



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Table of Content

Edito	3
Our mission	4
Our vision	4
Our approach: Strengthening a local refugee-led response	5
I. We Support: Incubation program	5
The Urban Refugee Incubation Program (URIP)	6
2020 Incubation Program	7
An innovative solutions for refugees in Kampala	7
Activities	8
A Covid-19 response #ByRefugees	9
Refugee leaders at the heart of the Covid-19 response	9
Activities	9
RLO incubation network	10
United South Sudanese Urban Refugees Community (USSURC)	10
Sudanese Women for Peace and Development Association (SWPDA)	11
Refugee-Led Organisations Network (RELON)	12
Somali Community Association of Uganda (SCAU)	13
The Refugee Entrepreneurship Association Limited (REAL)	14
II. We Advocate: Refugee Leadership in humanitarian urban response	15
A refugee-led advocacy strategy	15
A year of advocacy with refugee leaders	16
III. We Connect: RLO network	17
RLO Support Network	17
The Like-Minded Network	17
UR Connec'thé - When Tea Meets Connection	18
Our partners	19
Connect with us	20

Edito

Sonia Ben Ali

Founder and Ashoka Fellow 2018



For the past 10 years, URBAN REFUGEES has been advocating for a better recognition of the potential of refugee-led organisations, arguing that allowing them to implement their own solutions is the best path to their autonomy and resilience. The Covid-19 pandemic gave us a chance to test this assumption.

And we were right!

The global crisis which hit everywhere in 2020 particularly affected populations with poor access to healthcare, to learning opportunities, to the labour market. This is exactly the case of most refugees living in cities today.

Yet, at the same time, the pandemic spotlighted the immense reflexivity and response that RLOs contribute to their communities. With the grants they received, they were able to identify and support in record-time hundreds of persons most in need of immediate assistance - whether for food, hygiene products, psychological support or other - within their communities. As a result, since last year, our partnering RLOs have gained more partnerships, received more funding, and achieved a deeper involvement of refugee leadership in decision-making than ever before.

As countries all over the world face important economic crisis, humanitarian and development aid is more than likely to be impacted negatively in the coming years. In a world with more and more displaced populations, and resources which were already stretched, this could have dramatic consequences on the lives of millions of men, women and children.

More than ever, we believe this challenge cannot be addressed without involving those who are most affected. They are at the root of the solutions. We must find them where they are, give them the means to design and implement their solutions and make their voices heard so that this may inspire other refugees, organisations and donors around the world.

Our mission

We aim to improve the lives of refugees in cities, by collaborating with them directly in building their own solutions.

Our vision

We believe in refugees. We see them as project leaders, not victims.

As such, we believe that they are best positioned to understand their own challenges and to design the best suited solutions for themselves.

These solutions are particularly necessary in cities, as humanitarian aid and media attention are focused on camps and tend to have difficulties to reach urban refugees where they are.

We believe that Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) are a unique gateway to refugees, with a capacity to address the unmet needs of their communities and to multiply the impact of positive solutions in the community, in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.

This is why we work with RLOs directly, providing their leaders with the tools to positively transform their communities, to speak out and advocate for themselves, and to become key stakeholders of the humanitarian response.



"We [RLOs] are the closest point to the community, so our people have that trust in us. We have built that trust between our organization and our community. We believe that if we work together with bigger organizations and NGOs, the services will reach our community much faster."

Roda Allison Dokola, Leader of United South Sudanese Urban Refugees Community (USSURC)

Our approach: Strengthening a local refugee-led response

URBAN REFUGEES works to identify Refugee-Led Organisations around the world. Our approach builds on their own experiences, their knowledge of their own needs and proposed solutions.

Support

- **Incubation program (URIP)** a 12-months training and mentorship program to build the capacity of RLOs
- Grants to RLOs to **launch and manage their own projects**

Advocate

- Advocating alongside refugee leaders in forums, events, working groups for a **stronger and effective localisation of aid**
- Training and supporting RLOs on their advocacy strategies

Connect

- **Network of over 85 RLOs** supported worldwide
- Sharing best practices, funding opportunities, training and advocacy opportunities



I. We Support: Incubation program

The Urban Refugee Incubation Program (URIP)

Our incubation program supports ambitious RLOs to accelerate their growth and deliver impactful responses to their communities by providing them with training in areas refugee leaders identify themselves, and with a grant to kickstart their programming.



Identification and selection



Identification within Urban Refugees' existing network and in the field

Selection for URIP according to 3 criteria:

1. Demonstration of how their activities impact their refugee community
2. Gender parity in the board (at least 50% women)
3. At least 50% of refugees amongst the leaders

Audit and design of training plan



Identification of strengths and weak points of each RLO through interviews, questionnaires and focus groups with its members, leaders and partners. Sharing of audit results with RLO leaders, and co-design of a training plan based on the identified needs.

Training



Training modules, may include : governance, financial management, networking and partnerships, fundraising, communication, and project monitoring
Mentorship to support the development and implementation of solutions.

Project grant



Grant up to \$5,000 to support community-led projects, emergency assistance
Project designed by each RLO and presented to a panel of representatives of
humanitarian organisations.

Projects implemented, managed and monitored by the RLOs themselves



2020 Incubation Program

An innovative solutions for refugees in Kampala

About **1.4 million** refugees live in Uganda today, including an estimated **91,000 persons** in Kampala, mostly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although many of them have been there for several years now, and struggle to meet their needs, they remain very much under the radar of many local and international organisations which aim to support them. Since 2019, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), URBAN REFUGEES has been working to identify Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) providing support to their communities, to help them to enhance their organisational and project management capacities so as to improve services available to refugees in their communities.

Lockdown measures restricted all in-person activities of refugees and of URBAN REFUGEES The UR team in Kampala worked extensively with refugee leaders supported in previous years to mitigate the pandemic risks and to continue to support them in other forms, including:

- **Support in writing proposals** to donors to take part in the crisis response
- Weekly check-in to maintain regular contact and work on their challenges
- Covid-19 prevention workshops and socially-distanced meetings when needed

Activities

In July 2020, as the national lockdown ended, UR launched its Incubation Program for **20 leaders from 2 organisations**, *United South Sudanese Urban Refugees Community (USSURC)* and *Sudanese Women for Peace and Development Association (SWPDA)*, to whom it provided:

- **Adaptive and dynamic** programming reliant on partnership with refugee leaders to image the needs of RLOs and their communities
- **16 tailored training modules** covering fundraising, partnerships, financial management, project management, communication, income generation, and governance
- **Grant of 5,000 USD awarded to each RLO** to support refugee-led programs, relief responses, and support overall RLO growth

Over **2800** refugee women, men and children were referred to local and international organisations for assistance and services including food distribution, hygiene supplies, accommodation, health assistance, mental health counselling and support to livelihoods.



A Covid-19 response #ByRefugees

Refugee leaders at the heart of the Covid-19 response

The Covid-19 hit refugees particularly hard, as the strict lockdowns deeply affected income generation for many refugees, and as a majority of non-vital humanitarian assistance was put on hold in March 2020 by the Ugandan authorities.

To respond to these unmet and urgent needs of refugees due to the Covid-19 crisis, URBAN REFUGEES joined the emergency response efforts in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Partnerships with refugee leaders appeared as key levers to address the negative impacts of Covid-19 in communities, as their intervention became necessary to ensure a rapid and adapted assistance.

Activities

UR adapted its URIP methodology with the aim **to amplify the Covid-19 response efforts of RLOs** to their refugee communities. **55 refugee leaders** (over 50% women) from 5 RLOs were supported through the following:

- **Crisis response training** to equip the RLO leaders with the skills to design strategies to cope and to respond to future crises
- **Direct support** through grants to each RLO to deliver direct relief aid to their members
- Training and support to improve information sharing within the communities
- **Financial and project management training with a small grant** to RLOs to support income generating activities
- Setting up of **partnerships between RLOs and humanitarian organisations** and agencies to improve referrals within communities. RLOs concluded partnerships with YARID, Mercy Corps, NRC, AHA, Raising Gabdho Foundation, JRS, IRC, Strong Minds, IOM, Actualite CD women Group and Pilgrim Center for Restoration
- Creation of job opportunities for **26 refugees employed in the project task force**

In total over **10 000 community members** received improved assistance :

- Direct assistance from RLOs to 4,500 refugees in their communities (food, hygiene items like soap, livelihood trainings, business grants)
- The referral of 6600 refugees by RLO to humanitarian organisations, in particular for livelihood and protection services

Moreover, **4 700 refugees** benefited from enhanced access to information through RLO social media (Facebook, Whatsapp).

RLO incubation network

United South Sudanese Urban Refugees Community (USSURC)

USSURC was founded in 2017 with the vision of gathering the South Sudanese community beyond tribalism and political differences and aiming to improve their living standards and welfare. Today USSURC serves over 700 persons in Kampala.

Through a partnership network of local NGOs in Kampala, USSURC became the second RLO to partner with URBAN REFUGEES and to participate in the Incubation Program in 2019.

Key achievements in 2020

- **Direct assistance to community members** as part of the Covid-19 response: USSURC distributed food to 500 refugees and host community members and non-food item (hygiene products) to 300 refugees
- **Active and Successful fundraising:** following the training module on fundraising, USSURC raised 10 000 USD from the All Africa Conference of Churches to support activities for women and youths at the USSURC center.
- **Psychosocial support services:** USSURC established a helpline with a Juba Arabic counsellor to provide support to refugees affected by mental health disorders.
- **Consorting with an advocacy network:** USSURC joined a network of humanitarian organisations, the Charter for Change (C4C), which advocates for localisation of interventions by all humanitarian actors. This will support a better recognition of the role played by local organizations in response to refugees' needs.



"Our organization benefited a lot from capacity building. From the beginning we did not know about writing a project proposal, skills such as communication and fundraising. I really learned from that capacity building. The benefit is that we can now write and submit proposals to different NGOs and embassies. We will be also trusting ourselves more."

Pasquale Kimbo, Zone Coordinator USSURC.

Sudanese Women for Peace and Development Association (SWPDA)

SWPDA is an organization of women refugee leaders based in Kampala. They are committed to empowering Sudanese refugee women by supporting the social and material needs of women in their community. It supports a community of over 1000 South Sudanese refugees in Kampala, including 600 children and 250 women.

SWPDA leaders participated in the URIP in 2020-2021.

Key achievements in 2020

- **Food distribution to 200 members**, refugees and host community
- **Tracking Community Vulnerabilities:** following the partnership development training module, SWPDA used the knowledge of its own refugee community to create a digital database of vulnerable community members. This resulted in a partnership with Mercy Corps' to deliver 3-months cash grants to the most vulnerable families identified.
- **Building Income Generation Skills:** SWPDA worked with the Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), a key RLO in East Africa, to provide English language and computer skills workshops to the community, and to develop a joint grant request to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund to face Covid-19 related challenges.
- **Responding to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** In partnership with the International Rescue Committee, SWPDA worked to develop strategies to combat SGBV and strengthen skills for economic independence.

"This first experience [URIP] was difficult, but I learned a lot. I feel very confident in writing proposals now and I am determined to write many more in the future. We feel like many doors can be opened to us now!"

Shima Bahre Abdallah, SWPDA Deputy Chairperson and Project Manager.



Refugee-Led Organisations Network (RELON)

RELON was founded with the mission to unite Refugee-Led Organisations, including smaller and less established organisations to benefit from each other and have a positive impact on the refugee community in Uganda. RELON brings together 28 RLOs in Kampala, and 6 RLOs in the settlements, representing approximately 30,000 refugees across Uganda.

URBAN REFUGEES began working with them in 2020 as part of the Covid-19 response program.

Key achievements in 2020

- **Technical desk and information hub:** Through this community-facing effort, RELON extended its services to member RLOs, including RLO legal registration, access to calls for funding, and linkage to employment opportunities.
- **Media Campaign:** RELON spearheaded a media campaign strategy to highlight the work of RLOs and their role in the COVID-19 crisis response as key stakeholders. So far, their media campaign delivered 2 digital media and podcast trainings with 10 RLOs, and established organizational social media platforms such as Twitter and Youtube.



Somali Community Association of Uganda (SCAU)

SCAU was founded with the goal to advocate for vulnerable Somalis living in Uganda. SCAU supports approximately 18,000 households across Uganda and operates on shared cultural values. In SCAU, elders of the community are responsible for conflict resolution, and play a large role in the decision making process. SCAU supports youth and women through different activities such as English classes or psycho-social support with assistance from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

SCAU participated in the UR Incubation Program in 2020-2021.

Key achievements in 2020

- **Business development:** Using the URIP grant, SCAU leaders provided grants to 50 Somali women refugees to develop their business and organised a financial management training for them.
- **English learning:** To strengthen their integration efforts and business capacities, SCAU started an adult English class program enrolling 30 Somali refugees (23 women).



The Refugee Entrepreneurship Association Limited (REAL)

Founded in 2017, is a women-led organisation which strives to promote refugee skills and economic empowerment for most vulnerable slum communities, supporting over 600 persons including members of the host community.

REAL was selected by URBAN REFUGEES to participate in the Covid-19 response program.

Key achievements in 2020:

- **Business development:** Through UR grant support, REAL leaders provided business grants to 25 women entrepreneurs affected by the COVID-19 crisis. As a result of the accumulated savings from these businesses, 3 new host community entrepreneurs were supported bringing the total to 28 in the community.
- **IGA Fundraising and Marketing:** The UR Connec'the event provided a platform for REAL to network with the different stakeholders and explore potential new markets for their IGA. With the compelling stories behind their bold African apparels and accessories, REAL was able to sell and raise funds from the event to support their initiatives in 2020.



II. We Advocate: Refugee Leadership in humanitarian urban response

A refugee-led advocacy strategy

Despite the great impact that refugee leaders and Refugee-Led-Organizations (RLOs) impart to their communities, these efforts often go unseen and undersupported by major stakeholders in the humanitarian sphere. URBAN REFUGEES actively advocates with RLOs for them to be recognized as key players at every stage of the design and implementation of aid policies and programs, to allow for a more impactful refugee-led response.

To support this, URBAN REFUGEES released a video in 2020, giving the floor to urban refugees in Kampala : [Urban Refugees | Empowering refugee-led organisations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUGMTP-PBTo).¹

In 2020, the Urban Refugee advocacy efforts focused on:

- 1/ **Developing a “refugee-led advocacy program”**, a training and mentoring program in advocacy to support refugee leaders in influencing decision-making processes. Designed in 2020, this program will be launched in 2021 in Kenya and Uganda with our RLO regional refugee coalition partners.
- 2/ **Encouraging donors and international organizations to provide adequate, multi-faceted support to RLOs in urban areas**, with a focus on the need to develop inclusive and “need-driven” capacity-strengthening programs. Today, RLOs are facing unrealistic criteria and expectations in terms of what they are supposed to deliver with low levels of support, resources or training. There is a risk of inequalities within refugee communities who tend to obtain donor attention, particularly from a perspective of gender. To reduce this risk, UR has started to document how delivering capacity-building programs can allow RLOs with a wider range of profiles to access donor funding, especially RLOs which are led by women or youth, facing language barriers, or lack experience working with NGOs and other institutions.

A year of advocacy with refugee leaders

January 2020	March 2020	April 2020	June 2020
Participation in the Change Now Summit - Presenting Innovative solutions envisioned by refugee leaders in urban areas to investors seeking to scale global solutions.	Launching of the “refugee-led advocacy program” in collaboration with the Global Refugee-led Network African Chapter (GRN AC) & the East Africa Refugee Led Organizations Network (EARLO)	Campaigning Video series highlighting refugee-led efforts and needs to support their community in adapting to COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences.	Participation in the Amplify Now Virtual Refugee conference: “Challenging Refugee Representations: a Workshop for NGOs” organized by Kiron Refugees. - Narratives about refugees in civil society and the activist sphere
			Production of a video featuring USSURC, UR’ RLO partner, calling for the aid sector to place RLOs as equal partners in programming.
July 2020	August 2020	November 2020	December 2020
Contribution to Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform's latest briefing on the #COVID19 response in forced displacement, focusing on the role of RLOs in lessening vulnerabilities in the pandemic.	UR as official partner of the #Refugeeleads campaign, aiming to promote refugee leadership and generate direct support. Publication of an article on UR's support to SWPDA, a women refugee-led organization partner in Kampala, to underscore the importance of developing comprehensive support to women organizations in their responses to crises.	Participation in the report and podcast “Civil Society Innovation and Urban Inclusion” from the International Civil Society Center (ICSC). Featuring urban refugee leaders, this highlights why RLOs are best positioned to meet their communities' needs, and how and why they should be treated as key stakeholders in the humanitarian system. Participation in the panel “RLOs: Urban Innovation Case Studies” in the ICSC “Global Perspectives” Forum, on why and how to reinforce clear avenues for positioning RLOs as driving force in the urban refugee response.	Publication of the article “Moral dilemmas encountered in enacting refugee capacity-building programmes” in Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration, Volume 9, drawn from UR experience in Uganda. Participation in the preparation of the Social European Forum on Migration 2021. UR introduced the need to support and include RLOs in aid governance mechanisms.

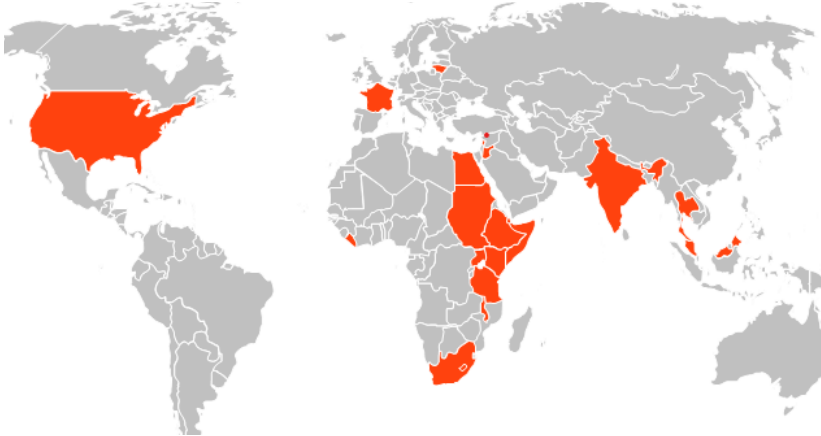
¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUGMTP-PBTo>

III. We Connect: RLO network

RLO Support Network

In 2020, UR launched a monthly newsletter, the “RLO Support Network” to support its network of over 85 registered RLOs around the world. Through a feedback form, the curation of the newsletter was adapted to best meet the needs of these RLOs. Available in three languages (English, Arabic, and French), the “RLO Support Network” provides:

- **Funding and Advocacy Opportunities:** Over 25 opportunities for RLO grants and events, including recommendations, detailed information and deadlines
- **Technical guidance:** guidance and tips on communication, proposal writing, etc.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** showcase of innovative solutions developed by refugee leaders



The Like-Minded Network

URBAN REFUGEES is one of the founding members of a network of Like-Minded NGOs, all dedicated to supporting RLOs to become key stakeholders in responses. The network is composed of 5 members, working with refugee communities in Africa (Egypt, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa) and Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia).



UR Connec'thé - When Tea Meets Connection

In December 2020, URBAN REFUGEES organized a networking event with 5 partner RLOs in Kampala (REAL, RELON, SCAU, SWPDA, and USSURC), during which they showcased and sold products made by community members. Additionally, this event served as an opportunity to enhance the visibility of the RLOs and amplify their work in the urban refugee community to key stakeholders like UNHCR and main INGOs working in the urban refugee sector in Kampala. UR Connec'thé created an important and needed linkage for refugee leaders; a space where RLOs can access support and key contacts from different humanitarian actors.





Connect with us

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/urbanrefugees>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/urbanrefugees>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/urban.refugees/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/urban-refugees>

Website: www.urban-refugees.org

Contact: contact@urban-refugees.org

Head office URBAN REFUGEES - 282 rue des Pyrénées - 75020 Paris

Our partners

We implement our actions with the support of the Inkerman Foundation and:



GlobalGiving



Global Development Group

Our programs in Uganda are part of an iNGO consortium, in partnership with :



Support our work

<http://www.urban-refugees.org/donate/>

LEGAL STATUS: association de 1901

Registered at: préfecture de Saint Germain en Laye on 4 Dec 2012.

Identification number W783004064