

BIMONTHLY

May-June 2025

NEWSLETTER



INTRODUCING BEACON

We are pleased to introduce the Build and Empower an Advocacy-Oriented Cohesive Coalition of Refugee-Led Organizations Nationwide (BEACON) Project funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

The project is designed to advance advocacy geared towards refugee inclusion, and meaningful participation in Uganda (2025-2028) will run on four key themes, which are;

1. Refugee Meaningful Participation
2. Refugee Self-Reliance and Access to Job Opportunities
3. Documentation and Freedom of Movement
4. Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Read more here: <https://bit.ly/4lfJp8Q>

WELCOME NOTES

Welcome to our May-June Newsletter! In this Newsletter, you will find the latest updates of our work stretching to the past two months.

With our new project BEACON, we are back like we never left, bigger and better, and more intentional about advancing refugee rights, inclusion of refugees in policy and decision-making processes that affect refugees, and new strategies and projects designed to respond to the evolving needs of RLOs, refugee and host communities, and mobilizing resources to support refugee response in Uganda.

The BEACON Project will prioritize the capacity enhancement of RLOs and advance refugee advocacy geared towards inclusion and meaningful participation in Uganda and beyond.



www.relonuganda.org

In this newsletter you will find:

Latest activities, engagements with our partners, our advocacy initiatives and more! Keep Reading!

Here is how RLOS are changing lives of Refugees

Association of Refugees with Disability (ARD)

Based in Najjanankumbi, ARD is an RLO whose key focus is on advocating for the rights and inclusion of refugees with disabilities, such as inclusive education, employment, health services, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), rehabilitation, and provision of assistive devices, among others.

ARD also plays a pivotal role in educating and influencing implementing partners to ensure refugees are included in both formal and informal employment opportunities.

Notably, in Nakivale, ARD has employed 21 people (1) staff member and 20 community-based facilitators.

During our visit, the Executive Director, James Muombamungu revealed that one of their major challenges is the absence of a dedicated advocacy officer, which limits the reach and impact of their advocacy efforts.



A team from RELON poses for a photo with the team of ARD after an impromptu visit to their office in Najjanankumbi- Kampala

PPDR (People for Peace and Defence of Rights)

Based in Masajja, PPDR focuses on fostering cohesion between refugees and host communities through dispute resolution mechanisms, skills training for livelihoods, and child care services.

Through their Information Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) program, co-implemented with NRC, PPDR supports refugees by raising awareness about legal procedures related to land and property acquisition, documentation, and conflict mediation. Joyeux Mugisho, the executive director revealed that their approach involves forming community networks, collaborating with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) for new arrival registration, facilitating access to justice, and training refugees on their rights and state obligations. They also promote peaceful coexistence through sports and other community activities.



A team from RELON poses for a photo with the team of PPDR after an impromptu visit to their office in Masajja-Kampala

AIDER Refugee Initiative

Based in Kisenyi, Kampala, AIDER Refugee Initiative supports urban refugees through advocacy for refugee policy changes, protection, and education—particularly vocational training.

They leverage community structures to raise awareness, train refugee advocates, and provide vocational skills to promote self-reliance among refugees.



A team from RELON poses for a photo with the team of AIDER after an impromptu visit to their office in Kisenyi- Kampala

GEARED FOR SUCCESS (GFS) PROJECT

Our Geared For Success (GFS) project registered key successes in which we continued to advocate for equitable and inclusive education for refugees and host community children and youth especially girls and adolescence girls.

RELON Uganda developed and disseminated advocacy materials to not only increase awareness and understanding of gender equity measures but also increase public awareness about existing gender-responsive policies that affect refugee women, and girls in these areas.

The engagement also provided a platform for refugee leaders, local authorities, and humanitarian actors to discuss policy implementation gaps towards promoting community-driven and inclusive solutions for improving gender equity in education.

The engagement provided well-crafted messages that resonate with diverse audiences, inspire action, and reinforce the importance of equitable access to quality education for all genders.



Stakeholders pose for a photo showcasing advocacy messages calling the public to actively engage in advocating for gender-inclusive education policies and interventions.

Media for Advocacy: Radio Talk shows



Key stakeholders participate in a radio talk show advocating for gender-inclusive education policies and interventions.

To further amplify the voices of marginalized groups such as girls, and students facing socio-economic barriers, RELON Uganda through the GFS project conducted interactive radio talk shows with relevant policymakers on the different gender responsive policies to bridge the gap between local communities and policymakers.

The three radio talk shows were held at Bidibidi FM, Arua One FM, and Aulogo FM in the West Nile region, seeking to mobilize support for girls' education, influence policies, and challenge harmful cultural practices and societal norms that persist within communities.

The talk shows also aimed to ensure holistic inclusion in advocacy efforts and encourage policymakers, educators, civil society organizations, and the general public to actively engage in advocating for gender-inclusive education policies and interventions.

This activity empowered listeners to actively engage with and hold policymakers accountable, laid a strong foundation for ongoing civic participation, and strengthened the momentum toward more inclusive and responsive governance.

RELON-Uganda is currently implementing the Six- year GFS project with funding from Global Affairs Canada through with War Child Canada, OXFAM, and in partnership with Youth Social Advocacy Team (YSAT) and Community Empowerment for Creative Actions (CECI).

The GFS project is currently being implemented in eight schools in the districts of Yumbe (Bidibidi Refugee Settlement), Obongi (Palorinya Refugee Settlement) and Terego (Imvepi Refugee Settlement).

Meaningful Participation and Engagement



The RELON team, together with the LWF team poses for a photo with other civil society actors after an engagement at K-Hotels-Entebbe

20 RLO Leaders Trained to Advance Advocacy Excellence under the BEACON Project

In June, 2025, 20 Refugee-Led Organization (RLO) leaders—advocacy champions from Kampala Metropolitan Area, Southwest Uganda (Kyaka II, Nakivale, Rwamwanja, Kyangwali), and West Nile Region (Arua, Rhino Camp, Imvepi) benefited from an intensive two-day advocacy training.

This engagement under the theme: **“Advancing Advocacy Excellence under the BEACON Project via Strategic Collaboration and Partnerships,”** was designed to promote Refugee Meaningful Participation and strengthen the advocacy capacities of RLOs.

The participants were selected from the 2023 advocacy champions cohort, and they engaged in a participatory learning environment that included:

Interactive presentations Case study sharing
Group work and role-plays Planning clinics

The sessions covered both foundational and practical advocacy topics, such as power mapping and stakeholder engagement, strategy development, fundraising and project proposal writing, current policy developments, peer learning exchange and collaboration, advocacy messaging and communication tools, budgeting and resource planning, monitoring advocacy strategies and plans, recap of advocacy concepts and 2023 learnings.



Collaboration to promote an inclusive civic space in Uganda

In May, 2025, RELON Uganda in partnership with LWF Uganda convened a consultative meeting with RLOs, INGOs and national actors to assess the impact of the NGO Act on the operations and autonomy of civil society organizations (CSOs) and RLOs in Uganda.

The meeting which sought to promote a more inclusive civic space was held under the theme **“Promoting Equitable Civic Space for CSOs in Uganda: Strengthening Legal Inclusion & Meaningful Participation of Refugees & Humanitarian Actors in Policy Analysis and Advocacy.”**

The deliberations sought to review the NGO Policy 2010 and the NGO Act Cap 109 that regulate the civic space in Uganda which is classified as 'restricted' by CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

Of specific concern to RELON and RLOs, it is illegal for refugees to form and run CBOs, and RLOs are not national NGOs. These and many other concerns were raised and compiled in a position paper to be used for advocacy purposes.



Collaboration to Develop Theory of Change

RELON Uganda participated in a two-day workshop organized by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) aimed at supporting partners in developing a robust Theory of Change for the BEACON project.

The workshop also introduced participants to the Two-Generation (2-Gen) model, a holistic approach that addresses the needs of both children and their caregivers.

Through interactive sessions, peer learning, and guided facilitation, RELON was able to deepen its understanding of the 2-Gen framework and how it can be effectively integrated into program design and delivery for refugee-led interventions.

As a result of the workshop, RELON successfully developed a comprehensive Theory of Change for its BEACON project interventions, clearly mapping out the pathways through which desired outcomes will be achieved.

World Refugee Day 2025: Solidarity in Action

Key Note Speeches

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“When funding is cut, it is the refugees who feel it most. We see long queues at health centers, children unable to fit in classrooms, and critical services reduced,”

Milly Nancy Lagu, the Chairperson of the Refugee Welfare Council III in Kiryandongo and Executive Director of My Rights My Future (a member of our network).

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“On World Refugee Day, we honor the courage and determination of those forced to flee their homes. But true solidarity goes beyond words—it requires real investment in protection, services, and opportunities. The international community must act now to support the future of millions of children, women, and men who have lost everything.”

Matthew Crentsil, the UNHCR Representative in Uganda

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This year's theme reflects what Uganda has practiced for decades. “Every refugee who crosses into Uganda finds safety and the promise of protection.”

Hilary Onek, the Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness, and Refugees

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On June 20th, we joined government and non-state actors in the refugee response for the national commemoration of World Refugee Day 2025, held at Panyadoli Self-Help Secondary School in Kiryandongo District. Our network supported the event with essential logistics, reaffirming our commitment to meaningful action.

This year's theme, “Solidarity With Refugees,” re-echoed our commitment to promoting refugee dignity, mobility, and participation. Solidarity, for us, is not just a word—it's a call to action, an urgent need for sustained support and innovative solutions.

In his speech, Matthew Crentsil, the UNHCR Representative in Uganda, paid tribute to the resilience of refugees and Uganda's exemplary open-door policy.



Building A Future of Hope and Self-Reliance

As a network of Refugee-Led Organizations in Uganda, we believe that solidarity must be more than a slogan—it must be a promise, a plan, and, above all, action. Guided by our BEACON project, we have launched advocacy campaigns advancing refugee leadership and self-reliance across four key thematic areas:

Empower to Earn, Self-Reliance Starts Here

This campaign seeks to advocate for increased opportunities that enable refugees to work, earn, and become self-reliant.

Nurture Now, Early Childhood Matters

This campaign will emphasize the importance of investing in young children's growth to build stronger futures.

Move Freely, Live Fully

This campaign will advocate for the right of refugees to move freely and live with dignity and choice.

Your Policy, Our Voices Matter

This campaign will call on policymakers and stakeholders to ensure refugees have a real say in decisions that impact their lives.



Our actions are rooted in the belief that refugees are not just beneficiaries but leaders and partners in shaping their futures. We reaffirm our commitment: **Solidarity with refugees is not just a slogan. It is our promise, our plan, and our ongoing action.**

With over 1.9 million refugees and asylum seekers, Uganda remains Africa's largest refugee-hosting country. The invaluable contributions of refugee-led organizations are central to ensuring access to healthcare, protection, and self-reliance for all refugees.

REFUGEE-LED ORGANIZATION NETWORK OF UGANDA (RELON)

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