



CECI UGANDA

Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation

BUILDING PEACEFUL AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

CECI UGANDA STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FOR CREATIVE INNOVATION - CECI UGANDA

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ABBREVIATIONS

CECI	Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UGX	Ugandan Shillings
IGAs	Income Generating Interventions
BTVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
EU	European Union
UNHCR	United Nation for Higher Commissioner of Refugee.
ToC	Theory of Change
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
UCRRP	Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
CRVPF	Children Rights and Violence Prevention Fund



FOREWORD

CECI Uganda envisions refugees and host community members living in peace, empowered with the skills, education, jobs, and clean energy they need to build better lives, support each other, and create a safe, inclusive, and resilient future.

To achieve this vision, CECI Uganda must take bold steps, foster strong partnerships, and stay committed to sustainable development.

It is with great pride and optimism that we present the Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation (CECI) Strategic Plan for 2025-2029, a roadmap for building peaceful and resilient communities. Since founding CECI in May 2017, we have been driven by **a mission to promote peace, self-reliance, and dignity among refugee and host communities.** This new plan builds on this mission and moves us closer to realizing **our vision of a peaceful and self-reliant community.**

Our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan has been invaluable in advancing CECI's mission. During this period, we invested more than 932 million Ugandan Shillings across over 15 projects that improved the lives of 162,406 refugees and host community members in Koboko, Yumbe, and Obongi districts in Northern Uganda. Among these projects were the Care for Children (C4C), funded by CRVPF, which supported women to establish 234 businesses and 100 gardens, and the Savings Lives Now, funded by OXFAM, which trained 595 youth as peacebuilders and informed 84,281 others on TB, COVID-19, Malaria, Typhoid, and HIV/AIDs care and prevention. We also successfully expanded our operations from one coordination office in Koboko to three additional field offices in Arua, Yumbe, and Obongi districts, enhancing our reach and presence. Furthermore, we acquired a 45-by-30-meter plot of land in Koboko to construct a women's safe space and trauma healing center, laying a foundation for deeper community support.

We achieved these milestones in the face of limited funding, gaps in monitoring and evaluation systems, and some donor-driven projects that limited our ability to respond effectively to evolving Refugee needs and broader organizational priorities. This experience taught us the need for stronger institutional frameworks, diversified funding strategies, and more integrated planning and monitoring approaches. These lessons learned directly informed the design of this strategic plan, ensuring it is both ambitious and responsive to the realities on the ground.

The 2025–2029 Strategic Plan is a bold step toward a brighter future for CECI Uganda and the communities we serve. Over the next five years, CECI Uganda's commitment to building peaceful and resilient communities will be guided by seven strategic goals: (1) improving access to formal and informal education; (2) strengthening livelihoods and food security; (3) enhancing safety, wellbeing, and peaceful coexistence; (4) advancing environmental conservation and access to clean energy; (5) strengthening institutional capacity; (6) diversifying resource base for growth and sustainability; and (7) ensuring responsible and transparent resource management. With a focus on empowering women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), this new Plan will see CECI Uganda work with over 500,000 refugees and host community members in driving sustainable change.

With this plan, CECI Uganda aims to serve an additional 10 refugee settlements and 10 host community Districts, impacting over 500,000 individuals by 2029. Our resource mobilization strategy targets raising approximately 7.16 billion UGX over the next five years to fund

critical projects. We plan to expand our partnerships by 30%, bringing in new collaborators from the private sector, local governments, and international agencies. CECI will also establish an income-generating social enterprise and capacity-building programs to enhance the sustainability of our operations and empower the communities we serve. By strengthening partnerships with current and future donors, leveraging evidence-based practices, and strengthening governance, this plan will amplify the voices of marginalized communities, empower them to build resilience, expand our reach, and improve our capacity to deliver services effectively as a Refugee-Led Regional Non-Governmental Organization.

This 2025–2029 Strategic Plan reflects CECI Uganda’s strong commitment to advance and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Uganda Vision 2040, the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). It positions CECI as a catalyst for transformation in Uganda and across neighboring countries such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, committed to piloting and scaling up innovative solutions that promote sustainable peace, livelihoods, quality education, clean energy, and environmental conservation.



Shaped through the feedback and collective efforts of our staff, board of directors, partners, donors, and the resilient communities we serve, as well as by lessons from our 2020-2023 plan, this new plan will serve as a flexible guide operationalized through annual work plans and strong monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning systems that ensure effective service delivery and continuous learning.

As we look ahead, the new strategic plan is more than a roadmap for us. It is our shared commitment to action, and its success now, more than ever, depends on our united and collaborative efforts. It is in this spirit that we call upon our partners, donors, and stakeholders to continue to walk with us, not just as supporters but co-creators, in our work to improve food security and access to education, skills development, and clean cooking solutions in refugee and host communities. The strong relationships CECI Uganda has built over the last 8 years with these stakeholders and the communities we serve will be the foundation of this work.

CECI Uganda will continue to ally with women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities from refugee and host communities, creating accessible spaces that allow them to stay actively engaged as equal partners in shaping solutions that set their needs and voices at the center of all our programs. We have an opportunity with this strategic plan to work together to accelerate progress towards SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, and 16, and to strengthen co-existence and self-reliance in refugee and host communities, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Chandiga Justine Abure', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Patrick Chandiga Justine Abure
Founder and Board Chair

CECI UGANDA

Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation (CECI Uganda) is a refugee-led and regional non-governmental organization founded in May 2017 to prevent violent conflicts, alleviate poverty, and foster peaceful coexistence and self-reliance in refugee and host communities. Through locally-led innovations in peacebuilding, education, livelihood, and environment, CECI Uganda empowers youth, women, and girls to prevent violent conflicts, build resilience, rebuild livelihoods, and actively participate in development. Guided by our core values, CECI Uganda is committed to creating sustainable solutions that are driven by local needs.

CECI UGANDA'S VISION

CECI Uganda envisions a peaceful and self-reliant community.

Our ultimate goal is to prevent violent conflicts, alleviate poverty in refugee and host communities, and see significantly less poverty amongst women, youth, and other excluded and marginalized groups.

Through 2025 to 2029, we want to see a community where refugees and host populations live in peace, empowered with the skills, knowledge, and resources to build lasting peace, enjoy equal access to education, sustainable livelihoods, and a healthy environment. It is a community where environmental conservation and clean energy solutions ensure a thriving and sustainable future for all and where every individual is empowered to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, fostering a resilient, inclusive, and dignified society.

MISSION

CECI Uganda's mission is to promote peace, self-reliance, and dignity through recreational activities, education, and other innovations, going beyond relief and development.

CECI UGANDA'S CORE VALUES

Accountability and Transparency

Personal development

Professionalism

Commitment

Teamwork

Honesty

CECI Uganda prioritizes clear communication, responsiveness, and compliance in all our work with those we serve and partner with while fostering a culture of collaboration, respect, and mutual support. We believe in continuous learning, growth, and accountability, ensuring that every team member is empowered to deliver quality service and uphold the values that drive sustainable impact.

CECI UGANDA'S THEMATIC AREAS

Peacebuilding and Protection: CECI Uganda strengthens the capacity and role of youth and women in preventing and resolving conflict to promote peaceful resolution of disputes, reconcile communities, foster peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

Education: CECI Uganda improves access to formal and informal education for children, youth, women, and girls to promote positive development.

Livelihood: CECI Uganda builds skills that support development and peace, build resilience, and increase employability among youth and women in both refugee and host communities.

Environment: CECI Uganda promotes adoption of clean energy solutions and engages youth and women in community-led environmental conservation and climate action in refugee and host communities.

OUR STORY AND IMPACT

In 2016, the outbreak of war in Yei, South Sudan, forced our founder, Patrick Chandiga Justine Abure, to flee to Uganda, becoming the third generation in his family to experience forced migration. He first found safety in Rhino Refugee Settlement, but the hate speech, ethnic discrimination, and violence he faced because of his identity forced him to leave once again, this time to Koboko, Uganda.

While serving as an Evangelist at the Koboko Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Patrick founded the Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation (CECI Uganda) in May 2017, driven by the urgent need to address rising violent conflict, ethnic discrimination, cultural intolerance, hate speech, and poverty within refugee communities. On August 14, 2017, CECI Uganda formally registered as a Community-Based Organization with the Koboko District Local Government. In 2021, it was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee and later, in 2024, registered as a Regional Non-governmental Organization (RNGO) with the National NGO Bureau of the Republic of Uganda.

Since its founding in 2017, CECI Uganda has steadily grown into a trusted, community-driven organization, serving refugees and host communities in Koboko, Yumbe, and Obongi districts. Through our programs in peacebuilding, education, livelihoods, and environment, we have worked side-by-side with communities to foster peace, self-reliance, and sustainable development. Over this period, CECI Uganda's programs have directly improved the safety and well-being of 178,410 people, including women and girls, youth, men, persons with disabilities, and the elderly from both refugee and host communities, laying a strong foundation for the goals in our 2025–2029 Strategic Plan.

Promoting peace has been at the heart of CECI Uganda's work. We trained 1,049 youth, women, and community leaders as local peacebuilders, equipping them with conflict resolution, trauma healing, and mediation skills, and established 22 local peace committees to address disputes and promote social cohesion. Through setting up a community radio in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, we reached over 5,800 people, including 3,660 children, with critical information on peace, health, and safety.

We supported 393 individuals to engage in local, national, and international dialogues on peaceful coexistence and empowered 21 women to rise into leadership positions through transformative leadership and public speaking trainings. More than 84,281 people were educated on protecting themselves against malaria, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, and substance abuse, while over 1,200 individuals participated in campaigns against Gender-Based Violence and human rights violations. Additionally, we trained and equipped 110 environmental and peace champions to lead grassroots mobilization efforts in their communities.

CECI Uganda has been a catalyst for education in refugee settlements, giving children and youth a second chance to learn. Our Accelerated Education Program (AEP) helped 128 youth who had dropped out of school return back to the classroom on full scholarships, with 47 learners successfully sitting for and passing the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations, progressing to A-Level studies. In public primary schools, CECI Uganda established 10 debate clubs and trained 167 pupils in public speaking and critical thinking through the Karl Popper method.

In refugee schools, we educated 4,580 students on sexual and reproductive health and human rights, promoting informed choices and safer learning environments. To strengthen community support for girls' education, we empowered 170 mothers as girl-child education advocates through mother-to-mother support sessions. We further amplified community voices by establishing Community Education Committees and STEM Clubs, equipping over 300 members with skills in advocacy, leadership, and education rights promotion.

CECI Uganda has relentlessly empowered women, youth, and persons with disabilities to build resilient livelihoods. As part of our post-COVID recovery, we enrolled 139 young people in Business, Technical, and Vocational Education and Training (BTNET) programs on full scholarships, equipping them with skills in mechanics, carpentry, tailoring, and hairdressing. In 2023, we opened a dedicated tailoring center, training 10 refugee women in garment cutting and sewing, while 19 women leaders received specialized training in financial management, budgeting, and compliance. To expand financial inclusion, we established 16 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) with 330 members accessing loans and amassing savings of over UGX 35 million. Through CECI Uganda's flexible cash grants for women groups, 234 businesses were created by women, girls, youth, and persons with disabilities, advancing economic self-reliance across refugee and host communities. To boost food security and household resilience, we supported 100 vegetable gardens and sensitized 841 parents, caregivers, and youth on positive parenting, human rights, and livelihood strategies.

Recognizing that environmental sustainability is vital to community wellbeing, CECI Uganda supported the planting of 1,100 trees with an 85% survival rate and secured 5 acres of land for large-scale reforestation. We restored 3 degraded wetlands to protect vital ecosystems and strengthen climate resilience.

To improve sanitation and health, we constructed 78 rubbish pits for households of persons with special needs, directly benefiting 312 individuals. In Koboko, CECI Uganda supported 203 people with impaired sight to regain their vision and provided 495 refugee women and girls in Bidibidi with dignity kits, enhancing their health, protection, and wellbeing. In response to public health needs, 3,943 refugee and host community households were sensitized and supported with PPEs and handwashing facilities for COVID-19 prevention, contributing to safer and healthier communities. Our environmental campaigns reached over 4,000 community members, promoting tree planting, climate action, and environmental stewardship. These achievements reflect the resilience of the communities we serve and the commitment of our partners, staff, and board.

By 2029, CECI Uganda aims to empower over 500,000 refugees and host community members with sustainable livelihoods, quality education, peacebuilding skills, environmental conservation practices, and access to alternative energy solutions. CECI Uganda remains committed to scaling its impact, empowering communities, fostering peaceful coexistence, and building self-reliant, inclusive, and resilient communities across Uganda and beyond.



CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Uganda remains one of the most important refugee-hosting countries globally, currently sheltering more than 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers – the largest number in Africa and among the top three globally. Refugees primarily come from South Sudan (55%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (30%), and other countries, including Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, and Eritrea. Over 79% of this population are women and children, and more than 55% are under the age of 18. Uganda's progressive refugee policy framework, underpinned by the 2006 Refugee Act and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), grants refugees the right to work, move freely, own property, and access national services such as education and health care.

While Uganda's approach has fostered relative integration between refugees and host communities, the increasing population has placed enormous pressure on essential services, resources, and infrastructure. Access to education remains limited, with only 43% of refugee children enrolled in primary school, 11% enrolled in secondary school, and less than 2% enrolled in tertiary education. Girls, especially adolescents, face the highest barriers to continuing their education. Food insecurity is also critical: due to persistent funding shortfalls, up to 47% of refugee households experience insufficient food consumption, and funding cuts have reduced food assistance rations to as low as 40% of daily caloric needs in some settlements, deepening vulnerabilities, especially among women and children.

Environmental degradation poses another significant challenge. Refugee settlements have intensified deforestation, land degradation, and water stress, while reliance on firewood has led to environmental damage and heightened protection risks, particularly for women and girls. Climate change further exacerbates vulnerabilities through droughts and extreme weather events, threatening livelihoods and infrastructure in fragile hosting areas. Furthermore, only 15% of refugee households have access to sustainable clean energy solutions, exposing women and girls to protection risks as they travel long distances to collect firewood.

Despite these challenges, Uganda's enabling policy environment offers important opportunities for inclusive development, resilience building, and peacebuilding. Government, humanitarian, and development actors are increasingly working toward refugee self-reliance through investments in education, livelihoods, environmental sustainability, clean energy, and social cohesion. However, institutional capacity at national and district levels remains uneven, requiring deliberate efforts to strengthen systems, foster transparency, and ensure effective service delivery.

Funding shortfalls remain a critical bottleneck, underscoring the need for diversified, innovative, and sustainable resource mobilization. Building strong accountability mechanisms, ensuring cost-effectiveness, and fostering participatory governance are crucial to maintaining donor confidence and strengthening community trust.

In this evolving context, CECI Uganda's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan responds directly to urgent needs and emerging opportunities. Through its focus on education, livelihoods, peacebuilding and protection, environmental conservation, and institutional strengthening, CECI Uganda seeks to contribute meaningfully to Uganda's refugee response and national development goals. By centering its work on refugee and host communities, advancing inclusive and sustainable development, and ensuring transparency and accountability, CECI Uganda is poised to deliver lasting impact over the next five years.

THEORY OF CHANGE

If CECI Uganda strengthens access to inclusive education, vocational skills, and sustainable livelihoods; and **if** CECI Uganda builds the capacity of refugees and host communities to prevent conflict, promote peaceful coexistence, adopt clean energy solutions, and take on leadership roles; and **if** CECI Uganda strengthens internal governance, financial management, accountability systems, and invests in building a culture of transparency, learning, and resilience; and **if** CECI Uganda mobilizes diverse resources, launches a sustainable social enterprise, and strengthens partnerships with donors, government, and private sector actors, **Then** CECI Uganda will contribute to building peaceful, resilient, and self-reliant refugee and host communities, while operating as a strong, sustainable, and accountable organization capable of delivering long-term impact across all areas of its mission.

CECI UGANDA WILL DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THESE SDGS (2025–2029)





GOAL 01

IMPROVE ACCESS TO FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

Access to education for refugees and host communities in Uganda faces significant challenges, despite progress in pre-primary and primary education. As of 2019, 76% (254,442) of school-aged refugee children were enrolled in primary schools, with a gender proportion of 54% boys and 46% girls. However, a critical gap exists in secondary education access, particularly for girls, with only 11% of refugee and 18% of host community adolescents and youth enrolled in secondary schools, compared to the national average of 27%.

This can be attributed to demand barriers such as 1) restrictive social and gender norms embraced by parents and the broader community; 2) prevalence of GBV and CEFM; 3) lack of funds for school fees, supplies and transportation; 4) insecurity and 5) girls' responsibility for domestic and household chores. Supply-side barriers include: 1) school related GBV in and around schools; 2) lack of female leadership in education; 3) weak coordination and capacity among the multiple actors involved in governing and delivering education services.

Additionally, 25% of those enrolled in secondary education are overage, and females make up only one-third of those enrolled. Girls are particularly marginalized, with 93% of secondary school-age girls and 86% of boys out of school. Many lack access to alternative education pathways, such as accelerated education programs, leaving them with limited opportunities to continue their education or transition into sustainable livelihoods.

In response, CECI will work to address these critical gaps by promoting gender-responsive and inclusive formal and informal education for refugees and host communities. By focusing on activities such as increasing access to secondary education, promoting alternative education pathways, and advocating for inclusive policies, CECI will create opportunities for adolescents and youth to access quality education and transition into meaningful livelihoods.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

- Increase the enrollment, retention, and completion rates of learners, particularly female learners, children with special needs, and other vulnerable groups.
- Expand opportunities for advanced and higher education as well as alternative education programs for secondary learners.
- Create pathways for young people to transition into meaningful employment through skills training, linkages, and advocacy.
- Ensure education systems at all levels are accessible and inclusive, with a focus on gender equity and learners with special needs.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

Support learner enrollment, retention, and completion through implementing targeted programs to support vulnerable learners, especially girls, and children with disabilities, to enroll in and complete education cycles and provide them with financial and material support to reduce barriers to education.

Promote early childhood and special needs education by establishing and strengthening early childhood education programs for refugee and host community children to build a strong educational foundation and develop inclusive education programs that cater to learners with special needs across all levels.

Implement Accelerated Education Programs (AEP) and provide scholarships and mentorship opportunities for vulnerable learners to access higher education, increasing alternative and higher education opportunities.

Implement formal and informal Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) programs to equip learners with employable skills and foster coordination and partnerships with private and public sectors to link graduates to employment opportunities.

Raise community awareness about the value and benefits of education for social and economic empowerment and **advocate for inclusive and gender-responsive education policies** at local, national, and international levels.

EXPECTED KEY RESULTS BY 2029

- Increased enrollment and completion rates in primary and secondary education among refugees and host community learners.
- Enhanced inclusivity and gender responsiveness in education systems and programs.
- Greater access to advanced education and learning opportunities for vulnerable groups.
- Improved community awareness of the social and economic benefits of education.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

Over 160,000 learners, teachers, families, and community members will benefit as more girls and learners with disabilities enroll and complete primary, secondary, and higher education, and transition into employment through increased access to accelerated education, vocational training, scholarships, mentorship, and improved early childhood education programs.

GOAL 02

STRENGTHEN LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

Youth unemployment among refugees in Uganda remains alarmingly high, with estimates suggesting rates as high as 80%. This critical challenge, coupled with the vulnerabilities faced by host communities, highlights the urgent need for sustainable and resilient livelihood opportunities. Refugees and host community members, particularly youth and women, face multiple barriers to economic empowerment, including low education and skills, a mismatch between workforce competencies and labor market demands, limited access to financial services, and household vulnerability to adverse shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite Uganda's progressive refugee policies, such as the Refugee Act (2006), Refugee and Host Community Empowerment Framework (ReHoPE, 2017), and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the continuous arrival of refugees has placed immense pressure on already overstretched resources and services. This strain is particularly acute in the marginalized regions of West Nile and Northern Uganda, which are themselves recovering from decades of conflict. Both refugees and host communities, especially women, youth, and children, have been disproportionately affected by these economic and social pressures, leaving them highly vulnerable to further shocks.

The majority of refugees and host community members depend on low-productivity agriculture as their primary source of livelihood. However, inadequate land size, lack of agricultural inputs, and vulnerability to climate change and post-harvest losses severely constrain their ability to generate sustainable incomes. Non-farm economic activities are even less accessible, with only 2% of refugee households reporting salaried employment and just 13% classified as self-employed. Refugee women face particularly low participation in the formal sector, averaging just 9% compared to 35% for Ugandan women.

This untapped potential presents an opportunity. Refugees and host communities, particularly the large population of productive-age youth and women, represent a valuable labor force that, if harnessed effectively, could contribute to job creation, increased productivity, and economic growth. Empowering these populations through targeted interventions in skills development, climate-smart agriculture, access to financial services, and support for entrepreneurship can transform them into drivers of local and national economic development.

This goal aims to address these challenges and unlock the economic potential of refugees and host communities. By focusing on skills development, access to financial services, and sustainable livelihood opportunities, CECI will create pathways for refugees and host community members to achieve economic independence, resilience, and self-reliance. Through these efforts, refugees and host communities will not only improve their own well-being but also contribute meaningfully to the economic and social fabric of Uganda.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

- Youth, women, girls, and persons with disabilities will be equipped with life skills, Business, Technical, and Vocational Education and Training, as well as capital to enhance employability, foster self-reliance, and transition into meaningful employment.
- They will access increased financial literacy, inclusive financial services such as savings accounts, loans, and credit, and participate in sustainable livelihood initiatives that diversify income streams and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid.
- They will benefit from increased access to quality agricultural inputs, tools, technical support, and stable, affordable food supplies, contributing to improved household food security, nutrition, and overall well-being.
- Local producers will leverage strengthened market linkages that connect them to buyers, enhancing income generation, creating economic opportunities, and boosting household incomes.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

Promote skills development by empowering youth, women, men, and PWDs with practical life skills and vocational training and facilitating community-based initiatives that enhance employability and resilience and foster skill-building and capacity development.

Advance financial inclusion by providing financial literacy training that equips individuals with the knowledge to manage and grow their resources effectively and partnering with financial institutions to improve access to inclusive financial services, such as savings accounts, microloans, and digital payment systems, for refugees and host communities.

Enhance access to quality agricultural inputs, tools, and extension services and develop market linkages to connect local producers with buyers to improve productivity and food security and create sustainable economic opportunities for refugees and host communities.

Support asset creation and livelihood diversification by providing technical and financial support to enable households to establish and sustain income-generating activities, including small-scale enterprises, to diversify income and livelihood streams, reduce dependency on humanitarian aid, and foster long-term economic resilience.

Engage with governments, donors, and private sector actors to advocate for policies that support the economic inclusion of refugees and host communities and promote gender equality and the inclusion of PWDs in all livelihood initiatives.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

Over 150,000 women, youth, and persons with disabilities from refugee and host communities gain hands-on vocational skills, access savings and loan groups, participate in farming and agribusiness activities, and connect with local and regional markets, helping them secure jobs, grow small businesses, improve food security, and build stronger, more self-reliant livelihoods.

GOAL 03

ENHANCE SAFETY, WELLBEING, AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Uganda continues to face growing pressure from regional conflicts in eastern DRC and South Sudan, leading to a high influx of refugees into already overstretched settlements and host communities. This strain has fueled tensions over scarce resources, economic hardship, and land disputes. Rising cases of gender-based violence, child marriage, and child labor have been reported in refugee settlements, worsened by economic stress and limited support. For instance, following food ration cuts in 2023, the WFP warned of increases in survival sex, early marriage, and crime as desperate coping strategies.

Koboko Municipality in Northern Uganda, a melting pot of South Sudanese, Congolese, and local Ugandan populations, faces significant challenges stemming from rapid urbanization, growing refugee populations, and limited municipal resources. Refugees, estimated at 23,128 individuals (27.9% of the urban population), and host communities alike struggle with overcrowded schools, overburdened healthcare facilities, limited livelihood opportunities, and inadequate waste management and WASH infrastructure. These constraints are exacerbated by trauma, insufficient funding, weak governance, and the lack of inclusive planning processes, which hinder the delivery of essential services.

Despite these challenges, Koboko and similar refugee hosting districts in the West Nile Region provide a critical environment for fostering peaceful coexistence and mutual development.

The region's history of cultural and familial ties among South Sudanese, Congolese, and Ugandan communities underscores its potential for social harmony. However, disparities in access to municipal services and perceptions of governance weaken trust and cooperation, making targeted interventions essential for promoting stability and well-being.

A multi-sectoral approach that integrates humanitarian and development efforts is crucial to addressing these challenges. By aligning with Uganda's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, this strategic plan aims to strengthen municipal capacities, promote inclusive service delivery, and support the socio-economic integration of refugees and host communities. Addressing systemic gaps in education, health, livelihoods, and governance while fostering community participation and transparency will enhance safety and well-being and ensure that refugees and host communities coexist peacefully.

This plan builds on existing synergies with local, national, and international stakeholders to ensure complementarity with ongoing initiatives such as the BRIDGE project, PBI Project, and the CRRF structures led by Uganda's government. It responds to the unique needs of Koboko, Obongi, Bidibidi, and Lobule's population while addressing broader structural challenges posed by demographic growth and urbanization. Through these concerted efforts, the strategic plan seeks to create a cohesive and resilient community where both refugees and host populations thrive in safety, dignity, and mutual respect.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

More refugees and host community members will:

- Be equipped with life skills that promote peaceful coexistence and self-reliance.
- Actively engage in initiatives to prevent Gender Based Violence (GBV) and promote inclusion and safeguarding.
- Transition into leadership roles that foster peace and security in their communities.
- Access inclusive platforms for dialogue and advocacy to influence government and partner programming.
- Leverage strengthened community structures to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Participate in sustainable initiatives that promote long-term stability and cohesion.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

Develop and implement community-based conflict resolution and prevention training programs alongside vocational skills, financial literacy, entrepreneurship support, awareness campaigns, workshops, and public forums to promote peaceful coexistence, self-reliance, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Prevent Gender-Based Violence by conducting public awareness campaigns targeting men, women, and youth, training local task forces to respond swiftly, support survivors, and lead prevention efforts, and establishing peer-led support groups that provide psychosocial support and empower those at risk.

Promote women's leadership by providing tailored leadership training to women, youth, and persons with disabilities, establishing mentorship programs connecting emerging leaders with experienced ones, and advocating for their increased participation in decision-making, peace negotiations, and local governance.

Enable access to inclusive platforms for dialogue and advocacy by creating safe spaces for refugees and host communities to share challenges and perspectives and co-create solutions, supporting community representatives to engage with decision-makers, and training marginalized groups in advocacy and negotiation skills to strengthen their voices and advocacy for inclusive policies.

Strengthen community structures for peaceful conflict resolution by establishing and supporting local peace committees, training local leaders and mediators in effective negotiation and conflict resolution techniques, and promoting collaboration between refugees, host communities, and local authorities to address shared challenges and foster social cohesion.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

Over 120,000 women, men, youth, PWDs, and local structures will serve as empowered local peacebuilders who prevent Gender-Based Violence, lead inclusive community efforts, influence decision-making through accessible platforms, resolve conflicts through trusted local mechanisms, and drive sustainable initiatives that foster lasting peace, social cohesion, and resilience in refugee and host communities.

GOAL 04

ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY

Uganda faces an urgent environmental challenge, with only 1% of the population having access to clean cooking solutions (IRENA, 2023). A staggering 84% of rural households and most refugee settlements rely on firewood, while 15% use charcoal, leading to severe environmental degradation and health issues caused by indoor air pollution. Refugee settlements such as Bidibidi, which hosts over 270,000 refugees, experience extensive deforestation and ecosystem damage due to the heavy reliance on biomass for cooking. This unsustainable use of natural resources also exacerbates climate change, with over 760 million tons of CO₂e released annually across Africa from burning fuelwood (Mulugetta et al., 2019).

The impact of these practices goes beyond environmental degradation. Women and girls, often responsible for collecting firewood, face heightened risks of gender-based violence, while the economic burden of purchasing charcoal or firewood strains household resources. Additionally, the health consequences of indoor air pollution contribute to a growing public health crisis. As Uganda's population continues to rise, projected to double by 2050, the reliance on biomass for cooking will only intensify, threatening both people and the planet.

As emphasized in Uganda's 2022-2025 Sustainable Energy Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities, enhancing access to clean energy in displacement contexts is more important than ever. By integrating community-driven initiatives, such as afforestation programs and climate-smart agriculture, alongside the adoption of non-biomass clean cooking solutions, our goal for a healthy and sustainable environment for all offers a pathway to mitigate the adverse effects of environmental degradation while advancing the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to climate change.

Through partnerships like the Solar Electric-Cooking Partnership (SOLCO), CECI aims to empower refugee and host communities with sustainable and culturally acceptable clean cooking technologies. Implementing solar-electric cooking in refugee settlements will reduce reliance on biomass, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and foster sustainable development. These interventions not only address Uganda's immediate environmental challenges but also contribute to long-term goals of conserving ecosystems, reducing CO₂ emissions, and ensuring equitable access to clean energy solutions for vulnerable populations. This is critical for achieving a healthier, more sustainable ecosystem for both refugees and host communities. It also underscores the need for urgent action to preserve natural resources, improve public health, and address climate challenges while empowering communities to build resilience through sustainable practices and innovative technologies.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

- Promote adoption of clean, non-biomass cooking technologies to reduce deforestation and carbon emissions.
- Empower refugees and host communities with sustainable energy solutions and climate-smart agricultural practices.
- Facilitate afforestation, reforestation, and ecosystem restoration initiatives in degraded areas.
- Increase awareness and community engagement in environmental conservation and clean energy adoption.
- Enhance access to affordable, clean, and efficient energy solutions for refugees and host communities.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

Promoting afforestation and reforestation through large-scale tree planting campaigns targeting areas with severe environmental degradation, such as Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, to restore degraded ecosystems and partnering with local and international organizations to support afforestation and community-led reforestation programs.

Facilitate access to affordable and clean energy solutions, such as solar power, biogas, and fuel-efficient cookstoves, and organize training sessions to build community capacity on using and maintaining such sustainable energy technologies.

Conduct climate education sessions targeting refugees and host communities to increase understanding of environmental challenges and solutions and advocate for policies that support sustainable energy, climate-smart practices, and ecosystem restoration.

Train communities in climate-smart agricultural techniques to enhance resilience and productivity, conserve resources, and promote regenerative farming practices that restore soil health and reduce environmental impact.

KEY RESULTS OR OUTCOME

- Increased access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable clean energy solutions.
- Measurable increase in hectares of reforested and rehabilitated land.
- Reduction in household biomass consumption.
- Increased number of households accessing and adopting cleaner energy technologies.
- Refugees and host communities utilize climate-smart agricultural practices, improving food security and reducing environmental impact.
- Increased community participation in environmental conservation programs, with visible shifts in cultural attitudes toward clean energy and sustainable practices.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

More than 70,000 individuals will be engaged through environmental and clean energy programs. More households of refugees and host communities will adopt clean energy technologies, significantly reducing biomass consumption, indoor air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. This shift will reduce deforestation rates and restore ecosystems, fostering increased biodiversity and environmental resilience. Women and girls, often most affected by environmental degradation, will benefit from cleaner cooking practices that improve health outcomes and reduce time spent gathering firewood.

Climate-smart agriculture and regenerative farming will enhance food security and promote sustainable livelihoods, enabling families to participate more fully in their communities. Cultural acceptance and adoption of clean energy and conservation practices will drive lasting behavioral change, empowering refugees and host communities to actively conserve and restore their environment. Increased access to affordable, clean, and efficient energy solutions will reduce reliance on unsustainable sources, with restored natural habitats mitigating climate-related risks and contributing to a healthier, more equitable, and resilient ecosystem for all.

GOAL 05

STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

As CECI Uganda continues to expand its reach and impact, the growing complexity of programs, donor requirements, and community needs demands stronger institutional systems, enhanced staff and leadership capacity, and more efficient planning and implementation processes. To sustain high-quality service delivery, ensure accountability, and respond effectively to dynamic operating environments, CECI Uganda must invest in scalable systems, talent development, and a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

- Improve program quality, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) to increase the quality and impact of CECI Uganda's work.
- CECI Uganda's board of directors and staff have the skills, knowledge, and tools to effectively manage, implement, and oversee programs, develop and operationalize policies, and adopt a culture of mutual accountability within and beyond CECI.
- CECI Uganda attracts, retains, and develops the talent needed for effective service delivery and implementation of the Strategic Plan.

- CECI Uganda has an organizational culture that supports Plan delivery and is aligned with the Strategic Plan and CECI Uganda values, including our commitment to diversity, women leadership, being an equal opportunity employer, and ensuring the safety of all staff and volunteers.
- The amounts CECI Uganda pays for resources, including people, goods and services, will provide the best possible value, and CECI Uganda will secure the best possible outcomes for its partners and service users, relative to the investments it has made.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

- Train CECI Uganda board members, staff, and volunteers to effectively design, implement and evaluate programs that reflect and advance the goals and objectives of this Strategic Plan
- CECI Uganda staff are well managed through robust performance management practices and processes, where talent is recognized and nurtured, and those with leadership potential are supported to become CECI Uganda's future leaders.

- Do holistic training needs assessment to identify institutional and staff capacity gaps and use the findings to inform the development and operationalization of targeted policies, strategies, and programs to address identified gaps, strengthen our capacity to meet the highest quality standards, facilitate continuous learning and improve governance.
- Strengthen CECI Uganda's Complaints, Feedback, Referral, and Resolution Mechanisms by training staff, updating guidelines, creating safe and accessible reporting channels, promoting awareness through community engagement, establishing timely response protocols, strengthening referral networks, regularly reviewing the system for improvement, and ensuring leadership oversight to foster a culture of accountability.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

CECI Uganda will consistently deliver high-quality, impactful programs through strong monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning systems. Every investment, whether in people, goods, or services, will be used efficiently to deliver the greatest possible impact for our partners and communities.

CECI Uganda will attract, grow, and retain talented people who are committed to our mission and values. The CECI Uganda staff and board members will be well-trained and equipped with the skills and tools needed to lead, manage, and support programs effectively. A strong, inclusive, and supportive organizational culture will guide CECI's work, with a focus on diversity, women's leadership, safety, and equal opportunity.

GOAL 06

DIVERSIFY RESOURCE BASE FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

CECI Uganda operates in a resource-constrained environment where rising community needs, expanding programs, and evolving donor expectations require increased and diversified funding to achieve the goals in this Strategic Plan. To sustain long-term impact and scale its mission-driven work, CECI Uganda must mobilize resources from a broader range of donors, government bodies, individuals, and private sector partners, while strengthening internal capacity in proposal development, donor cultivation, and financial management. Establishing a viable income-generating social enterprise is also essential to strengthen financial sustainability and reduce dependence on grants and donations.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

- Increase resources raised from diverse sources, including donors, government entities, individuals, and the private sector.
- Strengthen board and staff capacity in effective resource mobilization and management, including proposal development, donor cultivation, and financial management.
- Identify, establish, and manage an income-generating social enterprise to support CECI Uganda's long-term sustainability.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

- **Raise funds** by applying to international donors, engaging government programs, building partnerships with businesses for corporate social responsibility support, and encouraging contributions from individuals.
- Strengthen proposal development by aligning projects with donor priorities and community needs, and equipping the board and staff with the skills and tools needed to write high-quality proposals that increase funding success.
- **Launch and manage an income-generating social enterprise** to create sustainable revenue for CECI Uganda, guided by feasibility studies that identify and prioritize opportunities with strong financial returns and social impact.
- **Build strong donor relationships** through transparent communication and regular project updates, and strengthen donor loyalty by organizing appreciation events and recognition initiatives.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

CECI Uganda has a diverse and reliable funding from donors, government, individuals, and the private sector, with staff and board members equipped with strong skills in resource mobilization, proposal writing, and donor cultivation. A successful social enterprise will generate steady income to support long-term programs, reducing reliance on external funding and increasing organizational sustainability.

GOAL 07

ENSURE RESPONSIBLE AND TRANSPARENT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As CECI Uganda expands its programs and partnerships, the demand for informed forecasting, timely reporting, and efficient use of resources continues to grow. Meeting these demands requires robust budgeting systems, automated financial tools, inclusive financial planning, and strong internal controls to ensure accountability, prevent misuse, and optimize resources for greater impact and sustainability.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2029

- CECI Uganda will enhance internal controls and optimize resource use to prevent fraud, reduce waste, and ensure cost-effectiveness.
- CECI Uganda will promote participatory financial management by actively involving staff and board members in inclusive budgeting processes.
- CECI Uganda will ensure transparent and timely financial reporting across all programs by implementing clear accountability measures.
- CECI Uganda will strengthen its budgeting and forecasting systems by improving accuracy and adopting automated financial tools for greater efficiency.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL

- **Conduct regular internal and external financial audits** of CECI Uganda's books of accounts and implement routine budget validation checks to ensure compliance, detect discrepancies, and strengthen financial accuracy and accountability.
- **Enhance CECI Uganda's internal controls** by regularly reviewing and updating policies, strengthening staff and leadership capacity in financial management, and establishing a responsive, accountable system for inventory and fixed asset management.
- **Establish inclusive platforms for participatory resource allocation and financial planning**, and organize joint meetings between staff and board members to strengthen collaboration in budgeting and financial decision-making.
- CECI Uganda will transition to automated financial systems to improve budgeting, tracking, and reporting efficiency, and will leverage technology to streamline inventory management and resource monitoring.

EXPECTED IMPACT BY 2029

CECI Uganda's robust, transparent, and accountable resource management system will enable it to meet donor compliance standards, reduce financial risks, ensure optimal use of resources, and build greater stakeholder trust, laying a strong foundation for sustained growth and impact that benefits the communities we serve.



MEASURING THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK WITH REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES

Over the next five years, CECI Uganda will strengthen its Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems to drive quality programming, continuous learning, and accountability at all levels. CECI Uganda will systematically collect, analyze, and use data on both program processes and outcomes to ensure evidence-based decision-making, demonstrate impact, and improve service delivery to refugees and host communities. Our MEAL framework will track input, output, process, and outcome indicators at activity, project, and organizational levels. CECI Uganda will also focus on enhancing data quality through the development of standardized data collection tools, rigorous training for program and MEAL staff, and alignment with national and SDG indicators. We will embrace digital solutions for real-time data gathering and analysis to improve responsiveness.

All departments and teams, including the board and staff, will be responsible for monitoring interventions, supported by a central performance management team tasked with timely consolidating, analyzing, and reporting results against strategic goals. Mid-term, end-term, and ad hoc evaluations will assess progress and learning, feeding directly into program and organizational improvements. CECI Uganda's Complaints, Feedback, Referral, and Resolution Mechanisms will be strengthened to ensure community voices are heard and acted upon. Results of the data collected and analyzed will be used proactively not only to track outputs and outcomes but also to tell compelling impact stories, support advocacy, enhance donor engagement, and mobilize resources. By 2029, CECI Uganda will foster a robust culture of accountability and learning, ensuring that data not only measures success but shapes it, and empowers refugees, host communities, staff, and partners to build peaceful, resilient communities.

FUNDING THE AMBITION FOR BUILDING PEACEFUL AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES IN THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

To realize CECI Uganda's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, we project a total investment need of UGX 7.16 billion, strategically aligned with our seven core goals in peacebuilding and protection, education, livelihoods, environmental conservation and energy, and organizational capacity strengthening and sustainability. Over the next five years, resources will primarily support direct project implementation, with UGX 5.1 billion earmarked for delivering impactful programs that empower refugees and host communities. Our financial strategy emphasizes cost-effectiveness, transparent resource management, and diversification of funding streams to enhance CECI Uganda's long-term sustainability.

This forecast reflects our strong commitment to maximizing impact, improving efficiency, and ensuring that every investment translates into meaningful, measurable change for the refugee and host communities we serve. Investments in people and culture, including staff salaries, benefits, and capacity building, will total approximately UGX 716 million, ensuring we attract and retain the talent necessary to drive results. Operational needs, including rent, communications, and transport, are budgeted at UGX 501 million to maintain effective service delivery across all project areas. To modernize and strengthen institutional systems, UGX 573 million is allocated for legal, governance, audits, and the adoption of digital operational tools.

CECI UGANDA STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029

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