



**YOUTH REFUGEES
UNITED FOR
DEVELOPMENT (YRUD)**

Together for the better world



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ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Youth Refugees United for Development (YRUD) is a refugee-led humanitarian community organization founded in 2018 by **Justin Buma**, and two strong women, **Naomie Baguma**, and **Cikuru Kasi** in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. YRUD was born following a tragic event that deeply affected our community: the death of a neighbor caused by hunger. This situation revealed the extreme vulnerability faced by many refugee families and inspired the founders to take action by developing sustainable community-based responses to humanitarian, social, economic, and environmental challenges.

The organization was officially registered in August 2020 by the local government of Isingiro District under registration number 0624, confirming its legal recognition and strong community foundation. Since its establishment, YRUD has been working to promote refugee self-reliance, strengthen community resilience, and foster social cohesion between refugee and host communities.

OUR STORY

In its early stages, Youth Refugees United for Development (YRUD) primarily focused on emergency humanitarian assistance, particularly food distribution to the most vulnerable refugee and host community families. These interventions mainly targeted widows, orphaned and vulnerable children, elderly people, people living with disabilities, and households facing extreme poverty and displacement-related hardship. During periods of crisis, conflict, and new refugee arrivals, this support played a critical role in helping families survive and regain a sense of dignity and hope.

However, over time, YRUD realized that emergency food assistance alone was not

sufficient to create lasting change. While humanitarian aid remains essential during emergencies, it often addresses only immediate needs without tackling the root causes of poverty, dependency, unemployment, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and social vulnerability affecting refugee communities.

This reflection encouraged YRUD to progressively transition from a short-term relief approach toward a more sustainable and transformative development model centered on empowerment, self-reliance, community resilience, and locally driven solutions. The organization began focusing on helping communities build the skills, systems, and opportunities necessary to improve their living conditions in a sustainable way.

Today, YRUD implements integrated community-based initiatives that combine humanitarian response with long-term development strategies. These initiatives include improving access to clean water and sanitation, strengthening food security through sustainable agriculture and permaculture practices, promoting circular economy systems through recycling and waste transformation, supporting environmental protection and climate resilience, and creating livelihood opportunities for vulnerable youth and women.

YRUD also recognizes that displacement and poverty deeply affect mental and emotional wellbeing. As a result, the organization increasingly integrates mental health awareness, psychosocial support, and youth empowerment activities into its programs in order to strengthen social cohesion, restore hope, and encourage positive community participation.

Through this evolution, YRUD aims not only to respond to urgent humanitarian needs, but also to help refugee and host communities become more resilient, self-sufficient, environmentally responsible, and capable of building a better future for themselves.

OUR MISSION

To provide, coordinate, and lead assistance in all its forms in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of refugees by promoting empowerment awareness and implementing sustainable community development initiatives.

OUR VISION

To build a reliable and sustainable organization capable of mobilizing resources to address the major challenges affecting refugee communities while strengthening autonomy, resilience, and social cohesion.

OUR CORE VALUES

YRUD operates based on the following principles:

- Human dignity
- Solidarity
- Social inclusion
- Social cohesion
- Community resilience
- Sustainable development
- Transparency and accountability

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen Economic Empowerment

Improve refugees' economic independence through vocational training, entrepreneurship, and income-generating activities.

- Strengthen Community Resilience

Develop sustainable community programs enabling refugees and host communities to respond effectively to social, environmental, and economic challenges.

- Improve Access to Essential Services

Support refugees in accessing education, healthcare, psychosocial support, and other essential social services.

- Promote Well-being and Self-Care

Increase awareness and practices related to mental health, healthy living, and self-reliance.

- Build Strong Partnerships and Resource Mobilization

Establish strategic partnerships with governments, NGOs, donors, and local communities to mobilize resources and strengthen support programs.

- Advocate for Refugee Rights and Social Inclusion

Promote policies and initiatives that protect refugee rights, dignity, and integration within host communities.

- Strengthen Institutional Capacity

Build a strong, transparent, and effective organization capable of managing resources efficiently and implementing impactful programs.

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN NAKIVALE REFUGEE

Limited Access to Safe Water and WASH Challenges

Access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) remains one of the greatest challenges in several areas of Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

According to humanitarian reports, some communities live with water quantities below recommended humanitarian standards. Insufficient infrastructure, long distances to water points, and long waiting times worsen the situation.

The main WASH challenges include: lack of access to safe water, insufficient latrines, poor hygiene conditions, risks of water contamination, and the spread of waterborne diseases.

According to UNICEF, these conditions increase the risks of diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, and malnutrition, especially among women and children.

In response to this challenge, YRUD considers access to water and WASH services a strategic priority.

YRUD has already drilled a water well in the New Hope area of Nakivale to respond to the urgent need for clean water access. With community efforts and partner support, the system has been equipped with a water pump, and a 3000-liter water storage tank. Today, this infrastructure provides approximately 80 neighboring families with safer and more dignified access to clean water while reducing long walking distances and the burden of water collection.

The project also contributes to improving sanitation and hygiene conditions, reducing waterborne diseases, strengthening the dignity of women and children, and improving community resilience to water-related challenges.

Given the scale of needs in Nakivale, YRUD aims to expand this model by drilling additional wells in other villages and zones of the settlement to ensure sustainable access to safe water for more refugee and host families.

We believe that access to water is not only a fundamental human need but also a key foundation for health, food security, education, and sustainable community development.

Food Insecurity and Circular Economy Solutions

Food insecurity remains one of the most critical challenges in Nakivale. This situation has worsened due to reductions in humanitarian funding for food assistance.

The World Food Program introduced a refugee categorization system based on vulnerability levels:

- extremely vulnerable households receive approximately 40% food rations,
- moderately vulnerable households receive around 22%,
- while some households considered less vulnerable have had their assistance reduced or suspended.

This situation increases malnutrition risks, chronic hunger, child labor, domestic violence, and economic dependency.

Pregnant women, children, and elderly people are among the most affected.

Many families are forced to reduce daily meals or sell essential belongings in order to survive.

In response, YRUD is currently developing an innovative community resilience model based on circular economy principles and sustainable use of local resources.

This integrated system was designed around the water access provided by the YRUD well in New Hope.

The model functions as a community ecosystem where each activity supports the others:

 Water from the well feeds fish ponds to support fish production as a source of protein and income.

-  Nutrient-rich pond water is then reused to irrigate crops and permaculture gardens, naturally improving soil fertility.
-  Poultry farming activities generate organic waste used to produce compost.
-  Compost is then used to fertilize agricultural production, reducing dependence on expensive chemical fertilizers.
-  Agricultural production feeds families, supplies local markets, and partially supports fish and poultry feeding, creating a sustainable, interconnected, and self-reliant ecosystem.

This circular economy model helps; strengthen food security, create sustainable income, reduce dependence on humanitarian aid, protect the environment, optimize water use, and strengthen refugee and host community self-reliance.

YRUD also plans to train youth and women so they can replicate this model within their own communities and develop local economic and environmental resilience initiatives.

Mental Health, Psychosocial Support, and Youth Protection

Refugees living in Nakivale face numerous health and psychosocial challenges, including: insufficient health facilities, lack of medicine, malnutrition, infectious diseases, trauma related to armed conflict, forced displacement, violence, loss of loved ones, unemployment, social isolation, and lack of safe spaces for youth.

Young refugees are particularly exposed to stress, depression, hopelessness, risky behavior, violence, drug abuse, and school dropout. Mental health and psychosocial support services remain highly insufficient in many parts of the settlement. In response, YRUD seeks to develop community-based solutions centered on well-being, youth empowerment, and protection of vulnerable families.

• Counseling and Psychosocial Support

YRUD plans to establish community counseling and psychosocial support activities to help refugees, especially youth, women, and trauma survivors, cope with emotional and psychological challenges linked to forced displacement and difficult living conditions. These activities aim to: strengthen mental well-being, promote listening and dialogue, reduce social isolation, prevent violence, and restore hope and dignity.

• Creation of Youth Centers

YRUD also plans to create safe community youth centers. These centers will aim to: provide recreational and sports activities, promote learning and personal development, encourage artistic and cultural talents, develop entrepreneurship and digital skills, strengthen youth leadership and prevent risky behaviors.

These youth centers will also serve as centers of social cohesion where refugee and host community youth can learn, collaborate, and build a more resilient future together. YRUD believes that investing in mental health and youth empowerment is essential for building peaceful, self-reliant, and sustainable communities.

Environmental Degradation and Climate Change

Nakivale faces increasing environmental degradation caused by: deforestation, population pressure, excessive use of firewood, and climate change effects.

Around Lake Nakivale, communities are observing: declining water levels, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss.

This situation directly threatens: food security, water access, livelihoods, and community resilience.

YRUD is currently developing environmental restoration initiatives through: bamboo plantation, moringa plantation, sustainable agriculture and environmental awareness activities.

Bamboo helps stabilize soils and protect water resources, while moringa represents an

important nutritional and economic opportunity for communities.

Limited Access to Education and Youth Development

Educational infrastructure remains insufficient compared to the growing refugee population in Nakivale.

Challenges include lack of classrooms, insufficient learning materials, long distances to schools, limited access to secondary and vocational education, and lack of youth development spaces.

Many young people lack technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills necessary for sustainable livelihoods.

Additionally, the absence of educational and recreational opportunities exposes many youth to idleness, school dropout, risky behaviors, violence, drug abuse, and social exclusion.

In response, YRUD considers youth as key actors of community transformation.

The organization therefore plans to establish community youth centers that will serve as: learning centers, entertainment spaces, personal development hubs, and social cohesion platforms.

These centers will support: educational and entrepreneurship training, digital and practical skills learning, sports and cultural activities, community dialogue, leadership programs, and psychosocial support activities.

YRUD believes that investing in youth is essential to reducing poverty, strengthening peace, and building resilient and self-reliant communities.

SOCIAL COHESION

YRUD places social cohesion at the center of its approach by promoting: peaceful coexistence, collaboration between refugees and host communities, and shared community development.

We believe that a sustainable future can only be built through solidarity, dignity, and inclusion.

CALL FOR PARTNERSHIP

YRUD is currently seeking for technical partners, financial partners, NGOs, academic institutions, humanitarian agencies, and social investors to strengthen and expand sustainable community initiatives benefiting refugees and host communities.

Together, we can transform humanitarian aid into sustainable and replicable solutions for a more resilient future.

Nakivale Refugee Settlement | *Registered Organization No. 0624 (August 2020)*

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