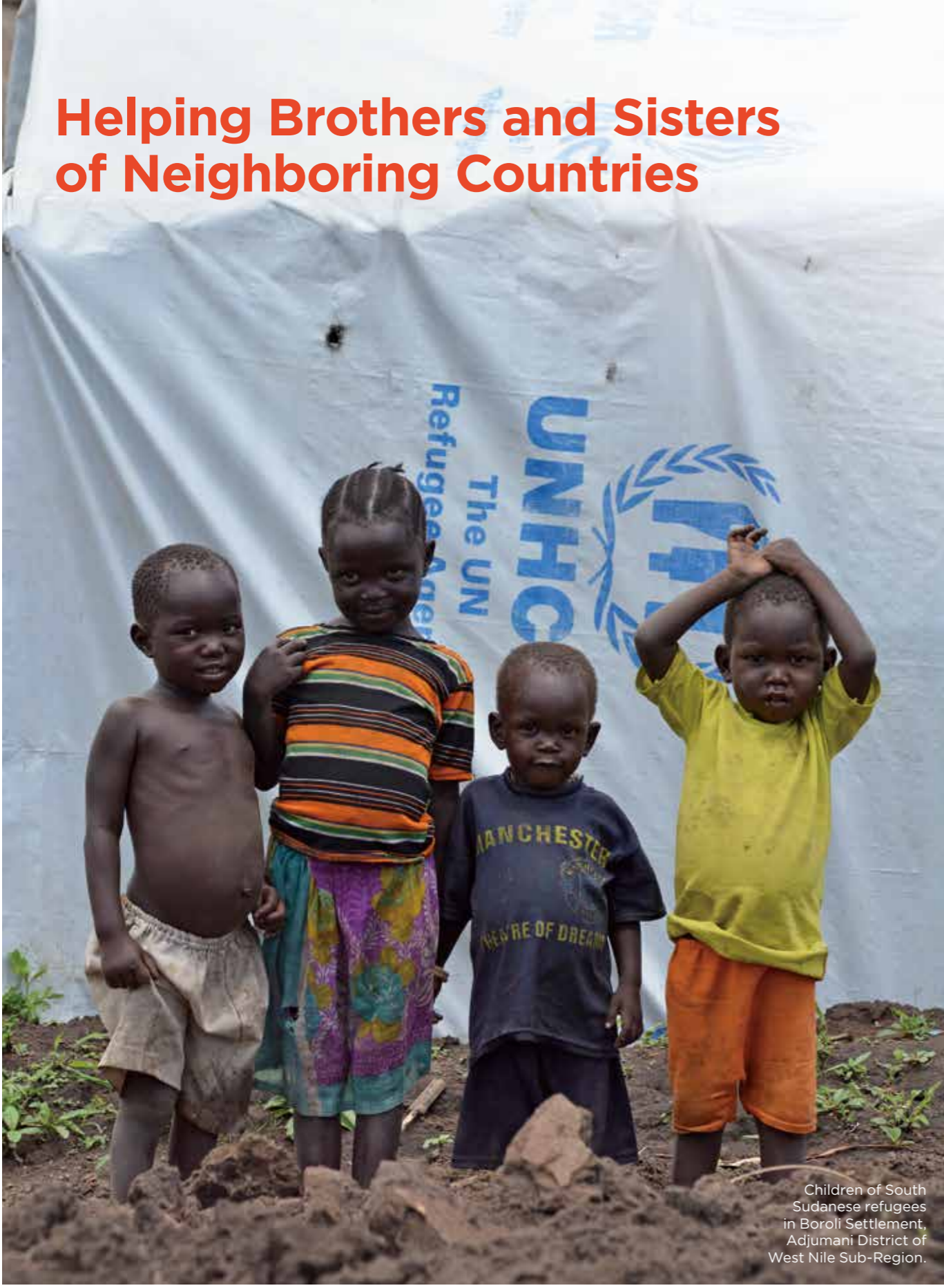
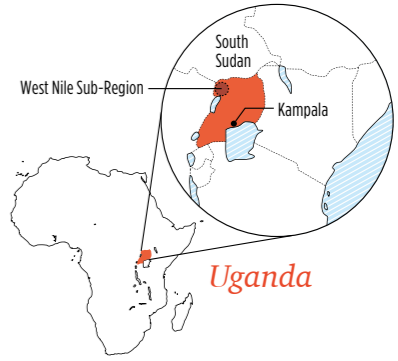


# Helping Brothers and Sisters of Neighboring Countries



Children of South Sudanese refugees in Boroli Settlement, Adjumani District of West Nile Sub-Region.

ALL PHOTOS ON PAGES 4-7 TAKESHI KUINO



Uganda is a country in East Africa with a population of approximately 40 million. Blessed with bountiful nature, the country was once called “a pearl of Africa” by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Today, a massive number of refugees are fleeing into Uganda from its neighboring countries, especially from South Sudan. In response, Japan has launched a unique series of initiatives to help Uganda deal with the refugees.

### INFLUX OF SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES: OVER 2000 PEOPLE ARRIVE IN UGANDA EVERY DAY

Once I drive through the heavy traffic jams of Kampala, the Ugandan capital, and make it out of the city, a land of natural beauty opens up before me: the gigantic Lake Victoria, the Nile River flowing out from the lake, and the vast prairies stretching for miles. People on the street wave at me, a foreigner, with laid-back smiles on their faces.

Uganda is said to be the most generous country for refugees. In fact, the country has received a great number of refugees since World War II from neighboring countries such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. Uganda itself has experienced a civil war, which caused many of its citizens to flee to neighboring countries as refugees in the past. In 2006, it enacted a law to grant rights to refugees to move freely and to work. Ugandan people say that they broadly support this idea—it is just normal to help one another, they say, “Because we are brothers and sisters.”

Now, Uganda is facing a surge of refugees from South Sudan, which is shaking the entire nation. In 2011, South Sudan achieved independence, earning a nickname as “the youngest nation in the world.” However, in 2013, civil war broke out between forces supporting the President and forces loyal to the former Vice President. Following a resurgence of violence in July of 2016, the conflict spread into Equatoria, a region bordering with Uganda. As a result, many people from South Sudan fled to northern Uganda.

By early August of 2017, the number of South Sudanese refugees residing in Uganda exceeded a million. Even now, over 2,000 South Sudanese flee into Uganda every day. Many are believed to be staying in Uganda without registering as refugees, seeking help from relatives living in Uganda.

In response to this situation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international aid organizations are boosting emergency humanitarian aid activities in the refugee settlements. The government of Uganda provides a plot of land to refugees, while humanitarian organizations assist refugees with basic needs such as shelter and food as well as access to safe drinking water and basic healthcare services. Yet, the soaring number of arriving refugees pauses great challenges for everyone.

Bidibidi Settlement is located in Yumbe District, West Nile Sub-Region, in the northwestern part of Uganda. Approximately 270,000 South Sudanese refugees—far above the initially estimated figure of 50,000—live in the settlement, which opened in August of 2016. Although there are white tents put up here and there, most refugees have built houses in Bidibidi. It is difficult to distinguish this settlement from any other Ugandan village nearby.

Life in Bidibidi is not easy and refugees seem to face many challenges. Lasu Justin, who worked at a healthcare center in South Sudan and had fled from South Sudan to Uganda in the past, became a refugee once again because of the current conflict. Lasu says, “In South Sudan, our lives, the lives of the people in Equatoria, were threatened. Life here in the settlement is safe, but food is becoming scarce, and there isn’t enough well water for all of us.” Merry Awate, who used to work at an NGO in South Sudan, says, “I don’t know when I can go back home. I need to find a job to support myself in Uganda.”

### BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO SUPPORT REFUGEE HOSTING COMMUNITIES

People in West Nile Sub-Region, where the majority of South Sudanese refugees living in Uganda are being hosted, faced various challenges in access-



Boroli Settlement in Adjumani District. Tents and houses stand side by side in the settlement.



Left: Lasu (center) is a South Sudanese refugee who lives in Bidibidi Settlement. Right: In Bidibidi Settlement, there are many expectant women and nursing mothers.

Refugees and Displaced People : UGANDA



Kubo asks Aruda District administrators about the progress made with the dissemination of planning tools.

ing services and basic infrastructure even before the influx of refugees. With the arrival of refugees, the region now needs not only humanitarian aid but also development support for host communities, in order for them to continue assisting refugees.

Here is one example. While many refugees live in settlements where humanitarian aid is limited, more and more refugees now reside in local communities in Uganda. This puts strain on the social infrastructure in the communities, such as schools and hospitals. Dalili Moses, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Adjumani District, where about 50% of the population is comprised of South Sudanese refugees, says, “There aren’t enough schools. Classrooms are jam-packed, with more than 100 children in just one room.”

However, it is difficult for the government of Uganda to deal with all of the requests from such communities. Kaggwa Andrew, who works at the Ministry of Local Government, says, “There are so many requests from those local communities and we are way too underbudgeted. We need to prioritize these requests and select development projects that are most effective.”

That is why JICA has been targeting capacity building of local governments in West Nile Sub-Region. JICA has carried out a similar project in the neighboring Acholi Sub-Region as part of the reconstruction of northern Uganda, which had been affected by civil war. This time, taking advantage of past experience and accumulated know-how, JICA aims to use its capacity building project to support district administrators in designing and formulating community-based district development plans not only in Acholi Sub-Region, but also in West Nile Sub-Region, the area most South Sudanese refugees flow into.

“In this project, we encourage the administrators of counties in the province to use a simple development planning tool so that they can implement higher priority projects,” explains Yusuke Kubo, a JICA expert who leads the project. “With this tool, they sort all data—such as the population of each village, the number of water wells, the condition of the roads, and so on—by category on a sheet of paper called an inventory sheet. And then they determine the priority of each request from villages by using objective criteria to grade the requests.” Having succeeded in utilizing these tools in Acholi Sub-Region, JICA continues to use them to train government officials in West Nile Sub-Region.

The Ugandan government is also pinning a great

deal of hope on this project. Odur Benard, an official in the Office of the Prime Minister in charge of the development of northern Uganda, says, “Even if we receive funding from aid organizations, it can be wasted if the government fails to carry out projects in a systematic way. With this project, we aim to strengthen local governments’ capacity for development and generate synergy with other development projects in every field.”

After district officials in Acholi Sub-Region formulated a community-based development plan, JICA began funding 28 pilot projects emanating from this plan. These pilot projects are drawn through collaborative efforts of district development officials and community members in the district.

Last March, for instance, residents in a village chosen for a pilot project used funds provided by JICA to purchase six cows for traditional cow plowing. Isa Imazato, a JICA expert supporting this pilot project, says, “In the past, even when community residents asked district officials to purchase cows, they did not really have a specific plan for how they would use the cows. So in this project, we ask them to make a detailed plan, like what’s the size of the land you would like to cultivate using the cows, how and when you are going to train them, and how you are going to keep them healthy, things like that.”

Such pilot projects to implement community-based planning are also envisioned in West Nile Sub-Region. Kubo, the JICA expert, says, “Compared with Acholi Sub-Region, I believe that West Nile Sub-Region is culturally and ethnically more diverse. Some villages have practiced cattle plowing while others have not. The number of arriving refugees also varies depending on the location. While ensuring that no one is left behind and that refugees are included in local planning, district officials and community members have to carefully select pi-



Isa Imazato, JICA’s livelihood expert, visits a village where a pilot project is taking place. “The administrator of this county did a great job,” says Imazato.



Villagers practice cow plowing under a pilot project.



Lalia (left), an agricultural official, Waran (second from left), and refugees in the settlement.

lot projects that meet the needs of diverse groups.”

**DISSEMINATION OF RICE CULTIVATION HELPS IMPROVE REFUGEE LIVELIHOODS**

Because of its moderate climate among other reasons, Uganda has been self-sufficient for basic crops. However, the sudden increase in the number of refugees from South Sudan is straining food supply in West Nile Sub-Region.

To alleviate the strain, JICA is conducting agricultural programs to improve food production. In 2011, it started a rice cultivation project, and in 2014, UNHCR joined in as a partner. The project promotes dissemination of an upland rice strain called Nerica. Under the project, JICA provides 1 kilogram of Nerica seed to each farmer who participates in special training. These seeds can yield a harvest of 50 kilograms of rice seed in the first season.

Nerica’s advantages include its high yield, short growth duration, and drought tolerance. It is beneficial not only for securing food stock in the region but also for improving the livelihoods of Nerica producing farmers because of its high monetary value. Lalia Jesca, an official in charge of agriculture in Adjumani District of West Nile Sub-Region, says, “We experienced a terrible drought last year, but Nerica yielded a good harvest. Rice sells for twice as much as cassava, so farmers are happy about it.”

To date, JICA has conducted rice cultivation training for 1400 people, including refugees, farmers in the host communities, and extension workers. Waran Simon, a South Sudanese refugee who lives in Boroli Settlement, Adjumani District, participated in a training program designed for trainers at the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI). After completing the program, Waran began to pass on knowledge of how to cultivate rice

to his fellow refugees in the settlement.

Waran had lived in Uganda for 27 years as a refugee, from age 7 until he returned to his home country in 2013. But the conflict recurred immediately after his return, forcing him to go back to Uganda once again. “I had to pay a big sum of money to rent a plot of land from a Ugandan landlord. But my farm was also once badly damaged by cows from another village. That was terrible,” says Waran, recalling the past with a bitter expression on his face.

Then he took me to the hut where he keeps his produce. There, 700 kilograms of rice were piled up in bags: harvest yielded from the 1 kilogram of rice seed provided by JICA two years ago. Waran pointed at an educational poster on the wall of the storage house and said, “It’s a poster about rice cultivation, which I got at the training program. My friends and I have practiced rice farming little by little, using explanations in this poster.” While he was talking, other members of his rice-growing group gathered around us. They seemed to have great confidence in Waran, who has worked hard to overcome many hardships.

In June of 2017, the government of Uganda and the United Nations jointly held a Solidarity Summit in Kampala. Some 500 people including delegations from various countries around the world, the UN and NGOs, as well as Ugandan local government officials participated in the summit, showing support for refugees and refugee-hosting countries and communities. At a side event, Japan hosted a session where local authorities explained how they supported refugees in their community.

Today, the refugee problem continues to be an uphill battle. To tackle the problem, it is vital to go beyond existing humanitarian aid schemes to create a new philosophy of assistance that improves livelihoods for both refugees and host communities.



Waran teaches his fellow refugees how to grow rice using a rice cultivation poster provided by Japan.