



## Report on National Consultations with Government and Private Sector on the IGAD Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods, and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities

Fostering Private Sector Engagement for Refugee Economic Inclusion  
2023-2024

*As convened in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya*

### Introduction

The Refugee Investment Network (RIN), in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), convened private sector and government actors for a series of workshops in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya to advance progress toward the commitments of the Kampala Declaration. The purpose of these gatherings was to create conversation and explore collaboration opportunities between the public and private sectors to ultimately implement refugee inclusive policies and bolster investment in refugee-hosting areas. RIN's priority was to engage investors and companies looking to invest in refugee-hosting communities as well as internally displaced people (IDP) and refugee populations within these three countries.

As informed by the [Refugee Lens Investment Framework](#), RIN contacted private sector partners that include, but are not limited to: Organizations with a track record of implementing successful programs that support refugees and marginalized communities; Banks and microfinance institutions that can provide financial services and support to displaced people, including refugees and refugee-supporting businesses; Investors interested in supporting businesses and initiatives with a positive social and economic impact on host communities and forcibly displaced people; Organizations interested in optimizing supply chains in ways that include remote or underserved areas; and companies developing goods and services that address refugee challenges, such as access to information, education, healthcare, or financial services.

The consultations aimed to, first and foremost, **improve understanding between both private sector actors and government counterparts of the Kampala Declaration and its Action Plan and their roles within it.** Indeed, the declaration calls on the private sector to invest in the economic development of refugee-hosting areas, including through the creation of employment opportunities, the provision of goods and services, and the development of infrastructure. Whereas from the government, the declaration calls for the development of policies and regulations that promote a conducive business environment, including access to finance and markets for refugees.

Through a series of workshops and group discussions, participants from across sectors collaborated to **identify the barriers that still hinder private sector engagement with refugees –**

**whether political, economic, or logistical.** Private sector participants were able to elaborate on barriers to refugee engagement, e.g., hiring refugees, expanding into refugee-hosting areas, etc., and in conversation with key government and NGO leaders, to assess the extent to which these are policy or market-related obstacles. The convenings were thus crucial for providing a platform for dialogue and interchange between three key groups of stakeholders to help them better understand the existing barriers to shared success and to work toward identifying opportunities for collaboration. Likewise, by bringing key stakeholders together, the consultations **encouraged private sector companies and government agencies to form strategic partnerships that leverage their respective resources, expertise, and networks to address the challenges faced by refugee and host communities.** Points of synergy were identified through these interactions to help determine what private sector actors were looking for in partnerships with the government, and what key characteristics attract private sector interest to Refugee Lens Investment opportunities. Participants also worked to identify practical, realistic, and yet impactful policy changes that would improve the investment climate.

**At the conclusion of each event, RIN and IGAD co-created a *Policy Action Roadmap*, in collaboration with participating private and public sector actors, that outlines pathways to greater private sector engagement with refugees with regards to each specific country context.**

## Report on the National Consultation for Ethiopia

August 1-2, 2023

Bishoftu, Ethiopia

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in collaboration with the Refugee Investment Network (RIN), convened Ethiopian private sector and government actors for an inaugural workshop to advance progress towards the commitments of the Kampala Declaration. Refugee representatives and the NGO sector were also engaged to develop a holistic understanding of the issue. The two-day session was a first-of-a-kind opportunity for direct private/public collaboration on the economic inclusion policy of refugees in Ethiopia.

The aim of the consultation was to engage investors and companies looking to invest in refugee and refugee-hosting communities within Ethiopia and bring them to the table to help determine the future of refugee self-reliance in the country. Nearly one-third of attendees were thus Ethiopian private sector representatives gleaned from RIN's network and spanning a variety of industries (including fintech, microfinance, manufacturing, and textiles). The event was therefore a unique opportunity to discuss barriers faced by the private sector directly with representatives from the Ethiopian government and to develop policies aimed to bolster investment in refugee-hosting areas.

The first day focused on socializing the contents of the Kampala Declaration and noting progress on pledges on self-reliance in years since. Attendees included representatives from the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) of the Ethiopian Government, GIZ, RIN, IGAD, the Swiss Cooperation Office (SDC), Inkomoko, DAI-SHARPE, Renew Capital, as well as refugee representatives, and several Ethiopian businesses.

One of the major accomplishments of the conference was an improved understanding of the Kampala Declaration and its Action Plan by both private sector actors and government counterparts. Proposed next steps by IGAD included forming a National Working Group with RRS acting as a central mobilizing agency in identifying point persons and developing indicators to monitor and track stakeholder progress. RRS presented Ethiopia's implementation of the Kampala and GRF pledges, noting the passing of key legislation 1110/2019, progress on issuing work and residency permits, and the signing of the Melkadida Refugee Compact as indicators of progress. RRS noted that major barriers to implementation included: inadequate investment (specifically a lack of multi-year financing); high dropout rates among refugee in livelihood programming; low awareness among refugee of their rights and entitlements; and, low agricultural output from refugees workers on ill-equipped land. Notably, RRS presented on proposed new pledge areas for GRF 2023 including:

1. *Climate action;*
2. *Transitioning camps to urban settlements;*
3. *Increasing inclusion of refugees into existing national systems;*
4. *Enabling investment in refugee-hosting areas;*
5. *Increasing refugee access to land and irrigation through co-op models, and;*

6. *Increasing government capacity to provide registration and documentation services to refugee.*

Over the course of the conference, other major themes arose surrounding barriers faced by refugees, including: The importance of documentation and IDs for refugees when engaging with the private sector, demand for FDI policy adapted for refugee and refugee-hosting areas to encourage investment, and need for increased investment in refugee-hosting areas to enable the integration of refugee into markets.

Though RRS presented progress in clearing its backlog of applications for refugee IDs and work permits, the difficulty of acquiring this documentation was noted as a major barrier to refugee engaging in formal employment in the private sector. Refugee representatives explained that even when issued IDs, authorities and business owners at the regional levels did not recognize them as a legitimate form of identification due to low socialization of federal-level refugee policies. Other forms of identification are also critical to facilitating Refugee Lens Investments such as: TIN numbers, business licenses, tax clearance certificates, etc. The lack of all the above limits refugees' access to financing and formal work. Private sector actors also added that though they would be interested in engaging refugees, there are no easy ways of identifying refugee populations to source employees from. Ultimately, the issue of refugee IDs is both logistical and normative, with much left to be done to ease the process of supporting refugee transition into the private sector.

One of the main barriers to RLI discussed was Ethiopia's conservative foreign direct investment (FDI) policies that safeguard domestic industry by setting a high bar for minimum capital investment by foreigners — specifically, \$200,000 USD. When considered within the context of refugee-hosting areas and refugee-owned businesses, this high minimum nullifies potential investment as, 1) many refugee-owned businesses are SMEs that cannot absorb this much capital, and 2) foreign investors are unwilling to take on the risk of such a large investment in an emerging market. Since the Consultation, the Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems (DREAMS) program has announced that it is expanding to Ethiopia and is expected to provide \$500 in seed funding and business training to an initial group of 1,200 people in Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup> This is a positive sign that other pathways to entrepreneurship may open for refugees.

Another issue raised by refugee representatives tied to FDI policy was that under Ethiopian law, refugees are classified as foreigners and therefore are also held to the capital investment minimum of \$200,000 US. For the vast majority of refugees barely covering their daily needs with their incomes, this is an insurmountable barrier to setting up legitimate businesses, even with microfinance sources taken into account. As an outcome of this conference, convening relevant Ethiopian government offices to continue to discuss potential solutions (e.g. lowering the minimum or creating a humanitarian loophole) is integral to stimulating RLI in Ethiopia and should be targeted in the next round of policy engagement.

<sup>1</sup> Frank, "How 1,200 Refugees in Ethiopia Are Becoming Business Owners," 2024. <https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2024/business-training-refugees/796801>

As the market systems development approach (formerly called Markets for the Poor or M4P) to forced displacement is implemented in Ethiopia (best exemplified by DAI-SHARPE), there remain critical infrastructure gaps in refugee-hosting areas, specifically the Gambella and Somali regions. Linking refugees camps to nearby cities and hubs would enable greater market opportunities while also easing barriers to entering refugee-hosting regions for interested private sector actors. Several private sector actors noted that they are unsure of how to access these markets, both legally (e.g., get permits) and physically (e.g., access markets/camps in isolated and remote parts of Ethiopia with poor infrastructure). The group agreed that addressing these gaps would be critical to catalyzing private sector engagement in these regions. After the Consultation in August 2023, the Melkadida Refugee Compact was launched. This four-year development and climate adaptation plan addresses many of the infrastructure shortcomings of the Somali region of Ethiopia where over 211,000 Somali refugees live among five camps. The forthcoming investments in access to a renewable energy and water supply will create a more enabling environment for private sector investment and may address some of the challenges discussed during the consultation.

Through presentations and informal discussions, many participants noted developing a deeper understanding of the Declaration and the need for public/private partnerships to develop innovative solutions to the challenges faced by refugees. An exciting development in this space since the conclusion of the Consultation was the launch of the Boundless Skills job matching platform by Gebeya, in partnership with UNHCR and RIN, in Ethiopia that connects refugees to the digital economy. This is indicative of continued innovation in the refugee livelihoods space in the Ethiopia. Overall, engagement was high and many new ideas for fulfilling the pledges of the Declaration were generated over the course of the two days. An overview of the challenges to private sector engagement with refugees in Ethiopia, as well as proposed policy roadmaps and outcomes, discussed throughout the course of the convening are presented in the table below:

## Policy Action Roadmap: Ethiopia

Challenges	Proposed Policy Solution	Ideal Outcome
Limited access to identification and permits to enable refugees to access formal work and have freedom of movement	RRS gains expanded issuing capacity and clears the backlog of applications.	Refugees are able to access formal work in the private sector and are able to travel freely and do business in local markets
Low levels of coordination/socialization of Refugee IDs outside of the federal level	Socialize Refugee IDs to regional-level officials, businesses and financial institutions through information campaigns	Refugees are able to access services and formal work with RRS-issued IDs and permits.
No clear pathway for the private sector to access refugee camps as access to camps is tightly controlled by RRS	Creating a clear administrative pathway for private sector to access camps  Transition of camps into settlements	Greater RLI and market opportunities in camps, lessening humanitarian need in the long run
RRS currently unable to issue business licenses for self-employed refugees	MOU between Ministry of Trade and RRS to allocate responsibility to RRS	Self-employed refugees enter the formal economy
No existing forums for the private sector to contribute to developing refugee policy that eases private sector involvement	Reserve slots for and foster relationships with private sector representatives through Technical Working Groups developed by IGAD/RIN and invite private sector to RRS/UNHCR led Coordination bodies  Engage Regional/State Level Investment Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce	Private sector actors contribute to the development of informed refugee policy that enables private sector solutions for forced displacement.

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<p>Foreign direct investment (FDI) in refugee hosting areas is difficult due to unwelcoming policy environment</p>	<p>Creating a separate categorization for refugees under laws to exempt them from capital requirements for foreigners</p>	<p>Greater RLI investment in refugee hosting regions of Gambella and Somali</p>
<p>Refugees are categorized as “foreigners” under FDI laws and are rarely able to raise the 200,000 USD required by Ethiopian law to establish businesses</p>	<p>Lower minimum FDI capital required when investing in refugee owned/supporting businesses.</p>	<p>Increased number of refugee owned and serving businesses</p>
<p>Foreign investors interested in supporting refugee-owned or serving businesses must invest a minimum of 200,000 USD – these businesses are often too small to absorb this much capital</p>		

<p>Refugee camps are in remote border regions, far from Addis, that are difficult and expensive to reach. These markets require significant investment and a high risk appetite for companies to invest in market expansion</p> <p>Camps are in remote and marginalized regions of the country with low levels of infrastructure</p> <p>There is no clear pathway for businesses interested in engaging refugees to secure permission to work in camps</p>	<p>Create incentives for the private sector to consider market expansion and investment in refugee economies.</p> <p>Donors to support investment partnerships and use of innovative public-private partnerships to stimulate and de-risk private investment</p> <p>Clarify and streamline the legal and administrative process for companies</p> <p>Invest in infrastructure to facilitate greater private sector investment and link refugee hosting regions to regional and national capitals (e.g commercial flights to Dollo Ado)</p> <p>Expose private sector to RIN's <i>Refugee Lens Investing</i> (RLI) to broaden understanding of how to identify, investing and measure impact of engagement</p>	<p>Refugees are able to economically benefit from increased market linkages</p> <p>Increased number of private sector actors present in refugee hosting areas, providing job and economic opportunities for refugees and stimulating camp economies</p>
<p>Private sector businesses cannot easily identify refugee populations to intentionally engage as employees, suppliers, or customers</p>	<p>Private/public collaboration to identify employable refugees to be referred to interested businesses.</p>	<p>Greater number of refugees engaging in formal work, paying taxes and benefitting from state services</p>



<p>Low levels of successful skill-matching between refugee and businesses interested in employing them</p> <p>TVET programs can be difficult to access for refugees at the regional level as regional authorities do not recognize refugee IDs</p>	<p>Continued integration of refugee into regional TVET programs - e.g. QEP by GIZ</p> <p>Conduct research to better tailor TVET programming to labor demand</p>	<p>Greater numbers of refugees engaged in formal sector work</p> <p>More private sector businesses sourcing employees from refugee and host populations to meet internal skill needs</p>
<p>Coordination and responsibility sharing across federal level between ministries on refugee issues is low resulting in slow integration of refugees into national systems</p> <p>Coordination of federal and regional levels is low – little socialization of 1) Kampala Declaration pledges at the regional level and 2) New legislation regarding refugee economic rights</p>	<p>Ministries give certain authorities to RRS to ease processes – for example, Ministry of Trade allowing RRS to issue work permits to refugees</p> <p>Socialize Kampala commitments and RRS pledges at the regional level through information campaigns</p>	<p>Refugees are integrated into national system and can easily access services</p> <p>Federal and regional authorities broadly engage in implementing pledges of the Kampala Declaration</p>
<p>The National Bank of Ethiopia allows refugees to have savings accounts but currently does not permit refugees to access loans from financial institutions, other than group loans from MFIs</p>	<p>Reform NBE regulations to permit financial institutions to offer digital and micro-lending products to refugees</p>	<p>Greater financial inclusion of refugees, allowing them to access business capital and invest in business growth on their own terms</p>

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## Report on National Consultation for Uganda

September 21st and 22nd, 2023

Entebbe, Uganda

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in collaboration with the Refugee Investment Network (RIN), convened Ugandan private sector and government actors for an inaugural workshop to advance progress towards the commitments of the Kampala Declaration. The two-day session was a first-of-a-kind opportunity for direct private/public collaboration on the economic inclusion policy of refugees in Uganda.

Uganda is a regional leader in refugee inclusion, maintaining an open border and settlement-based refugee policy, and hosts the largest number of refugees on the continent. With a long history of refugee self-reliance initiatives going back to the first formalization of refugee policy in the constitution of 1995, Uganda presents a unique and enabling environment for the engagement of the private sector in solutions to forced displacement.

The aim of the September consultation was to convene Ugandan government and private sector leaders to discuss progress made towards the commitments of the Kampala Declaration thus far, and to prepare for the upcoming “mega-pledge” on self-reliance to take place at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023. A diverse range of stakeholders, including refugee representatives, RLOs, and NGOs were also present to provide input on this topic. The presence at the meetings of a variety of private sector representatives invited by RIN provided the opportunity to socialize these policy developments and provide space for public/private collaboration within the new context.

As a co-convenor of the upcoming Global Refugee Forum under the theme "Uganda, The World's Model for the Refugee Response - Let's Make It Sustainable," the Ugandan government has committed to a series of policy pathways to implementing the Kampala Declaration in line with the theme of self-sufficiency. This includes the establishment of new – as well as the implementation of existing – national plans and strategies in addition to the compilation of a Technical Working Group on the Kampala Declaration.

Representatives from the government attending the Entebbe meeting presented current response plans, including the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (JLIRP). The leading officials from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, in tandem with other Social Development Sector (SDS) provided the convened conference participants valuable insight into the current prospects and challenges of implementing the JLIRP. The five strategic objectives of the plan are as follows:

1. Peaceful coexistence and economic interaction extended and strengthened between refugees and host communities by 2025;

2. Sustainable economic opportunities created in thirteen refugee-hosting districts for improved competitiveness and inclusive growth of refugees and host communities by 2025;
3. Food, nutrition and income security of 486,861 refugee and 1,152,087 host community households improved by 2025;
4. Skilled refugees and host communities capable of harnessing employment opportunities in the country by 2025;
5. A minimum of 361,000 five per cent of refugee and host communities' vulnerable populations are fully included and actively participating in local development initiatives of the country by 2025.

In developing these goals, the GoU followed the World Food Program's Self-Reliance model closely, placing emphasis on the following components: 1) A private sector engagement strategy; 2) Economic inclusion and access to financial services for refugees; 3) Skills development programming; 4) Increased wage and self-employment through advocacy; and, 5) Employability. In this respect, the Entebbe consultations were especially important and valued by the GoU, who needed to source private sector input as they developed approaches to these goals. In so far as achieving these goals through other partnerships, the GoU has worked with donors to launch major programs that increase access to TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), employment opportunities, market-relevant skills and pathways to sustainable agricultural productivity. Major examples cited during the conference included the Uganda Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) Project, the Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP) and the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS).

The GoU noted several challenges that have emerged in its attempt to meet its goals: First and foremost, they noted that funding constraints on programs have slowed progress. Moreover, partner interventions under the JLIRP have not been well coordinated, leading to redundancies, and actors have struggled to de-emphasize agricultural livelihoods for other forms of employment, while climate change has damaged livelihoods across the board, especially in the agricultural sector. The government cited other factors slowing the implementation of the JLIRP including low rates of voluntary repatriation due to persistent violent conflict in neighboring countries.

Perhaps most relevant to the attendees at the Entebbe conference, officials noted low buy-in by private sector stakeholders the government strategy and the plan's livelihood interventions/agenda. There is also a lack of a pipeline for interested investment actors as refugee engaging companies are not consistently tracked. A major goal noted by the GoU was aligning the National Employment Policy Strategy from 2011 (being renewed in 2023) with JLIRP and to prioritize job growth as a key issue with interventions aimed at both refugees and hosts. One solution proposed during the session by a refugee representative was greater engagement of employment services by private employment agencies. The idea to involve the Microfinance Support Center (a government owned agency) to a greater extent in

refugee-hosting districts and to provide access to finance to businesses, incubation and entrepreneurship training, was recommended by the MFSC representative present. Refugee representatives also raised the issue of the nonrecognition of refugee IDs at the local level and the difficulty of accessing services with a refugee ID due to low socialization of the rights entitled to refugees.

Another opportunity for cross-ministry collaboration cited at the conference involved updating the National Qualifications Framework by the Ministry of Education to help ease the recognition of prior educational degrees and credentials of refugees. However, low qualifications for refugees were also noted as a challenge, as well as the relative high cost of assessment and training packages for refugees. The smooth management of transitions at TVET centers was also pointed out as necessary to help ensure financial sustainability and viability after partners exit. During discussions on financial institutions, banks' concerns over increased risk related to the repatriation of refugees was raised as an issue. However, the representative for OPM, which has the ability to track individuals across borders, noted that financial service providers can coordinate with OPM to mitigate these perceived risks.

Following the GOU presentation, Ugafode, and Asilli Corporation – two private sector actors in Uganda – presented their work and refugee engagement models. Attendants were then split into five small groups (with representatives from the GoU, private sector, and NGOs equally split among them) to come up with a list of five major challenges for private/public collaboration on the economic inclusion policy of refugees in Uganda and ideas for solutions. The outcomes of this group work have been summarized in the table below:

## Policy Action Roadmap: Uganda

Challenges	Proposed Policy Solution	Ideal Outcome
Low buy-in from the private sector to support livelihood initiatives via employing refugees, etc.	<p>GoU intentionally engages private sector actors at every stage of the implementation of the JLIRP</p> <p>Government incentivizes the private sector by lowering startup costs (by gifting land parcels, bettering infrastructure to lower transport, water, and energy costs), streamlining information/documentation requirements and sharing to interested actors</p>	Private sector is a main stakeholder in the implementation of the JLIRP and it intentionally engages refugees as employees, suppliers, and customers to create sustainable economic opportunities
Limited alignment of private sector partner interventions	<p>GoU creates a TWG (Technical Working Group) or forum for private sector actor collaboration and alignment</p> <p>Mapping exercises, greater engagement of the Private Sector Foundation, as well as greater integration of the private sector into existing working groups</p>	Private sector forum is a platform for collaboration and alignment that helps to prevent redundancies and to create opportunities for economies of scale with regards to refugee engagement
Hyperfocus on agricultural livelihoods for refugees and little focus on other sectors	Engaging private sector actors from a variety of sectors (energy, manufacturing, etc.) – beyond agriculture – as potential employers to diversify livelihood opportunities for refugees	Expanded diversity of economic opportunities for refugees leading to more resilient and sustainable livelihoods
Recognition of prior education is difficult to receive and refugees have inconsistent access to education and may be under qualified for certain opportunities	GoU MoE expands prior education recognition capacity with support from donors	Refugees can easily access education and credential recognition services at affordable rates

Inconsistency in measuring the concept of self-reliance with no standardized indicators for measuring progress	GoU working with diverse stakeholders (NGOs, RLOs, private sector) to decide on one set of self-reliance indicators to be used across all livelihood activities in Uganda	Holistic and standardized indicators for self-reliance are used by actors implementing livelihood programming
Lack of pipeline for actors interested in engaging the private sector or investing in RLI businesses	GoU and RIN collaborate to set up an expanded RLI business pipeline and the capacity to maintain up-to-date information on private sector engagement of refugees in Uganda	Accessible database of RLI businesses and other private sector initiatives in support of refugee livelihoods is compiled and maintained, e.g., RIN's RLI Opportunities <a href="#">Map</a>
Low recognition of refugee IDs across government service providers and other sectors, in addition to general prejudice against refugees	Refugee ID issuing rate by GoU is increased and complemented by public/private sector refugee ID socialization campaigns	Private and public service providers recognize refugee IDs and are informed of the rights and entitlements of refugees
Redundant skill training by donors and NGOs that is out of tune with market demand	GoU convenes fora for NGO/donor and private sector collaboration and learning activities to ensure livelihood training is designed with market demand in mind	Refugees are trained in marketable, demand driven, skills and matched with appropriate and sustainable employment opportunities
Lack of access to affordable capital for refugees	<p>Blended financing solutions and collaborative efforts from GoU, CSO, private finance providers and business development service providers for group guarantee schemes and customized financial products are designed for refugees</p> <p>Educational outreach to financial institutions showing that refugee-led businesses are not high-risk</p> <p>Increased provision of cheap capital to lenders</p>	Ugandan financial institutions increase lending to refugees at accessible rates

<p>Mobility of refugees across borders, especially in the case of repatriation, has led financial institutions to categorize refugees as higher risk for default</p>	<p>Coordination between GoU, OPM, and financial institutions to manage flight risk management and validation of cross-border movement</p>	<p>OPM and financial institutions coordinate to ensure refugee customers are tracked and risk categorization of refugees is ultimately lowered</p>
<p>Refugees may be unwilling to engage in wage labor due to a “dependency syndrome” developed from years relying on humanitarian aid</p>	<p>Greater socialization of availability of financing and other self-reliance opportunities within refugee communities</p> <p>Increased apprenticeships and other professional placement programs for refugees</p>	<p>Refugees have successfully transitioned away from humanitarian aid and are engaged in sustainable economic activities</p>
<p>Climate change destabilizes refugee livelihoods due to adverse effects on agricultural yields, climate forced displacement, etc.</p>	<p>Inclusion of climate mitigation plans within livelihood strategies</p> <p>Increasing opportunities for non-agriculture based livelihoods for refugees</p>	<p>Effects of climate change on livelihoods are mitigated as a result of diversified income generating opportunities for refugees</p>

## Report on National Consultation for Kenya

February 20th and 21st, 2024

Nairobi, Kenya

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in collaboration with the Refugee Investment Network (RIN), convened Kenyan private sector and government actors for an inaugural workshop to advance progress toward the commitments of the Kampala Declaration. The two-day gathering of key stakeholders, including refugee representatives, NGOs, and international organizations, was designed to socialize the goals of the Kampala Declaration, review Kenya's progress in the promotion of refugee economic inclusion, and to generate pathways to private sector engagement of refugees.

Kenya has made significant progress in developing new refugee policies that are catalytic to the economic integration for refugees, most notably the 2021 Refugee Act. The 2021 Act greatly expanded and formalized the rights of refugees in Kenya, especially in regard to extending access to refugees to identification and work authorization documentation. Although the Act has still yet to be widely implemented, existing policy was augmented by the gazetting of Refugee Identification Documents in November 2023 that enables refugees to access services provided by the government using refugee IDs. These developments are in line with the *Shirika Plan*, a development-oriented approach to Kenya's refugee response that transitions refugee management away from refugee camps to integrated settlements, that is currently under development by the GoK and will be finalized in 2024.

The Commissioner for Refugee Affairs, John Burugu, addressed the meeting on ongoing work by the Department of Refugee Services (DRS) to implement the Refugee Act of 2021 and the recent gazetting of refugee IDs. Commissioner Burugu noted ongoing outreach to other Ministries under the GoK to ensure that new Refugee IDs in Kenya are recognized across all GoK entities so that refugees may be integrated into the provision of services, including at Kenya's:

- Central Bank (discussions aim to have the refugee ID recognized as a financial document);
- Communications Authority (to enable refugees to register for SIM cards);
- Bankers Association (the financial sector's leading advocacy group with a current membership of 46 financial institutions);
- Revenue Authority (to facilitate the issuance of KRA PINs to refugees that enable tax collection).

The DRS is also working with the Kenya National Qualifications Authority to issue refugees' recognition of prior learning certificates to better position them for employment.

One major hurdle to refugee integration from Commissioner Burugu's perspective was the accessibility of UNHCR's refugee data. In ongoing negotiations with UNHCR, the DRS aims to develop a refugee management platform ("eRefugee"), that will be owned and maintained by the GoK, i.e., the Kenya



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National Bureau of Statistics. Additional grant funding for infrastructure, refugee scholarships, and WASH facilities also were announced – all aiming to dovetail into the *Shirika Plan* by supporting the transition of camps to municipalities. IGAD also presented the launch of the Kampala Declaration Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in Kenya that will soon be implemented to track progress toward the commitments of the Declaration.

To kick-off the afternoon session, RIN's Africa Director, Danny Cutherell, outlined the Refugee Lens in a plenary session of the conference and provided an overview of RIN's 2022 report on [Refugee Lens Investment \(RLI\) opportunities in Kenya](#). This landscape study provides an overview of the size, location and key characteristics of the refugee population in Kenya, along with a review of the state of refugee economic inclusion policies in the country. It then provides analysis of Kenya's economic environment and examines potential sectors, value chains and business models that might offer refugee lens opportunities for interested investors across the three major refugee hosting areas (Kakuma, Dadaab and Nairobi). Danny then invited two of RIN's current private sector partners, Gebeya Inc., and Kakuma Climate Ventures (KCV), to present on their engagement with refugees. Gebeya has recently launched the Boundless Skills Talent Cloud – a tailored online platform that leverages the digital economy to match qualified refugees with job opportunities. Gebeya is actively expanding the reach and capacity of the program and has already at 169 onboarded refugee talents since launching in January 2024. KCV highlighted their investment portfolio in northern Kenya and, specifically, refugee-serving enterprises.

The session concluded with six focus-group discussions that each consisted of representatives from the GoK, private sector, NGOs, refugee representatives, and refugee-led organizations to identify barriers to private sector engagement with refugees in Kenya, along with potential policy and market-based solutions. Major themes identified by the focus groups included bureaucratic and infrastructural barriers to private sector expansion into refugee-hosting areas; ongoing delays of the full implementation of the Refugee Act of 2021; and a lack of skilled labor among refugees that can meet current market demands. A summary of the discussions can be found in the table below.

## Policy Action Roadmap: Kenya

Challenges	Proposed Policy Solution	Ideal Outcome
Lack of skilled labor among refugees and especially among women and other marginalized groups	The engagement and collaboration of diverse stakeholders – GoK, NGOs, and private sector – to provide TVET and other training opportunities tailored to meet market demands	Sustainable livelihood opportunities for trained refugees and greater sourcing of labor from refugee populations by the private sector
Lack of supporting infrastructure in refugee hosting areas (e.g. roads, water, electricity) makes it difficult to sustain private enterprises	National and county government investment and support in building out necessary infrastructure, ideally as part of the transition from camps to municipalities described in the Shirika Plan	Private sector actors have lowered barriers to enter refugee serving markets and launch enterprises in these regions, ultimately resulting in more livelihood opportunities for refugees
Lack of data on economic sectors and market size in refugee hosting areas to help private businesses design and tailor products	International donor and GoK support for exploratory research that aims to identify private sector opportunities in refugee hosting regions	Private sector actors can leverage new data to better design refugee serving markets and are more likely to expand into refugee hosting areas overall
Refugee documents, despite recent gazetting, are not recognized across a variety of public and private service providers	Sensitization campaign led by DRS to better inform public and private entities of the rights entitled to refugees and the recent gazetting of refugee IDs by the GoK to ensure refugees are able to use them to access services	Refugees are able to fully utilize their IDs to access a variety of services, both public and private, and decrease reliance on humanitarian aid in the long run
Inconsistent and fragmented approach to refugees across government ministries as each ministry must individually reframe policies and regulations to be inclusive of refugees	Continued DRS outreach to agencies to align refugee policy across the GoK and creation of a Technical Working Group with representatives from critical agencies to support the implementation of the Refugee Act of 2021 and the operationalization of the Shirika Plan	Refugee policy is consistent and aligned to the provisions of the Refugee Act of 2021 across all agencies

Private sector is profit oriented and lacks incentives to engage refugee populations	Establishing a culture of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that is inclusive of refugees in addition to the GoK playing a role in providing incentives for private sector actors to engage refugees/expand into refugee hosting areas	The private sector incorporates refugees into both CSR and go-to-market designs that leverage refugee talent and existing markets
Lack of political will at various government levels to fully implement the Refugee Act of 2021	Continued pressure from a coalition of DRS, donor, and private sector to generate political will	The Refugee Act of 2021 is fully implemented
Bureaucratic barriers to accessing camps and founding enterprises within refugee hosting areas	National and regional governments design legislation that eases the process of investment and private sector engagement in these regions	Increased investment and expansion of enterprises into refugee hosting areas as a result of lowered barriers

## Policy Barrier Themes Across the Region

RIN's participation in the IGAD Kampala Declaration consultations in Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya was instrumental to creating a public-private dialogue on the barriers and opportunities associated with the economic inclusion of refugees in all three countries. Open discussion and debate in both small groups and plenary sessions informed RIN and IGAD on the current status of commitments made in the Kampala Declaration, as well as the work that remains to be done to address shortcomings. Notwithstanding the varying country contexts, RIN noted the recurrence of a number of themes across the three consultations. There are potential synergies in solutions to challenges facing the implementation of the Declaration cited by participants, in addition to valuable learning from the experiences of private sector actors engaging refugees.

Private sector actors looking to integrate refugees into their workforce noted that the **supply of refugee skills is not meeting their demand**. This gap between the supply and demand for skills needs to be addressed by ensuring refugees are provided training and professional development support that best prepare them to access sustainable employment opportunities. It is critical for the private sector to be engaged in this process to share insights on current labor needs and, likewise, to ensure there are channels for passing this information to TVET and other service providers (whether government, NGO, or UNHCR). Moreover, even when refugees are appropriately skilled, it is often difficult to match supply with demand, or relevant opportunities, resulting in the underemployment of refugees. Therefore, it is essential that job matching platforms – such as Gebeya – are also engaged in the process of closing this gap.

**Prior education recognition and the recertification of refugees was raised as a government priority** and is another pathway for refugees to access employment opportunities. This is in line with similar efforts in other regions, such as the Lumni fund for recertification in Colombia. Both Uganda and Kenya have dedicated resources in ministries responsible for this and are actively working to make this service accessible to refugees. However, the high costs of this process were frequently noted during consultations and the two governments are seeking donor support to support operations.

Another major theme of the consultations was the difficulty the private sector faces in both physically and legally accessing refugee markets in camps and settlements. **A lack of infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas** creates a high barrier to entry for enterprises interested in expanding their operations into these areas. By their nature, refugee camps and settlements are usually founded in remote areas along borders that are underserved by public services and have underdeveloped infrastructure for water, power, and transportation. Historically, these services have been provided by the UN along with NGOs, however the long-term economic integration of refugees in the private sector will require government investment into infrastructure that can be sustainably maintained.

Additionally, **investors and private sector actors are unclear regarding the legal process of accessing refugee communities** where jurisdiction is split between governments and UNHCR/NGOs, and no clear guidelines exist for private sector actors.

There are still many steps before more liberal refugee policies reach full operationalization. **Socialization of refugee rights and identification documents remains low** across public and private service providers. This may be tied to the fact that refugee policy is written and passed at the national level and regional governments (especially in countries where devolution is part of the governance model) take much longer to recognize and implement said policies.

RIN's partnership with IGAD was key for building a culture of continued engagement between the private sector and government on refugee economic integration. As one of the first events in the region where private sector actors were brought directly to the table on these issues, **the Consultations yielded valuable insights and budding networks that have established a foundation for progress towards the full implementation of the commitments of the Kampala Declaration.**

## Lessons Learned

In engaging in this partnership with IGAD, RIN sought to fulfill its mandate in supporting evidence-based policy change by convening an event for direct private sector-government engagement and collaboration. RIN was correct in the assumption that **few such targeted forums existed**, especially those with structured opportunities for discussion and deliberation regarding the socioeconomic integration of refugees. As a reflection of this under addressed gap, many attendees remarked on the novelty and necessity of the consultations and noted they had never attended similar convenings before. RIN's role as an intermediary tasked with bringing influential private sector actors to the table was successful – **over fifty private sector representatives attended** across the three convenings. Representatives were highly engaged in the discussions as well as the development of the respective policy action roadmaps.

As a result of the nature of this being the first engagement of this kind, most of the sessions were spent on establishing mutual understanding and identifying problems and barriers, limiting time that could be spent on developing solutions. While building this baseline was an important achievement, barriers must be revisited in future sessions to develop nuanced pathways to solutions. This reflects a difficulty that RIN faces in tracking policy changes that result from this engagement as an “outsider” to the policy processes of government actors, especially as refugee policy can be highly politically sensitive and move slowly within restricted circles. This engagement was originally designed to be the first in a three-part series where the same actors are re-convened annually to take stock of progress in achieving the private sector related commitments of the Kampala Declaration. **Only through frequent reconvening of the same actors can progress be tracked**, illustrating that this should not be a limited engagement. To ensure progress on these fronts can be measured, benchmarks towards sought after outcomes should be established in tandem to facilitate easier evaluation of progress.

While these initial convenings were critical to identifying generally salient themes most immediately pertinent to refugee economic integration, **future roundtables should take a targeted approach and hone in on specific barriers**. Taking a sector-by-sector approach within the policy engagement strategy provides a platform for a smaller group of stakeholders to collaborate on a more in-depth exploration of potential solutions. These conversations can produce valuable learning documents (such as an FAQ for private sector actors interested in engaging refugees) that can be disseminated to bring forward the field as a whole. Potential topics for such meetings can be skilling and job matching, financial services, and tech-based livelihoods. While similar barriers exist across the region, a country-by-country approach is nevertheless necessary to address the specific nuances of refugee related laws and regulations and other context-specific factors.

Maintaining the momentum of these meetings and operationalizing many of the policy pathways proposed requires continued engagement and consistent effort over a long time frame. RIN hopes to spearhead this effort and is currently seeking funding to implement the future iterations of these convenings.