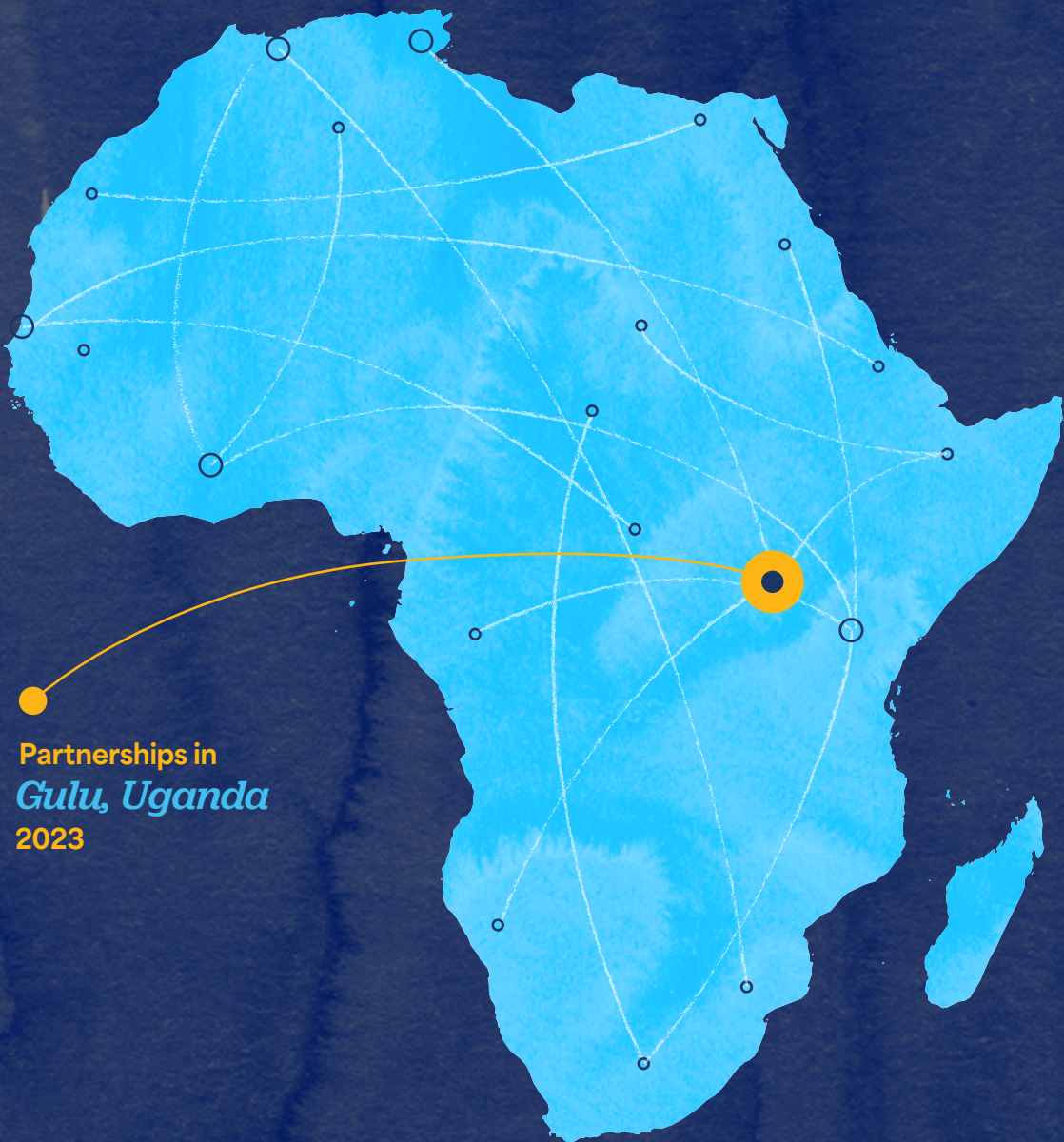


Equal Partnerships

African Intermediary Cities as Actors and Partners in Urban Migration Governance



Partnerships in
Gulu, Uganda
2023

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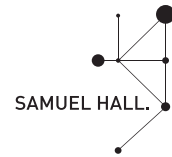
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Equal Partnerships

Africa is witnessing an ongoing transformation from rural to increasingly plural urban societies. While this transformation has been well-documented, the focus of scholarship and practice has been predominantly on human mobility towards and into major urban areas and capital cities. In contrast, intermediary cities, the in-between the rural and the metropolitan, have been largely absent in academic and policy debates. The Equal Partnerships project explores the opportunities and challenges of collaborative, urban migration governance in African intermediary cities. The project was jointly developed and is implemented by the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, the city network United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), and the social enterprise Samuel Hall. Supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the project works in cooperation with six intermediary cities in East, North, and West Africa. Through participatory research, workshops, and networking formats, the project brings together local, national, and international actors to develop practical impulses and policy recommendations to co-shape multi-stakeholder partnerships for urban migration governance in African intermediary cities.



With the support of the



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Glossary

Migration

The Equal Partnerships project works with a broad definition of migration, understanding a migrant as any person “who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.”¹ This broad definition proved helpful for working in partnership with African intermediary cities that experience a wide range of migration movements at times classified under umbrella terms such as “mixed migration”² or “transnational mobility.”³

Intermediary Cities

Building on research conducted by the Cities Alliance,⁴ the Equal Partnerships project moves beyond a definition of secondary/intermediary cities based predominantly on city size often considered to range between 50,000 and 1 million inhabitants.⁵ Instead, we combine demographic aspects with a city’s connectivity and status. We, therefore, use the terms “secondary” and “intermediary” interchangeably, as they refer to different city aspects: The cities on which we focus our research are intermediary in the sense that they link capital cities with smaller towns and rural areas through flows of goods, ideas, funds, and people. At the same time, these cities are secondary regarding economic status, municipal capacities and resources, as national development strategies for urban planning have for a long time prioritized capital cities.

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can be defined as “voluntary initiatives involving governments, intergovernmental bodies, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in pursuit of a common goal or commitment.”⁶ Equal Partnerships research shows that approaches striving towards equal participation of stakeholders need to include a broad range of partners in the initial development stage, remain open for new actors as the cooperation evolves and continuously review roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder within the partnership.

(Urban) Migration Governance

Migration governance entails an “interdependent set of legal norms, policies, institutions, and practices to administer, regulate, and mediate activities and relations within defined socio-political entities, whether states, administrative regions, cities, or corporate bodies.”⁷ Urban migration governance takes an urban setting – such as a town or city – as the defined socio-political entity.

- 1 IOM 2023. About Migration. <https://www.iom.int/about-migration>.
- 2 IOM Migration Data Portal 2023. Mixed migration. <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/mixedmigration#:~:text=Definition,seeking%20better%20lives%20and%20opportunities>.
- 3 Van Hear, N. Policy Primer: Mixed Migration Policy Challenges. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PolicyPrimer-Mixed_Migration.pdf.
- 4 Cities Alliance. Taking a Closer Look at Secondary Cities. <https://www.citiesalliance.org/newsroom/news/spotlight/taking-closer-look-secondary-cities>. 2019. Connecting Systems of Secondary Cities: How Soft and Hard Infrastructure can foster Equitable Economic Growth among Secondary Cities. https://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Secondary-Cities-Book-Brief_v2.pdf.
- 5 UCLG n.d. Intermediary cities. <https://www.uclg.org/en/agenda/intermediary-cities>.
- 6 Bester, A., and Hermans, L. 2017. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Implications for Evaluation Practice, Methods and Capacities (2017). Available at: <https://nec.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Multi-Stakeholder%20Partnerships%202017.pdf>.
- 7 Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA) 2017. Governance of Migration: a context note for reference in current national and international processes and discussions. <http://globalmigrationpolicy.org/articles/governance/Governance%20of%20migration%20Context%20Note%20rev%20GMPA%20jun2017.pdf>.

List of acronyms

BSU	Building Stronger Universities
CARA	Control of Alien Refugees Act
CDO	Community Development Officer
GBV	Gender-Based-Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	The International Organization for Migration
LC	Local Council
NDP	National Development Plan
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
ReHoPE	Refugee and Host Population Empowerment
RRP	Uganda Refugee Response Plan
SRS	Self-Reliance-Strategy
STA	Settlement Transformation Agenda
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments Africa
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USMID	Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development

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Key findings and recommendations

National policies and priorities challenge targeted action, cooperation, and synergies.

Firstly, Uganda is lauded as one of the most open and progressive refugee hosting countries in the world, the national immigration and settlement policies have, however, proven to be incompatible with contemporary globalizing (increased interconnectedness, labor diversification etc.), and urbanizing tendencies and needs, in the context of Gulu.

Secondly, mixed mobility in Gulu consist of a diverse composition of nationalities, cultures, backgrounds, and needs, ranging from economically resourceful migrants on the one side of the spectrum to vulnerable and displaced persons traumatized by conflict on the other side. The lack of urban prioritization by the Ugandan national government and UNHCR leads to a lack of funding opportunities, resulting in chronic underfunding and limited room to maneuver for the responsible departments and civil servants.

Thirdly, 'self-settled' refugees and displaced persons, are highly invisible in Gulu, and often settle in the physical and social margins of society, leading to growing slums and multiple vulnerabilities. These individuals are dependent on direct contact with the city and division levels, along with civil society actors, to ensure that their basic livelihoods needs are met. These are, however, limited by overburdening and practical challenges (lack of transport opportunities and technical equipment), which hinders their possibilities of engaging in cooperative initiatives, and hence must rely on ad hoc partnerships with civil society. These partnerships manifest in spontaneous meetings and reporting for monitoring purposes.

New city structure complicates action – silos and confusion.

The highly market-based decentralization efforts from the Ugandan government, have primarily been providing increased funding for improved physical infrastructure and economic development, while general service provision and the complex socio-cultural composition of Gulu have been neglected. Despite Gulu's long history as a host city for mixed mobility, there is no specific office or responsible department addressing migration and/or displacement. The responsibility is rather divided between different sector-specific departments, and mixed mobility issues are generally perceived to be beyond the respective mandate of these, leading to confusion and passivity. These silos complicate cooperation between council departments, the different levels of government, and between the local government and civil society.

These findings inform the following four overall recommendations, aimed at strengthening partnerships and cooperation frameworks for urban migration governance in Gulu:

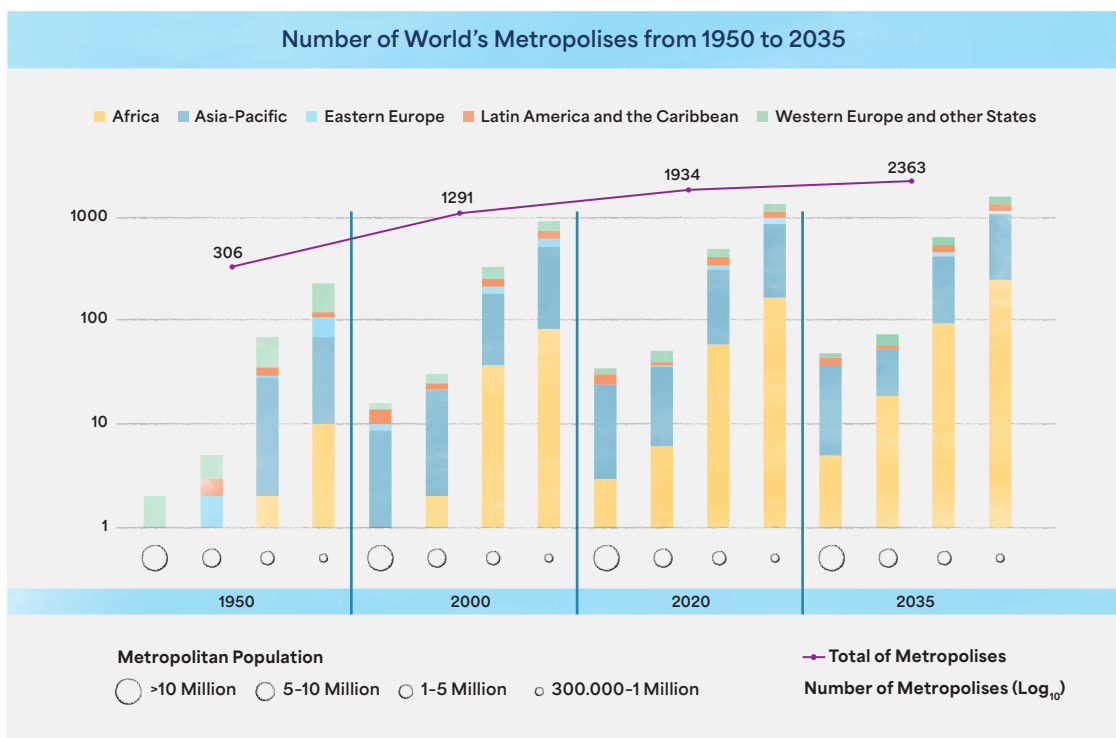
- **Ensure that practical and technical measures meet current needs** by establishing local offices responsible for migratory dynamics, and prioritize the inclusion of sufficient equipment, such as laptops, printers, and transportation means for the division level in the annual budgets. These elements are vital to maintain both cooperation and implementation activities.
- **Enhance communication, foster confidence, and define duties** by building trust between the local government and civil society, through equally shared responsibilities and regular meetings to maintain ongoing communication and collaboration.
- **Strengthen local data collection capacities** by creating easily accessible databases that include both activity and population data, going beyond the national census.
- **Enhance capacity building efforts and increase funding for sustainable interventions that are locally led** by dedicating resources and time for regular supervision, monitoring, and training within and between departments to ensure high-quality service delivery that aligns with changing circumstances, for the benefit of both employers and beneficiaries. Donors should further shift from project-based focus to more structural and locally tailored funding.

1 Introduction

1.1 Urban migration governance in African intermediary cities

Africa is witnessing an ongoing transformation from rural to increasingly plural urban societies. While this transformation has been well-documented, the focus of scholarship and policymakers has been predominantly on human mobility towards and into major urban areas and capital cities. In contrast, intermediary cities, the in-between the rural and the metropolitan, have been largely absent in academic and policy debates. Addressing this gap becomes increasingly important,⁸ as African cities with 1 million or less inhabitants already account for the highest relative share among African cities – a trend forecast to continue in the future (figure 1).⁹

Figure 1. Intermediary cities dominate African cityscape (Source: UN Habitat 2020)



⁸ Stürner-Siovit, J. and Morthorst Juhl, L. 2023. Migration in African intermediary cities: why multi-stakeholder partnerships are key to inclusive action. <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2023/03/30/migration-in-african-intermediary-cities-why-multi-stakeholder-partnerships-are-key-to-inclusive-action/>.

⁹ UN Habitat 2020. Global State of Metropolis. Population Data Booklet. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/09/gsm-population-data-booklet-2020_3.pdf

Both natural population increase and human mobility contribute to the growth of African intermediary cities. These cities constitute central spaces for mixed movements driven by processes of urbanization, socioeconomic transformation, and environmental stressors, as well as conflict and persecution. Though not always intended as final destinations, persons on the move may consider intermediary cities more accessible – financially, geographically, and socially – than capital cities.

As intermediary cities, thus, gain in importance as places of origin, transit, destination, and return, African local authorities are increasingly confronted with key issues of mixed migration and are further directly impacted by (inter)national policies. Due to their proximity to local communities, local authorities have the potential to shape inclusive approaches for migrants, refugees, and local populations. However, developing local strategies often proves challenging to local authorities, since national or international actors holding official mandates for migration and displacement rarely consider them (equal) partners, and they are often not equipped with sufficient resources and capacities to play an active role. This creates knowledge and cooperation gaps between local, national, and international actors addressing urban migration and displacement on the ground, and in policy dialogues. To address such challenges, some local authorities have started seizing opportunities for engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships, bringing together local, national, and international actors working on questions of migration in African cities.

1.2 *The Equal Partnerships project*

The Equal Partnerships project explores the opportunities and challenges of collaborative, urban migration governance with African intermediary cities. The project was jointly developed and is implemented by the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, the city network United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), and the social enterprise Samuel Hall. Supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the project works in cooperation with six intermediary cities in East, North, and West Africa: Garissa in Kenya, Gulu in Uganda, Kumasi in Ghana, Oujda in Morocco, Saint Louis in Senegal, and Sfax in Tunisia. Through participatory research, workshops, and networking formats, the project brings together local, national, and international actors to develop practical impulses and policy recommendations to co-shape multi-stakeholder partnerships for urban migration governance in African intermediary cities.

This case study report is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the research methodology with a specific focus on case study selection, data collection and research limitations. Section 3 presents the migration dynamics in Gulu and Uganda and explores impacts of migration on the ground. Section 4 discusses partnerships approaches in Gulu via a stakeholder mapping and zooms in city and civil society perspectives on cooperation efforts, topics, and challenges. Section 5 summarizes key findings and provides policy recommendations to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships on urban migration governance in Gulu.

2 *Methodology*

2.1 *Case study selection*

The Equal Partnerships project works with African intermediary cities that are central hubs for diverse forms of human mobility. At the outset, the project held discussions with a broad range of cities in order to identify urban areas where the local administration and/or local government showed an interest in addressing questions of migration. Throughout the project, this approach served to explore opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships in contexts where political will to proactively engage on urban migration governance is present at the local level.

Gulu City, located in northern Uganda, has experienced significant urbanization over the past decades, with its population growing from 38,297 in 1991 to 149,802 in 2014. It is the largest urban center in the region and functions as both a commercial and administrative center for the Gulu District as well as a cultural, educational, trade, and commercial hub for the wider Acholi region. Gulu was recently elevated from municipality to city status as part of Uganda's 2040 Vision.

Gulu's urban growth can be attributed to various factors, including the armed conflict in northern Uganda, which led to an influx of displaced persons into the town, along with general rural-urban diversification of labor. Gulu has also emerged as a destination for migrants due to its post-conflict economic opportunities, relative stability, and particular appeal as a refugee destination primarily for South Sudanese refugees. Despite the absence of an official office engaging directly with migratory issues in Gulu, the city has been accommodating vast numbers of both registered and unregistered migrants and displaced persons over the last many decades. The lack of official mandates and resources for local migration governance, caused by centralized national policymaking in Uganda, has resulted in a type of governance based on what can be termed local 'ad hoc' structures. Gulu's recent status as an official city in 2020, further makes it an interesting case regarding potential contemporary deflation initiatives and administrative restructuring.

2.2 *Fieldwork and data collection*

The Equal Partnerships project draws on three forms of data collection: (i) desk review of literature on urban migration governance, (ii) key informant interviews (KIIs), and (iii) a half day workshop.

Literature review: A broad literature review on migration dynamics to, from and within Uganda was conducted to situate migration movements in Uganda within the national, and regional context. Research on migration within and around Gulu city, along with recent population census is vastly limited. In order to gain insights into the socio-economic and political landscape regarding migratory dynamics in Gulu, the study has reviewed official national policy documents, national and local development plans, along with secondary academic sources and ‘grey literature’.

Key informant interviews: The project created a mapping of local, regional, national, and international actors addressing different forms of human mobility in direct or indirect ways. In parallel to this mapping, the research team conducted 22 semi-structured key informant interviews with stakeholders at different governance levels. The mapping and interviews served the team to gather information on cooperation structures and gaps, while exploring the motivation and reservations of different actors to engage in cooperative action. The team also gained insight on the (perceived) role of the local government in different partnership structures. Prior to each interview, interview respondents were informed about the Equal Partnerships research project. They also received information about data protection compliance, the handling of their personal data, and were requested to provide verbal and written consent to participate in the interview.

Local workshop: The Equal Partnerships team of the FAU organized a workshop for 25 participants in July 2022. The workshops offered the stakeholders identified in the mappings an interactive space to develop (1) concrete next steps for building multi-stakeholder partnerships Gulu as well as (2) a number of policy recommendations addressed to national and international actors.

An important **research limitation** was the difficulty to reach migrant or refugee associations. This was mainly due the politicized nature of immigration matters in the country, and hence the precautions of vulnerable communities. However, the research team managed to gain insights through more informal conversations with migrants and refugees.

3

National mixed migration dynamics and policies

National legal and policy refugee frameworks in Uganda

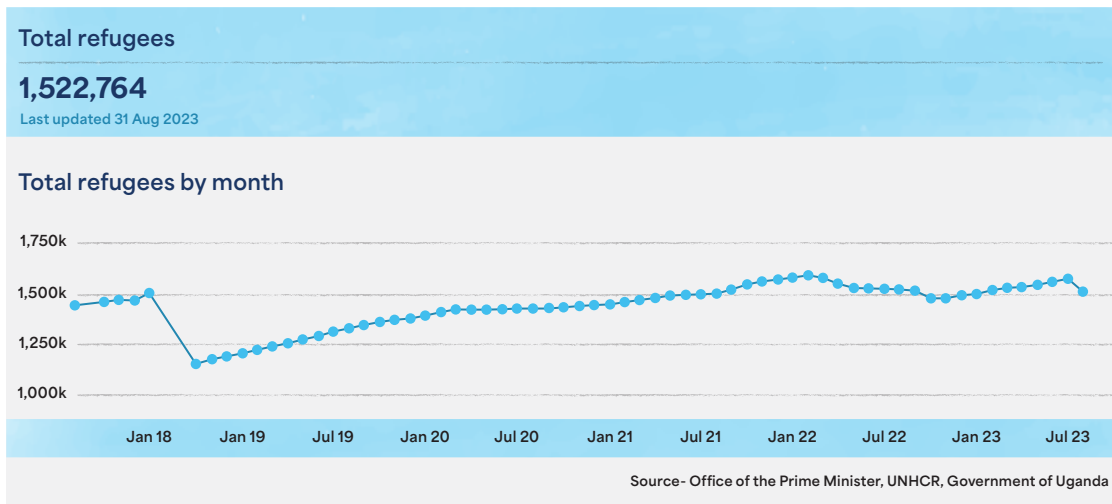
- Control of Alien Refugees Act (CARA), 1960
- Immigration and Citizenship Control Act 1964; 2016 Reform
- State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol in 1976
- The 1995 Constitution
- Since 1999, Uganda has focused on a development approach towards forced displacement and has collaborated with the UNHCR to create self-reliance strategies for refugees.
- Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), 2003
- The National Policy for Internally Displaced People, 2004
- The Employment Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers Abroad Regulations, 2005
- The 2006 Refugee Act
- The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009
- Since 2010, Uganda has integrated refugee matters into national and sub-national development and environmental plans (2010 Regulations)
- In 2015, the Government of Uganda operationalized these commitments through the adoption of the **Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA)**, which was fully incorporated into the **2015/16–2019/20 National Development Plan II (NDPII)**, thereby integrating refugee issues into national development planning. Efforts to support the STA were mobilized through the strategic **Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE)** framework.
- These building blocks predated and inspired the participation of Uganda in the 2016 Global Leaders' Summit on Refugees, and the countries engagement on the **Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)**, as proposed by the 2016 New York Declaration

Uganda has always experienced a wide range of migratory dynamics embedded within diverse social, political, and economic contexts. These have been driven by various political factors, national and regional conflicts, labor mobility and poverty, rapid population growth, and fast evolving urbanization. The volatile political and economic histories of Uganda's five neighboring countries have further contributed to vast cross-border population movements.

For decades, the Ugandan government has been working on national initiatives closely related to the UNCHR-defined Self-Reliance-Strategy (SRS). In 1999 the country started partnering with UNHCR to work towards the establishment of a new refugee policy. The new policy was a reaction to a need to reform the criticized and restrictive nature of the Control of Alien Refugees Act (CARA, 1960), while adapting to the volatile political situation in the East African region. Internal conflict (1986-2006) affected Uganda domestically for decades and forced thousands to seek exile in neighboring countries and left almost

two million people internally displaced, mainly in the Northern parts of the country. As both a sending and receiving country, Uganda already hosted 300,000¹⁰ refugees primarily from Southern Sudan, Rwanda, and Congo by 1995, and the South Sudanese civil war (2013–2020) has led to an influx of close to one million refugees¹¹ into Uganda's Northernmost regions.

Figure 2. Total refugees. Source: OPM and UNHCR 2023



Recent key policy developments and initiatives

- Launch of the CRRF in April 2017
- Adoption of the Uganda 2018–2020 national action plan to implement the Global Compact On Refugees and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF Roadmap) in January 2018, as well as its revision in April 2019
- Adoption of the 2018–2021 National Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda in May 2018
- Adoption of the 2019–2024 Health Sector Integrated Refugee Response Plan in January 2019
- Adoption of the Water and Environment Sector Refugee Response Plan (WESRRP) in November 2019
- Adoption of the 2020–2021 National COVID-19 Health Prevention and Response Plan in March 2020, which integrates refugee issues in the national response
- Finalization of the country's National Development Plan III (2020/21–2024/25), which fully integrates refugees into national, sectoral and district planning and statistics, entered into force in July 2020
- National Migration Policy (pending)
- National Diaspora Policy (pending)

The new SRS initiative (launched in 1999) was initially sought to be implemented as a settlement strategy in the Northern region of the country, mainly in the West Nile district, Mojo, Adjumani, and Arua. The overall aim was to improve and increase self-sufficiency among refugees, while enhancing both refugee's and host communities' access to social services as a dual integration system.

As a governance component, the strategy further sought to improve and support local governments to deliver better services to both host populations and refugees.

According to UNHCR¹² the strategy was, however, only compatible with refugee contexts that recognize basic refugee rights, such as freedom of movement and, access to economic activities, along with a presence of practical environmental and agricultural conditions, such as sufficient land fertility. Criticized for neglecting these elements within the SRS, Uganda passed the Development Assistance for Refugee-Hosting Areas

¹⁰ IOM 2013. Migration in Uganda: A Rapid Country Profile 2013. IOM Mission to Uganda, Republic of Uganda

¹¹ UNHCR 2021. South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan January–December 2022

¹² UNHCR 2005. Handbook for Self-Reliance. UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/44bf7b012.pdf>

International refugee engagement

- Signed the IGAD Djibouti Declaration on Education in 2017
- Supported the development and affirmation (?) of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in 2018
- Signed the Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities in the IGAD region in March 2019
- Participated in the 2019 Global Refugee Forum (GRF)

(DAR, 2003) policy, and the country's current refugee policy, the 2006 Refugee Act, which (theoretically) allows refugees to pursue employment, freedom of movement (including to urban areas), equal access to social services (health, housing, and education), and to settle and cultivate crops.

According to Section 44 (2) of the 2006 Refugee Act, an asylum seeker or recognized refugee who wants to live somewhere other than the designated refugee settlements can request permission from the Commissioner to live in any other part of Uganda. The Act also enshrines the right to freedom of movement (Section 30 (1)). Despite these

new policy measures, Uganda maintains a primary focus on the 'rural' settlement component as its fundamental pillar, which has resulted in a general lack of support towards urban migrants, refugees, and local governments alike.¹³

UNHCR attempted to address this situation in Uganda and beyond through its 2009 Policy on Urban Refugees and the Alternatives to Camp policy (2014). More recently, the Ugandan government has aimed to incorporate the urban dimension into its political strategies and national action plans. Designed as a development-focused refugee integration strategy, the Ugandan government, UNHCR, and the World Bank, jointly launched the 2016–2020 Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) Strategic Framework, revolving around the inclusion of refugees and host communities in the national development plans.

Figure 3. National Population and Housing Census 2014 Gulu. Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017

POPULATION SIZE			
Total population by age group and sex, Gulu District, 2014			
Age group	Male	Female	Total
0-9 y	43,397	40,761	84,158
10-19 y	35,832	37,879	73,711
20-39 y	39,093	42,753	81,846
40-59 y	12,254	13,823	26,077
60 y +	3,995	5,826	9,821
Total	134,571	141,042	275,613

¹³ Hovil, L. 2018. 'Uganda's Refugee Policies: The History, the Politics, the Way Forward'. Kampala: International Refugee Rights Initiative.

As part of the wider 2040 Vision, this strategy attempted to integrate refugees directly into the 2015/16-2019/20 National Development Plan II (NDPII), by promoting the Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA), which grants refugees basic socio-economic and human rights - ultimately measures already presented through the settlement-oriented SRS. In line with the STA and to circumvent this criticism, UNHCR underlined that "... the 2019-2020 RRP [Uganda Refugee Response Plan] will prioritize better assessments of refugees in urban areas, more engagement with municipal actors, and enhanced support to refugees and hosting communities in these areas, resources permitting".¹⁴ These measures correspond to the wider urbanization strategy of the Ugandan government, which has been in progress during the past two decades and was regularized in the Uganda National Urban Policy in 2017.

However, according to the National Development Plan III (2020/21-2024/25),

“

*a (...) lack of a comprehensive national policy on migration, fragmented approach to migration issues by key stakeholders, lack of comprehensive data providing evidence base to policy makers, insufficient preparation of service providers meant to create a protective environment for vulnerable migrants, are all critical issues that need to be addressed in order to unlock the potential of migration in Uganda and enhance the protection of vulnerable individuals.*¹⁵

As the report will show, these issues influence the local context in the city of Gulu.

¹⁴ UNHCR 2018. Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan The integrated response plan for refugees from South Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, p. 33

¹⁵ The National Planning Authority 2020. National Development Plan III 2020/21-2024/25, p. 46

4

Mobility context of Gulu

Gulu is among Uganda's fastest growing intermediary cities. With a city population above 150.000 inhabitants and more than 275.000 in the wider district (2014 National Census), Gulu is the largest urban center in the Northern Region of Uganda. As part of the wider implementation of the 'Uganda 2040 Vision', Gulu was officially elevated from municipality status to city status on the first of July 2020, among six other municipalities. Gulu is both the commercial and administrative center of the Gulu District, while also functioning as a cultural, educational, trade and commercial hub for the wider Acholi region. Gulu is further situated at a strategic crossroads at the junction to other cities in Northern Uganda, to South Sudan, Kenya, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and The Central African Republic.¹⁶

Rapid and uncoordinated urbanization, with a population rise from around 39.000 inhabitants in 1991 to more than 150.000 today¹⁷, along with internal (1986-2005) and regional conflicts, have caused significant socio-cultural, political, and developmental challenges, which have rendered segments of the population economically and socially vulnerable and marginalized.

4.1

Displacement

Prior to the 1970s, Ugandan rural-urban migration was primarily of transit character. However, domestic conflicts and forced urbanization under the presidency of Idi Amin (1971-1979) undermined both agricultural production and personal security. In consequence, rural-urban migration took a more permanent turn.

This tendency continued during the civil war in Acholi land (1986-2006), where IDPs sought refuge in Gulu, as a result of poor living conditions in the compulsive IDP camps. Prior to 1986, the majority of the population in Gulu lived as farmers outside town and most IDPs never returned home to their villages when the conflict ended. Today, forced rural-urban migration to Gulu is largely caused by conflict over land, and post-civil war return migration.¹⁸ The increased urbanization has resulted in the growth of slum areas, where around 45.000 people live in interim huts.¹⁹ The civil war has also resulted in the occurrence of the phenomenon of street children, born in captivity to abducted mothers. These children often settled in the slums and roamed the city trying to make a living.²⁰

¹⁶ Interview with migration scholar at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, July 2022

¹⁷ UBOS 2014. National Population and Housing Census 2014, Revised Version, p. 12

¹⁸ KII 1

¹⁹ KII 22

²⁰ KII 4

Figure 4. Gulu received city status.

Source: *Equal Partnerships 2022*



and the city administration have made the city an attractive destination and transit point for diverse mixed migration movements. A dynamic, which has created both development opportunities and socio-economic challenges for the local authorities in terms of delivering adequate social services to newcomers and the local communities.²¹ The South Sudanese Civil War has affected the migratory dynamics in Gulu significantly. Gulu, which is placed along the main road to South Sudan (around 100 km from the border), has received large numbers (the exact number is not documented) of mainly South Sudanese urban ‘self-settled’²² refugees.

However, many interview partners did not consider these persons to fall within the official category of ‘refugees’, since they are perceived as having ‘voluntarily’ avoided or left the politically gazetted rural settlements, whereas staying in the settlements would ensure their legal refugee status.²³ Lack of resources and fertile lands, combined with the diverse employment backgrounds of the refugees, have increasingly made people leave the settlements to try to make a living in the city.²⁴ Aside from South Sudanese, Congolese refugees are also currently settled in Gulu, mainly in villages in the periphery of the city center.²⁵

Climate-induced migration to Gulu is increasingly becoming an issue for the city and the wider region. But Gulu has not been considered a typical hub for climate-migration until recently. Climate change and global warming have led to failing harvests and food shortages in the last years, inciting people in Northern Uganda to move to the city for food security.²⁶ However, overview data and detailed information on climate-mobility to Gulu is currently scarce.

Aside from domestic instability, Uganda’s Northern region, of which Gulu is considered the unofficial capital, has been affected by decades of international conflicts. Long-term instability and violent conflicts in neighboring countries, such as Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan, have led to migratory and refugee movements towards Gulu. Gulu’s geographical position, its promising economic opportunities, and perceived hospitality among the host population

²¹ KII 14

²² The term urban self-settled refugees is here to be understood as a deviation from the national rural settlement policy.

²³ KII 2

²⁴ KII 1

²⁵ KII 16

²⁶ KII 1

4.2. *Mixed movements*

The categorization of voluntary contra forced migration proves to be a complex and politicized issue in the context of Gulu city. While ‘voluntary migration’ in Gulu is composed of national and international labor migration and rural-urban migration, related to the gradual diversification of labor, socio-economic security, a growing youth bulge, and the formation of social networks, ‘self-settled’ South Sudanese and Congolese refugees are often perceived to fall within this category as well – by authorities and host communities alike.²⁷

Uganda is experiencing rapid urbanization caused by both rural-urban and international migration, and Gulu is among the fastest growing cities in the country. In interviews, representatives from academia, civil society, and the city administration highlighted that Gulu is a vibrant migrant hub, due to its perception as offering a particularly enabling socio-economic climate.²⁸

Gulu and the surrounding areas, which were previously dominated by small-scale farming, increasingly experience that especially the younger population, are abandoning the traditional agricultural lifestyle. Agricultural production is challenged by a lack of socio-economic connectivity, low revenues, and conflicts over land. Therefore, the promise of economic opportunities, access to social services, education, and a ‘modern’ lifestyle incite more and more people to settle in the city. Moreover, people from other countries – Eritrea, South Sudan, DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and India – travel to Gulu to do business or search for economic opportunities for longer or shorter periods of time.²⁹

4.3. *Migratory effects on Gulu*

Migrants and refugees have contributed significantly to Gulu’s rapid demographic and socio-economic development. Both migrants and ‘self-settled’ refugees engage in multiple sectors of the informal and formal economy and provide increased economic revenues and district level taxes.³⁰ From the experience of the city administration, migrants and refugees mainly engage in production, construction, hotel business, restaurants, and trade, or in casual and informal labor (e.g., Boda Boda³¹ transport and street vending).³²

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ A Boda Boda is a popular motorcycle taxi, widely used by the general population for everyday transport.

³² KII 22

Figure 5. Gulu bus station.

Source: *Equal Partnerships 2022*



able pressure on socio-economic service provision (e.g., health, education, housing, land, and water and sanitation), and failing to contribute to official tax generation. Growing slum areas and pronounced poverty are seen as direct consequences of the above-mentioned challenges. But also, as a result of inadequate political and economic space to maneuver for the local authorities. The lack of measurable demographic and socio-economic data is further making targeted initiatives and city planning challenging.³³

Gulu's recent status as a city has on paper brought increased political mandates and economic support to the local authorities. However, the practical circumstances have primarily been manifested in administrative restructuring, increased taxes for housing and business, and a crackdown on street vendors, which are in large parts migrants, refugees, and street children. Since the costs to engage in the formal market in Gulu is rising and as result of the criminalization of the informal market, already vulnerable population groups are pushed further to both the margins of the city and the established society.³⁴

Figure 6. Gulu City Council.

Source: *Equal Partnerships 2022*



³³ KII 14

³⁴ KII 1

5

Partnership approaches for urban migration governance

In order to comprehend the complex approaches to partnerships and cooperation in Gulu, and the actors involved in these processes, the next section of the report will begin by providing an overview of the key stakeholders present in Gulu, who are engaged in various aspects of governance and the implementation of initiatives related to migrants and displaced persons. Subsequent sections of the report will then delve into some of the structures of these stakeholders' cooperation (or lack thereof), along with the potential challenges and opportunities in this regard. Annex figure 1 and 2 provide an overview of different actors present in Gulu by topic and target group.

5.1. *Stakeholder Mapping*

National government actors

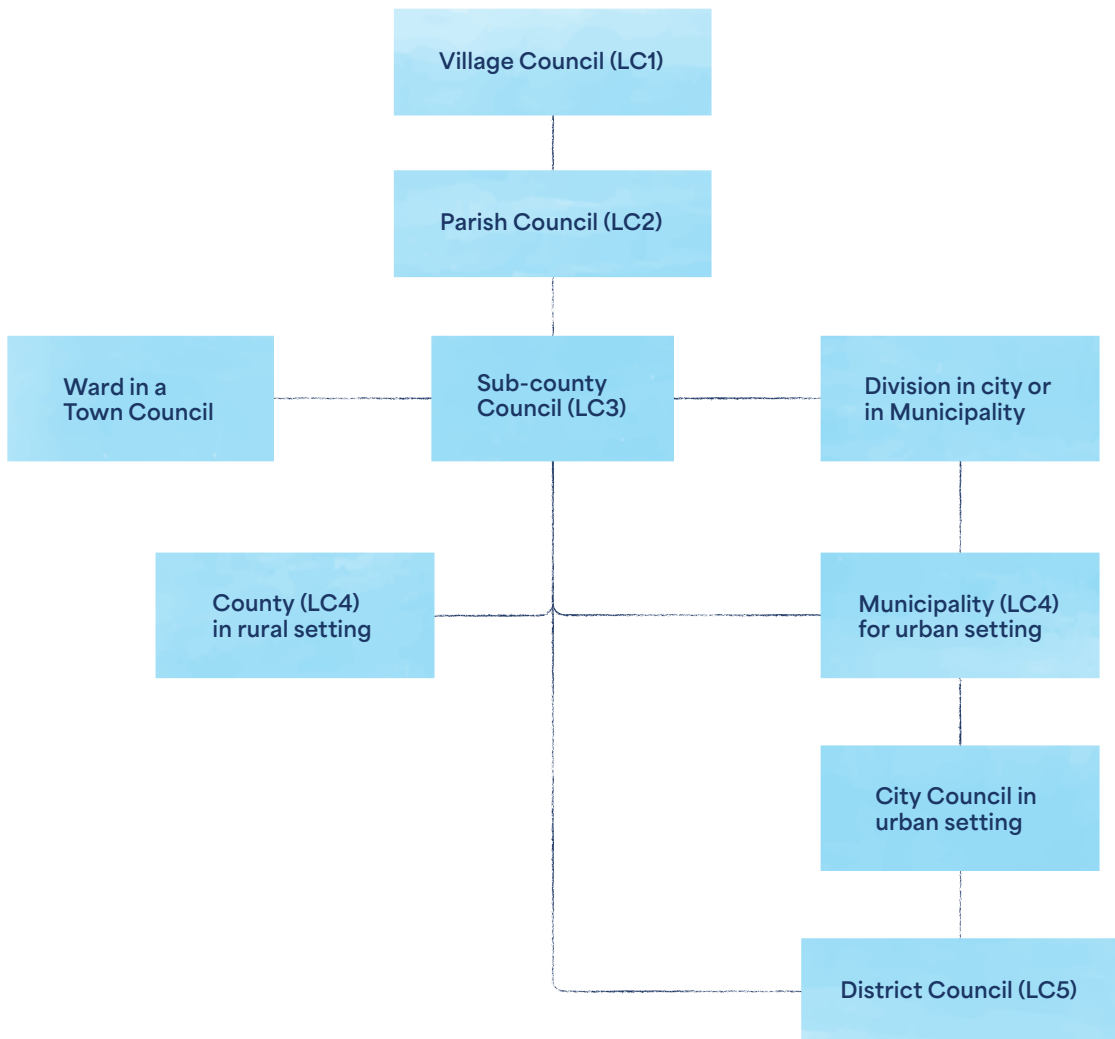
Due to the centralized refugee policies in Uganda, the presence of national ministerial actors in Gulu city is greatly limited. The rural settlement-based immigration policy only allows refugees to register in designated settlements or in Kampala, which is why the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), responsible for planning, budgeting, and protection initiatives, does not operate in municipal areas. Officially, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, represented by an immigration office in Gulu, is responsible for the registration of migrants at the city level. However, everyday support for migrants and unregistered displaced persons ultimately falls under the responsibility of the city authorities and the NGOs. 'Self-settled' refugees cannot register in Ugandan cities, with the exception of the capital Kampala.

District government actors

Before Gulu obtained its city status in 2020, the District Council (LC V) served as the official communication link between the national and urban levels, represented by a chairperson from the city within the council. Gulu's recent city status has led to a restructuring of governance, whereby Gulu City Council is now officially at the same governing level as the district level (LC V). This has resulted in a more than five-fold increase in the geographical scope of the City Council's responsibilities and the relocation of the District Council headquarters to the Aswa district instead of in Gulu. Since the mandate for social service delivery is the

responsibility of the city, direct cooperation with the District Council is limited to a Memorandum of Understanding, along with the work of the District Disaster Preparedness Committee, which is only active during perceived onset disasters. There are no refugee settlements within the new geographical area under the jurisdictional and political responsibility of the City Council, and therefore limited national support for urban migrants or displaced persons.³⁵

Figure 7. City structure. Source: Turyahabwe et al. 2010



Local government actors

Decision- and policymaking in Uganda is highly centralized and constrained by general district and local underfunding, despite continuous decentralization efforts based on the 1995 Constitution and the Local Government Act of 1997. The governance structure comprises of a five-tiered system of elected local councillors (LCs). The Local Council I (LCI), the smallest unit of government, consist of locally elected leaders representing the village; LC II represents the parish level; LC III represents the sub-county; LC IV represents municipalities; while LC V represents the district. The LC IV typically acts as a local implementer and administrator, linking residents (also including migrants and refugees) to social services and

representing village interests within the city. LC V is responsible for implementation of the development plans related to the district, which officially covers protection of both registered and unregistered refugees.

Despite historically being labeled Northern Uganda's 'aid capital', deriving from the long continuum of both IO, and national and international NGO presence since the post-conflict time (2006), Gulu city has officially not been engaging in specific projects or policy implementation revolving around local governance of migration and displacement. However, as a member of the city administration underlined in an interview, the 160 million USD World Bank funded 'Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID)' program³⁶, has since 2013 been aiming to empower and upgrade the urban councils' capacity-building and provision of resources to infrastructural construction and maintenance of roads and city greening. USMID is also aiming at including the effects of migratory dynamics in the programming.³⁷

Table 1. National Budget Framework Paper FY 2020/21 – FY 2024/25.

Billion Uganda shillings	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	Medium Term Projections				
	Outturn	Approved Budget	Releases by end Q1	Proposed Budget	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
02 Disaster Preparedness and Refugees Management	91.184	128.683	25.878	191.091	122.232	72.232	27.232	37.232

Source: Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2019

National planning, budgeting, and implementation of initiatives related to displacement and refugee protection fall under the responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), and UNHCR. According to the National Budget 2021, these activities were labelled under the 'Disaster Preparedness and Refugees Management' program, which had an approved budget allocation at 128.683 billion Ugandan Shillings (UGX) in 2020. A budget, which is planned to decrease drastically over the next four years.³⁸

Local authorities in Gulu and representatives from the OPM emphasized that these initiatives are solely implemented as part of the settlement policy, and therefore only at a refugee hosting district level. Even though 30 percent of the services within the national refugee framework goes to the host communities, the OPM provides no direct support to, or has established cooperation with cities and urban centers. As a result of the end of the Ugandan civil war and thereby the decrease in IDPs, many IOs and NGOs left the urban center of Gulu, to concentrate their focus on rural initiatives. In consequence, many of the NGOs, which are still present in Gulu city, only focus indirectly on migrants and refugees in their respective

³⁶ Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development 2018: <https://mlhud.go.ug/projects/usmid-program/>

³⁷ KII 2

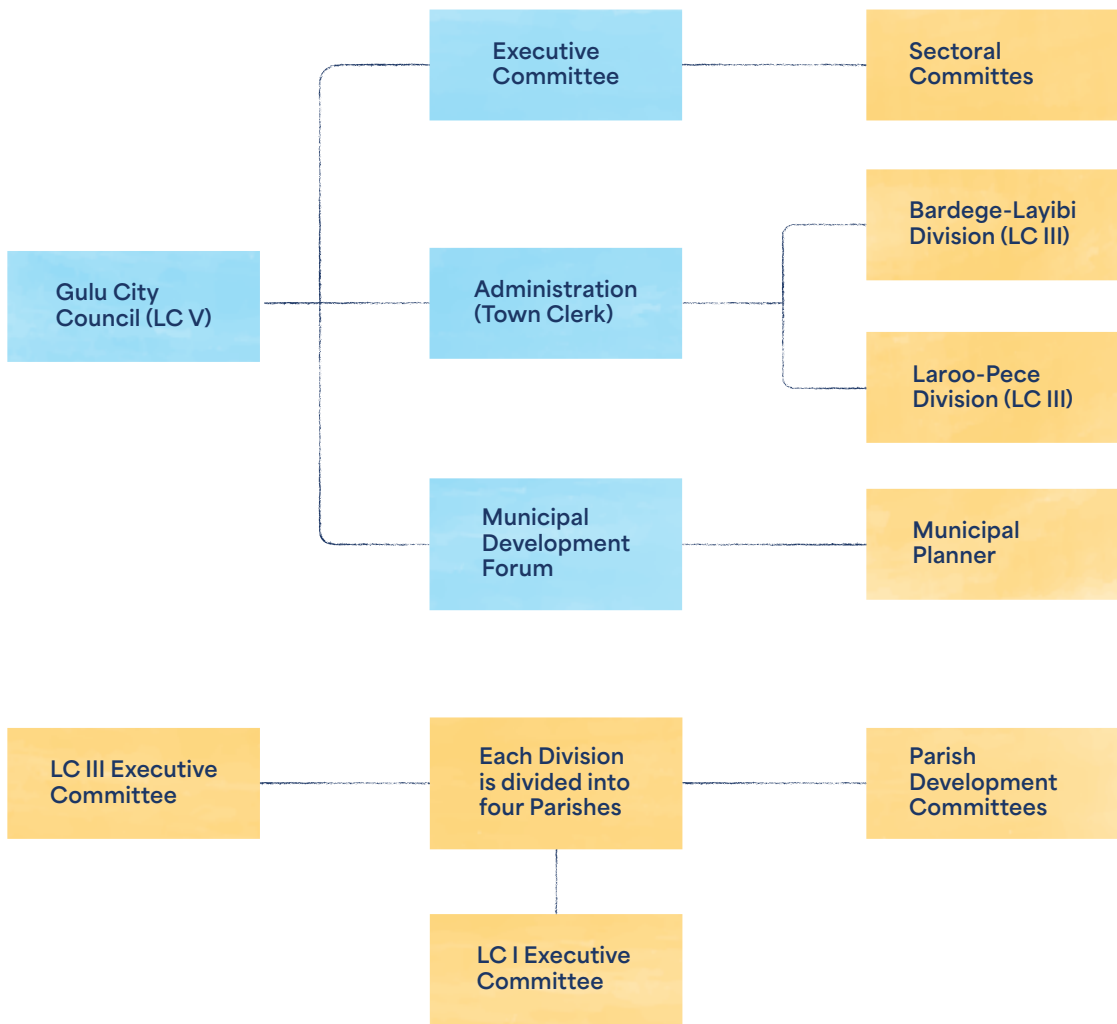
³⁸ Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2019. National Budget Framework Paper FY 2020/2021 – 2024/25, p. 151

programming. When asked, the majority of the NGO representatives emphasized that they have little to no direct cooperative engagements with the city administration on questions concerning mobility and displacement.³⁹

Many of the representatives expressed how they would welcome increased and closer cooperation with the city administration, and that it would be very beneficial to establish a city-level office responsible for migration and displacement issues.⁴⁰ They, however, acknowledged that such structural changes are not possible, unless the national government provides the needed support to realize such changes.

Overall, the role of local government in Uganda regarding migrants and refugees is to provide essential services and support to these populations within their respective jurisdictions. The City Council in Gulu does not have a designated office for issues related to migratory matters. These issues fall under the responsibility of the city-level Population Officer in the Planning Office, the Statistics Department, the Principal Community Development Officer (CDO), and the Labor Officer (LC V), along with the CDOs of the respective divisions (LC III).⁴¹ There is further a Senior Assistant responsible for the implementation of the World Bank funded USMID infrastructure program, at the city-level.⁴²

Figure 8. Gulu organisational structure. Own figure.



³⁹ KII 3, KII 4, KII 8, KII 9, KII 11, KII 12, KII 17, KII 20

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ KII 14

⁴² KII 10

The Planning Department (LC V) provides budgeting for the local communities related to social services, such as social protection, health care, and education based on population projections (last national census was in 2014 and the next will likely be in 2023), but the practical implementation and everyday community contact is facilitated by the city-level and division-level CDOs.⁴³ The city-level staff has recently initiated the work on a cross-sectoral ‘City-Level Management Plan’ (2022), which is indented to include migrants and displaced persons into the planning of improved social services provision and disaster preparedness. It is, however, still unclear who should provide the funding for the implementation of the plan.⁴⁴

Civil society actors

Civil society (e.g. NGOs and faith-based groups) is well-represented in Gulu city. It is, however, only a few actors who are specifically targeting their initiatives and programs directly towards migrants and displaced persons. Migrants and displaced persons are mainly supported under an ‘umbrella perception’ of vulnerable urban communities, and these are indirectly included in various social support initiatives. The Equal Partnerships project identified four main areas of civil society interventions relevant to migrants and displaced person in Gulu city, namely: general provision of social services, psychosocial support, gender-based violence initiatives, and education, vocational training, and employment. The actors undertaking these initiatives present in the urban setting include the Refugee Law Project, Gulu NGO Forum, Justice and Reconciliation Project, Umbrella of Hope, Gulu Youth Development Association, Gulu Women’s Economic Development and Globalization, Africa Center for Victims of Torture, and Acholi Religious Leaders’ Peace Initiative. Annex figure 2 provides an overview of the specific areas of engagement of these civil society actors.

Development agencies and international organizations

UNHCR and IOM do not have offices in Gulu City or its surrounding area, as they relocated to other regions in Northern Uganda in line with the official national settlement policy and the 2006 peace agreement. These organizations focus on supporting communities that are considered direct hosts to refugee settlements, which does not include Gulu City. The World Bank has been funding the Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID) program since 2013, with a budget of 160 million USD. The program aims to enhance the capacity of the City Council in terms of physical infrastructure and social services. However, despite aiming to include migratory dynamics, the program does not have a specific component for migrants or displaced persons, who are typically supported under general initiatives for the population as a whole.

In ultimo 2021, the Swiss office for International Development and Cooperation initiated the four-year ‘Financing Durable Solutions Programme for Forcibly Displaced People (FDSI), with an overall budget of CHF 8.000.000. The program is covering Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, and Ethiopia, with the objective to mobilize the private sector and municipalities to play a role in providing sustainable solutions for communities affected by displacement in the Horn of Africa. Gulu and Arua in Uganda will be the pilot cities of the program, which aims to work with cities, local governments, and host communities to manage migration related challenges and opportunities.⁴⁵

⁴³ KII 22

⁴⁴ KII 10

⁴⁵ Swiss Development and Cooperation, FDSI: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/jemen.html/content/dezaprojects/SDC/en/2021/7F10857/phase?oldPagePath=/content/deza/en/home/laender/jemen.html#>

The Gulu office of Caritas International is working in collaboration with the local government to implement initiatives aimed at providing support for vulnerable communities in Gulu city, particularly in the areas of gender-based violence (GBV) and psychosocial well-being. Similarly, Care International in Gulu is involved in supporting initiatives focused on GBV, education, vocational training, and employment. The collaboration with local authorities for these activities remain unstructured and migrants and displaced persons are included in these activities based on their perceived vulnerability, rather than their migration or displacement experience.

Academic actors

As part of the collaborative ‘Building Stronger Universities (BSU)’ project in Northern Uganda, the Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS), the Faculty of Business and Development Studies, and the Faculty of Education and Humanities at Gulu University, are engaged in diverse research activities related to migrants and displaced communities. One of the core components of the research project is the ‘Ugandan Refugee Model’, but the project partners have so far mainly been engaging in research activities revolving around Adjumani city and surrounding host community. The cooperation between Gulu University, the local authorities, and civil society is limited. However, the BSU working group aims to strengthen the cooperation and widen its scope of research to also cover urban mobility and displacement in Gulu city in the future.⁴⁶

5.2. Cooperation and coordination

The situation regarding the actors involved in managing migration and providing services in Gulu is intricate and limited due to a chronic lack of local funding and limited political and legal room to maneuver. Additionally, national immigration policies also restrict the situation. Therefore, partnerships addressing mixed movements in Gulu are primarily occurring through indirect engagement with migrants and refugees. While ‘registered’ migrants fall within the category of the wider population, displaced persons who are (mainly) unregistered are often not ‘visible’ to city authorities due to a lack of operational mandates and vertical knowledge-sharing. NGOs typically prioritize holistic approaches for vulnerable communities, which may or may not include migrants and displaced persons, resulting in limited targeted actions and initiatives directed towards displaced persons.⁴⁷ Annex figure 1 and 2 provides an overview of the actors present in the context of Gulu, along with their respective areas of engagement.

5.2.1 City perspective – partnership opportunities and challenges

Lack of coordination between the city and the national government

The centralized immigration policies in Uganda have, despite being praised as particularly open and progressive, resulted in a focus on rural settlements and host communities alone, which has led to a lack of political and economic urban prioritization in this regard. Despite

⁴⁶ KII 1

⁴⁷ KII 19

initial steps being taken in the National Development Plan II from 2016⁴⁸, towards increased inclusion of local governments in decision-making and governance processes related to migrants and displaced persons, the government's institutional socio-economic development initiatives remain focused on areas with settlement presence. Local and district governments in areas of relative proximity to settlements receive funding (not necessarily increased inclusion in decision-making) from the OPM, while areas with high presence of unregistered urban refugees and migrants, which are not considered official refugee hosting areas, lack general support and mandates to provide adequate services and protection. The centralized policy model in Uganda is in this sense a limiting factor for cooperative governance practices and for both vertical and horizontal partnerships related to urban mobility. During an interview, an OPM employee in the department for refugees in Northern Uganda stated that OPM engage only with refugee host districts in their operations, and not cities and municipalities.⁴⁹

These notions resonate well with the general perception of Gulu City Council, regarding the lack of vertical cooperation between the local government and the national government. As an employee from the City Council underlined during an interview:

“

*(...) our hands are tight. Of course, we have refugees living in town here, but we have not had any moment to interact with them, because it is not our mandate, it is the office of the Prime Minister to first give us that power, that authority.*⁵⁰

Despite Gulu now being a city and no longer a municipality, which structurally brings the city to the same governance level as the district (LC V), the City Council is not considered to be a policy-making actor or partner to the government on questions related to migration or displacement. Cooperation is revolving around budgeting and planning for wider socio-political development initiatives centered around outdated official population census, which rarely manage to capture the rapidly changing dynamics of migrants or displaced persons in the urban setting.

Limited coordination at the level of the City Council

The geographical significance of Gulu city has made it an attractive hub for both onwads and more permanent types of mobility over the last decades. In this sense, human mobility and its consequences and opportunities are far from novel issues for the local government, and the political strategies to overcome challenges in this regard, has been a necessity rather than a choice. The local government therefore aims to plan and budget for general social service provision, along with coordinating all pertaining activities with all the respective actors present in the city. The centralized governance structure and the overall settlement policy in Uganda has, however, led to numerous challenges for both implementation and multi-stakeholder cooperation, in this regard. The overarching challenge for the City Council is by far the lack of political mandate and the lack of influence on decision-making processes and inadequate budgets for activities such as general service provision and demographic data collection.

⁴⁸ National Development Plan II, 2016, pp. 10: <http://npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/NDPII-Final.pdf>

⁴⁹ KII 2

⁵⁰ KII 19

An employee from the City Council made it clear that the city lacks mandate from the OPM to have something to offer displaced people and refugees, and added:

“

*We depend majorly on partners, because if there is any social problem here, we call on our stakeholders to help us, like the NGOs and the faith-based organizations. They are the ones who have been actively helping us in supporting refugees and other vulnerable people.*⁵¹

The statement above relates mainly to unregistered displaced persons and refugees residing in the urban area, and this segment of the urban population is also highlighted as the largest overall challenge to accommodate for the local authorities. On the contrary, several City Council employees argued that so-called economic and officially registered migrants who are socio-economically ‘self-reliant’, take part in formal economic activities and thereby provide increased tax revenues. They are in this sense contributing with development opportunities and is therefore also perceived to be the ‘least challenging’ population group to include in local development plans.⁵²

However, rapid urbanization tendencies and general insufficient and outdated population data (the last official national population census was made in 2014), counts for one of many challenges for the local authorities to target both registered and unregistered urban migrants and displaced persons within their budgeting and planning activities. To overcome the challenges of chronic underfunding, lack of measurable data, and therefore insufficient social service provision to vulnerable communities, the City Council depends on partnerships with civil society as implementing actors and data providers.

According to several city employees, the city and division level CDOs do not receive any direct support regarding their work with migrants and displaced people from the OPM, and therefore not from the city-level either. Instead, the CDOs must rely on self-established ad hoc partnerships with IOs, NGOs and FBOs, through coordination meetings and working groups, such as the ‘Social Protection Working Group’, with planned meetings on a quarterly basis. The meetings are arranged by the city departments, and usually involve around 15-20 persons from various organizations.⁵³

According to city officials, there is an overall City Development Plan, which aims to include all public segments and sectors, but the general lack of resources to implement the plan makes the cooperation with IOs and NGOs vital to secure basic public needs.⁵⁴ The lack of opportunities for obtaining official refugee registration in Gulu challenges the service provision for the local authorities further.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ KII 2

A City Council employee underlined the importance of civil society partnerships in Gulu City, stating:

“

*So, the NGOs are there to bridge the gap, to supplement what government has provided. And we have NGOs intervening in different sectors, in different areas. Some are in education, others are in agriculture, child protection, HIV/AIDS intervention, and then GBV. The only thing that we normally do, we normally have coordination meetings with them quarterly.*⁵⁶

The city level approach to multi-stakeholder partnerships in relation to mixed migration in Gulu is largely based on the lack of cooperation and coordination with the national government, which render the city particularly dependent on civil society and informal day-to-day partnerships with ‘lower’ governance levels. However, this cooperation only includes a few coordinated and recurring mechanisms. Partnerships with civil society are largely based on informal and unofficial structures but are nonetheless vital in terms of assuring adequate data collection and social service provision.

The Disaster Management Committee has further created a Disaster Management Plan, which aims to include local and district governments in planning and implementation during diverse crisis. This committee is, however, only active during perceived onset natural or man-made disasters, and is therefore mainly a latent and largely inactive coordination mechanism.

Practical information exchange between the division level, and local councils and civil society

The city status of Gulu has by law resulted in a merge of the four divisions of Laroo, Pece, Bardege, and Layibi, into two larger divisions of Laroo-Pece and Bardege-Layibi. However, without an increase in personnel, the new city structure has led to a widened geographical area and increased population under the responsibility of the, only two, division CDOs. Aside from a lack of human resources, the chronic underfunding for the divisions is also manifesting in lack of sufficient technical and practical equipment, such as laptops and vehicles – issues which challenges the daily work and general coordinated participation of the CDOs further. The CDOs must therefore rely on their own vehicles to reach the communities and provide their own fuel. This is also emphasized by an employee in the city division:

“

*For me, I have my personal vehicle. So, I must sacrifice. I said to one NGO partner I coordinate with - can you help give fuel - five liters or ten liters so we can go to the client? So, if somebody sent us a gift, then we go. If not, we cannot go to the client because of lack of fuel. So, we will now have to postpone and push problems. And, If I had a laptop, I'll do registrations of refugees just in a day. For instance, there are things I haven't been able to submit for two months. Going on to three months. Therefore, they cannot work on it [in the city council]. And that's also a big challenge. Yes, I have a small printer here, but we need a laptop to work.*⁵⁷

⁵⁶ KII 19

⁵⁷ KII 6

Many unregistered displaced persons settle in the parishes and the periphery of the urban center, opposed to so-called ‘resourceful migrants’ engaging in business and entrepreneurial activities within the city center. Therefore, many of these vulnerable population groups fall under the direct responsibility of the CDOs at the division levels who, however, are not provided adequate resources from the City Council to target their actions towards these population groups or even physically reach them to learn about their needs.

National decentralization efforts and the general city structure in Gulu (and Uganda more widely), provides a certain degree of autonomy for both city divisions and parish level local councils. An autonomy, which is intended to lead to cooperative inclusion, but which on the contrary often causes exclusion and structural isolation, leading to the need to seek and establish locally focused partnerships to ensure adequate implementation activities on the ground. In order to accommodate the needs of the local populations in the divisions and parishes, the CDOs engage in Local Council (LC I) meetings, composed of elected representatives such as community elders, religious leaders, displaced persons, and civil society actors. Locally elected leaders from the Local Councils brings decisions forward to the CDOs from the divisions, who are then reporting these issues to the City Council to provide the adequate budget needs to accommodate increased data collection, service provision and general implementation of activities. The lack of vertical cooperation, coordination, and knowledge-sharing is, however, resulting in general underfunding of the lower levels of government in Gulu.

As mentioned in the previous section of the report, civil society engagement is crucial for the local government to ‘bridge the gap’ between actual community needs and sufficient service provision and implementation of support initiatives. The partnerships between the division level CDOs, civil society actors, and community representatives are, however, not anchored in any official or institutionalized agreements, but in informal ad hoc partnerships. The only official cooperative measure in place between the divisions and the city level, is continuous monitoring of activities through quarterly reports. As emphasized by a division employee:

“

*You know, for all these community members, the divisions are the ones having the people. Yes, they're with us. The city that's the higher local government. We report to them from down here. Because they cannot go down to the community and do anything. We are the implementing partner, the implementing government body. So, we are there with the people, so we talk to them, do everything. For them we only report to them.*⁵⁸

While vertical cooperation between both the national level and the City Council, and between the City Council and the divisions level is vastly limited and challenged, the division level CDOs have managed to create several vital informal cooperation structures with civil society and local councils. These structures revolve mainly around day-to-day practical implementation processes to secure that immediate community needs are met. Lack of human and economic resources are, however, making this task increasingly difficult to manage.

5.2.2.

Civil society perspective – partnership opportunities and challenges

The vast presences of dilapidated donor-logo-billboards and gated donor compounds in Gulu are vivid reminders of Gulu's past as a so-called "aid town". During the civil war, Gulu had a presence of a plethora of IOs, and NGOs involved in various aspects of humanitarian assistance. The relative peace in 2006, however, led to an 'exodus' of these organizations, and only a limited amount remained in Gulu to maintain their respective activities. The new landscape resulted in a change of focus from humanitarian assistance to post-conflict reconstruction activities, such as psychosocial support, GBV initiatives, education and employment, and general provision of other social services (see annex figure 1 and 2). According to one NGO Director, "Everyone works under the assumption that now there is peace and people have gone back home a long time ago, so there is no specific focus on displaced persons now, the focus is rather on refugees [in the settlements]".⁵⁹

The change of geographical and sector specific focus has also resulted in a lack of international funding opportunities for both the City Council and civil society to carry out initiatives, beyond economic development and infrastructural projects, such as the USMID program. While civil society do engage with migrants and displaced persons in their activities, these population groups are mainly indirectly included in general NGO projects addressing post-conflict recovery initiatives. The specific needs of migrants and displaced communities are, in this sense, rarely addressed in a targeted and coordinated way, but rather as part of holistic initiatives addressing vulnerable communities.⁶⁰

Most civil society actors confirmed that their main direct cooperation partners regarding mixed mobility issues within the local government, are the city and division level CDOs. Since the CDOs are the main implementation partners and primary points of community contact, project activities are aimed coordinated with these.⁶¹ The cooperation activities revolve around spontaneously arranged bilateral coordinating meetings, the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), and ideally monthly and quarterly reporting for official monitoring, budgetary, and planning purposes.

Regularly recurring meetings have, however, thus far not been possible to maintain as a result of overburdened personnel and lack of resources. NGOs are further invited to submit proposals for future desired project activities to the planning department (LC V), around the time of annual budget allocations. Nationally imposed budgetary constraints, however, limits the funding opportunities for the local authorities, towards civil society. NGO and iNGO representatives also mentioned that they invite city personnel for various training and advocacy activities, but that workload and limited means of transportation often prevents the CDOs in taking part in such activities, unless financial support for transportation is provided.⁶²

⁵⁹ KII 12

⁶⁰ KII 3

⁶¹ KII 3, KII 4, KII 8, KII 9, KII 11, KII 12, KII 17, KII 20

⁶² Ibid.

As mentioned by a representative from an INGO:

“

*(...)when you call them for activities or for meetings, they tell you that, “the transport refund you are giving us is small.” But for us, we are looking at that aspect of volunteerism. When we call a meeting, you are supposed to come for that meeting. You do not have to basically look at how much you are going to receive.*⁶³

A central coordination actor within the civil society sphere is the NGO Forum Gulu, a network of NGOs and civil society organizations that work together to promote sustainable development and social justice in Gulu and the surrounding region. The organization was established in 1997, during the height of the conflict in northern Uganda, to provide a platform for NGOs and civil society groups to share information, coordinate their efforts, and advocate for the needs and rights of vulnerable populations. Today, NGO Forum Gulu continues to play a vital role in supporting the work of NGOs and civil society organizations in the region. They provide a range of services and support, including capacity building, networking opportunities, and advocacy and lobbying support. Coordination activities within the areas of migration and displacement are, however, focused on host districts and settlements.⁶⁴

Cooperation among civil society actors, and between civil society and the local government in Gulu, is fragmented. As witnessed regarding the cooperation between the national and local government, the general horizontal and vertical cooperation is restricted by underfunding and a lack of politico-economic prioritization. These challenges trickle down through the levels of governance, and lead to a lack of communication and coordination, and hence limited targeted actions among the different stakeholders – including civil society. The increased fragmentation is also a result of the administrative and structural changes following Gulu’s recent city status, which have led to confusion around certain areas of responsibility between the different departments. Civil society actors experience that this fragmentation as apparent in various ways, such as the different administrative departments that are perceived to work in silos, which hinders coordinated efforts in addressing the needs of migrants and displaced persons.⁶⁵ As highlighted by an NGO representative:

“

*If it is health, it is health. If it is education, it is education if it is gender issues, it’s gender issues. And I see all these are usually fragmented. It’s fragmented in the sense that if it is health, you find it confined to the health. If education is confined to the education, if it is gender, it’s confined. And yet you find all these things have the links interlinks. What affects education affects health, what affects health affects education and all that.*⁶⁶

The structural, economic, and practical challenges in Gulu, mainly resulting from a lack of national governmental prioritization of mixed mobility in urban settings in Uganda, make cooperation and partnerships across sectors increasingly difficult. As the CDOs in Gulu, civil society actors must rely on self-established informal cooperation mechanisms, while attempting to include migrants and displaced persons into broader socio-economic programming.

⁶³ KII 11

⁶⁴ KII 12

⁶⁵ KII 8

⁶⁶ Ibid

6

Conclusions and recommendations

The conclusions of the study summarize the main takeaways regarding urban migration governance in Gulu and provide recommendations on how to create and strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships.

6.1. *Conclusions*

National policies and priorities challenge targeted action, cooperation, and synergies

Despite the fact that Uganda is lauded as one of the most open and progressive refugee hosting countries in the world, the national immigration and settlement policies have proven to be incompatible with contemporary globalizing (increased interconnectedness, labor diversification etc.), and urbanizing tendencies and needs, in the context of Gulu. The study has shown that while the Ugandan settlement policies might be suitable for agrarian communities and periods marked by unrest, the contemporary socio-political landscape calls for new solutions to accommodate the increased number of migrants and displaced persons who are settling within Gulu. While the settlement policy might provide protection and livelihoods opportunities for population groups with agrarian backgrounds, the focus on host districts restricts targeted action and cooperation for the local urban authorities in Gulu.

Mixed mobility in Gulu consist of a diverse composition of nationalities, cultures, backgrounds, and needs, ranging from economically resourceful migrants on the one side of the spectrum to vulnerable and displaced persons traumatized by conflict on the other side. The lack of urban prioritization by the Ugandan national government and UNHCR leads to a lack of funding opportunities, resulting in chronic underfunding and limited room to maneuver for the responsible departments and civil servants.

'Self-settled' refugees and displaced persons, are highly *invisible* in Gulu, and often settle in the physical and social margins of society, leading to growing slums and multiple vulnerabilities. These individuals are dependent on direct contact with the city and division level CDOs, along with civil society actors, to ensure that their basic livelihoods needs are met.

The CDOs are, however, limited by overburdening and practical challenges (lack of transport opportunities and technical equipment), which hinders their possibilities of engaging in

cooperative initiatives, and hence must rely on *ad hoc* partnerships with civil society. These partnerships manifest in spontaneous meetings and reporting for monitoring purposes.

New city structure complicates action – silos and confusion

While the new city status for Gulu officially should lead to increased financial resources, and administrative and structural streamlining, city employees emphasized how it has rather led to confusion regarding the division of responsibilities.⁶⁷ The highly market-based decentralization efforts from the Ugandan government, have primarily been providing increased funding for improved physical infrastructure and economic development, while general service provision and the complex socio-cultural composition of Gulu have been neglected. Despite Gulu's long history as a host city for mixed mobility, there is no specific office or responsible department addressing migration and/or displacement. The responsibility is rather divided between different sector-specific departments, and mixed mobility issues are generally perceived to be beyond the respective mandate of these, leading to confusion and passivity. These *silos* complicate cooperation between council departments, the different levels of government, and between the local government and civil society. The new structural changes have further led to an increased geographical area of responsibility for the City Council. What was previously under the jurisdiction of the district level, are now city level matters. The increased territory and merge of divisions have, however, not resulted in increased personnel, which is why especially the division level CDOs are permanently overburdened.

6.2. Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the analysis of key informant interviews, along with a local workshop in Gulu in July 2022, facilitated by the Equal Partnerships project.

Ensure that practical and technical measures meet current needs

- It would enhance both cooperation and efficiency to establish a City Council office responsible for issues related to migration and displacement. Such an office could lead cooperation and coordination across different levels of governance and sectors and ensure adequate implementation of activities. The current restructuring of the city administration, as a result of the recent city status, could prove an entrance point for the establishment of such a structure.
First step to ensure such an initiative would be to strengthen local-national channels with the objective of creating local offices that communicate with the national level in order to implement national refugee and migration policy also in cities.
- The City Council should prioritize the inclusion of sufficient equipment, such as laptops, printers, and transportation means for the CDOs in the annual budgets. These elements are vital to maintain both cooperation and implementation activities.

Enhance communication, foster confidence, and define duties

- Effective partnerships and cooperation among relevant stakeholders are essential for providing services to migrants and displaced persons. It is important for all parties to coordinate and share responsibilities across different sectors, both vertically and horizontally.

⁶⁷ KII 6, KII16

- Trust between the local government and civil society needs to be strengthened to establish successful partnerships. To achieve this, traditional patterns of cooperation need to be reevaluated, moving towards a mutually reinforcing approach with equally shared responsibilities in planning and implementation. Regular meetings should be held to maintain ongoing communication and collaboration.
- To facilitate continuous communication among stakeholders, various channels such as WhatsApp groups, email groups, and newsletters could prove useful.
- Additionally, focal points should be designated within each institution, department, or organization to oversee communication and knowledge sharing, regarding general cooperation.

Strengthen local data collection capacities

- It's important to create easily accessible databases that include both activity and population data, going beyond the national census.
- To achieve this, the office for planning and statistics should collaborate closely with research institutions, NGOs, and civil society groups to gather measurable population data. This would enable more effective provision of targeted social service.

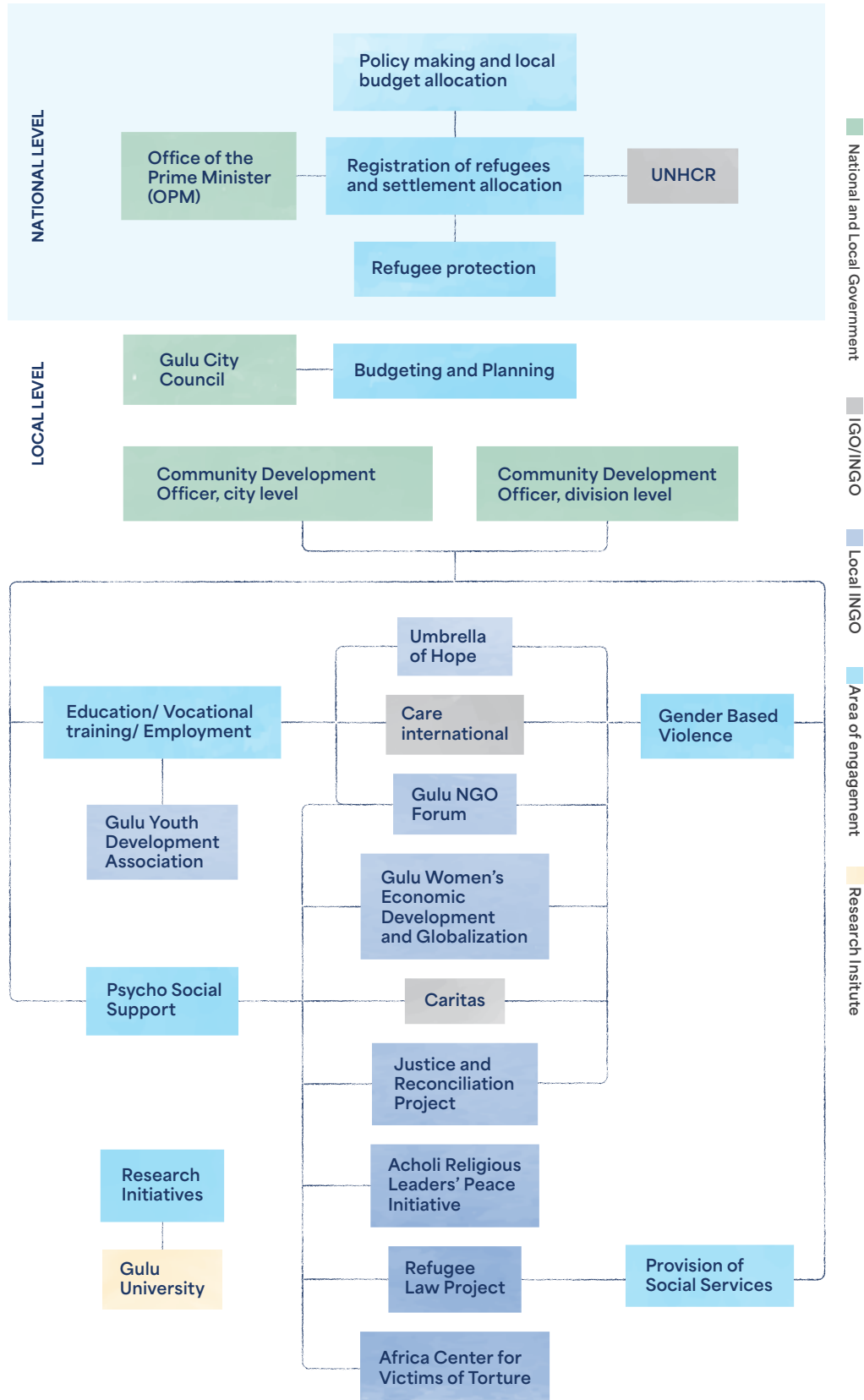
Enhance capacity building efforts and increase funding for sustainable interventions that are locally led

- The local government must dedicate resources and time for regular supervision, monitoring, and training within and between departments to ensure high-quality service delivery that aligns with changing circumstances, for the benefit of both employers and beneficiaries.
- In addition, social intervention programs should be reinforced and given priority, and vocational training opportunities should be offered to marginalized groups.
- **Both the local government and civil society should:**
 - work together to advocate with international donors for the inclusion of local, regional, and national stakeholders not only during project implementation, but also during the development phase. This will ensure that international funding is truly responsive to local and regional needs, and leverages the potential of institutions, civil society actors, and migrants.
 - to create participatory approaches, the voices of migrants should be included in the development of migration governance and the design of projects at all stages (design, implementation, evaluation) and all levels (international, national, regional, local).
- **Donors should:**
 - Shift from project-based funding to more structural and locally tailored funding.

Annexes

1. Coordination structures in Gulu City

Figure 9. Coordination structures in Gulu City. Own figure.



2. Actor mapping Gulu

Table 2. Actor mapping Gulu. Own table.

Name	Level of governance	Topics	Target groups with displacement/migration experience
Public actors			
City Level Community Development Officer	Local level	Implementation and planning of social service provision on city level. GBV and psychosocial support initiatives	Registered and unregistered urban refugees and migrants
Community Development Officer division level	City division level	Implementation of social service provision on city level	Registered and unregistered urban refugees and migrants
District Disaster Management Committee (only active during onset disaster)	Local level	Creating 'City Disaster Management Plan', handling man-made or natural disasters, and community rehabilitation	Registered and unregistered urban refugees and migrants
Gulu City Council	Regional and local level	Budgeting, planning, and social service allocation	Registered migrants and urban refugees
Local Councils	Local level	Local and division level representation regarding social service implementation	Registered and unregistered urban refugees and migrants
Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)	National, regional, local level	Policymaking, budgeting, registration, protection	Refugees in settlements according to national policy
Resident City Commission (RCC)/City Commissioner Office	Local level	Delegates assignment to relevant social service department and overseeing security issues within the city	Registered migrants and urban refugees

NGOs, Civil Society Actors, Faith Based Actors			
Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative	Local level	Psychosocial support	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Africa Center for Victims of Torture	Local level	Psychosocial support	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Gulu NGO Forum	Regional and local level	Education and psychosocial support	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Gulu Youth Development Association	Local level	Education and vocational training	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization	Local level	Psychosocial support and GBV initiatives	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Justice and Reconciliation Project	Local level	Psychosocial support and GBV initiatives	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Refugee Law Project	Regional and local level	Research, psychosocial support, social service provision	Registered refugees in district settlements, and registered/unregistered urban refugees
Umbrella of Hope	Local level	Education, vocational training, and GBV initiatives	Registered and unregistered urban refugees
Academic actors			
Gulu City University	District Settlements	Research activities	Registered refugees in district settlements, and registered/unregistered urban refugees
International actors			
Care International	National, regional, local level	Psychosocial support and GBV initiatives	Registered refugees in district settlements, and registered/unregistered urban refugees

Caritas	National, regional, local	Education, vocational training, and GBV initiatives	Registered refugees in district settlements, and registered/un-registered urban refugees
UNHCR	National, regional, local level	Registration, protection, and social service provision	Registered refugees in district settlements

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