the region that aim to work with RLOs, including women-led and youth-led organizations.

The two expected outcomes are:

-  Enhanced capacity of PROSPECTS Partners to achieve meaningful engagement and participation of young people;
-  Young people are skilled and empowered to be effective partners and to lead and drive change in their communities and their lives.

Building on the lessons from Uganda, the newly funded Youth Engagement Opportunity Fund, which covers Uganda and Ethiopia, under the Prospects funding, has allocated slightly more than 10 per cent of the funding to RLOs and CBOs.

Since the RLOs and the communities that benefited from the project showed high appreciation of the funding opportunity, it would be fruitful if another opportunity like this could be granted and expanded so that the RLOs could expand their projects and implement them for a longer implementation period.





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