

# LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

Uganda, Burundi, Niger :  
The urgent need for durable solutions



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### Summary

The testimonies and analyses gathered by Caritas International Belgium (CI.be) in this edition of "Local Actions, Global Lessons" support Pope Francis' call for the "globalization of international solidarity."<sup>1</sup> In particular, the context of global polycrisis pushes us to strengthen our support to populations affected by forgotten humanitarian crises – linked to climate risks, food insecurity and conflicts – and to rethink the modalities of action in the long run.

Our partner organizations within the Caritas network in Burundi, Niger, and Uganda share their experiences and local expertise in order to develop global lessons relevant to Belgian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, and its partners.

Their analyses focus on the following issues and recommendations:

- **Strengthening local responses and structures for the prevention of climate risks, food insecurity, and conflict.**
- **Supporting socio-economic development in fragile contexts by promoting family farming and diversified, inclusive, and sustainable sources of income.**
- **Integrating human mobility, the protection of displaced populations, and peace issues in programs and policies.**
- **Developing a position on the "triple nexus" that clarifies Belgium's vision for its implementation in fragile contexts.<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican News (2018) [Pope Francis calls for a 'globalization of solidarity'](#).

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see the recommendations from members of the 11.11.11 umbrella organization (2021) [Triple Nexus: How Humanitarian, Development and Peace Actors can Work Together](#).



### Introduction

The term "**protracted crises**" may sound contradictory... but in many parts of the world, including in partner countries of Caritas International Belgium (CI.be), some humanitarian crises are becoming entrenched and continue to last. How does this happen? Often through a combination of unresolved conflict dynamics, fragile systems, and the devastating impacts of climate change, all of which also lead to recurring cycles of forced population displacement. Global instability in 2022 has only accentuated the impact and intensity of these crises for affected populations.

The situation in eastern DR Congo, which was the subject of the [previous edition of this publication](#), is a particularly illustrative example. This new edition highlights lessons and courses of action from three other contexts. In **Uganda**, an ambitious model for hosting refugee populations continues to be under significant pressure from constant arrivals from neighbouring DR Congo and South Sudan. In **Burundi**, forced movements persist due to socio-economic and political instability, as well as the lack of safeguards for refugee families returning to their communities after several years in exile. Finally, **Niger** is experiencing a combination of climate, environmental, and social disasters, fuelling record levels of food insecurity in the country.

Despite the gravity of these crises, **the humanitarian community's responses remain limited**. The trend of structural underfunding of international humanitarian responses is confirmed and exacerbated by the chain of events of the COVID-19 crisis and the war in Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> For example, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Burundi has been funded at around 30% for 2022, while the rate for Niger is close to 50%.<sup>4</sup> However, mobilizing financial resources is only part of the solution: a drive for sector reform is essential in order to move the current model towards **programs and policies that are commensurate with needs, truly sustainable**, and where resources are no longer dependent on the level of media coverage of a crisis.

The analyses in this publication are similar in the alternatives they propose: targeting the *causes* of the crises above all. First, concerted action must be taken **to build capacity and refocus the responsibilities of national and local actors** on the prevention of multiple risks.<sup>5</sup> Second, **unstable sources of livelihoods and food systems are important causes of crises and must become more resilient** – this logic applies in both refugee hosting and climate adaptation contexts. Finally, issues of mobility and forced displacement should **drive commitments to systematically ensure protection and support for both host communities and populations on the move**, whether they are migrants, refugees, internally displaced, or returnees. Social cohesion must also become a cross-cutting issue in policies and programs to ensure equitable management of scarce resources and to avoid or resolve conflicts between different groups within a community.

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<sup>3</sup> The New Humanitarian (2022) [How the focus on Ukraine is hurting other humanitarian responses](#).

<sup>4</sup> Data issued by [OCHA](#).

<sup>5</sup> However, [data](#) shows that international donors have never come close to delivering on their promises of direct funding to local actors: only 1.2% of international humanitarian aid went directly to local NGOs in 2021.



## Refugees in Uganda: What prospects for durable solutions?

This analysis was written in partnership with [Caritas Hoima \(HOCADAO\)](#).

*The escalating conflicts in DR Congo and South Sudan continue to drive thousands of men, women, and children to flee to Uganda, already the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. While Ugandan authorities express their intention to continue their long tradition of hospitality and protection, some key obstacles remain in the way of promoting durable solutions for all.*

### The African country that hosts the most refugees

The intractable cycles of violence in South Sudan and eastern DR Congo have generated large-scale displacement into Uganda for decades.<sup>6</sup> In the first half of 2022, nearly 70,000 refugees crossed the border into Uganda in both the southwest and north of the country. For the 1.5 million refugees already living there, many of whom have been there for many years, the plight of newly arriving families is undermining hopes of return to their country of origin (for the example of refugees returning to Burundi, see the analysis below).

At the same time, **Uganda's reception system and international protection space have also fallen victim to trends of dwindling international aid and solidarity.**

Last year, the World Food Program (WFP) was forced to reduce its food rations by 60% – a blanket reduction which directly worsened the daily livelihoods of refugee households, particularly for the most vulnerable families and those with protection needs.<sup>7</sup> In 2022, shocks caused by the war in Ukraine further impacted aid funding and led to a spike in household prices in Uganda.<sup>8</sup> Worryingly, resettlement opportunities to third countries – reserved for refugees with a particularly vulnerable profile – continue to fall far short of commitments made.



Map of the refugee situation in Uganda (as of July 2022), including the location of current CI.be partnerships and programs.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about how Caritas responds to these challenges in DR Congo, read the [first edition of Local Actions, Global Lessons – "Overcoming Fragility in DR Congo"](#).

<sup>7</sup> The New Humanitarian (December 2022) ["Life is even worse now": Ration cuts and price rises hit refugees in Uganda](#).

<sup>8</sup> Segawa (June 2022) [The shrinking of "Rolexes" in Uganda due to the war in Ukraine](#).

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**December 2022** – *Refugees in Uganda: What prospects for durable solutions?*

This difficult context has **undermined the prospect of durable solutions for refugee communities**: return is a deadly risk, sustainable socio-economic inclusion in Ugandan society remains uneven, while resettlement is only available to a small minority.

### From dependency on humanitarian aid to sustainable livelihoods

Uganda's refugee system is often **cited as an example**. Unlike other countries in the region, Uganda's policies and laws grant refugee populations indiscriminate access to employment, education, and health care. They also allow for freedom of movement and the right of enterprise. Once their cases are processed, refugees are relocated to "refugee settlements" where they are given a plot of land.

While this vision and hosting strategy should in theory foster self-reliance and development opportunities, both for refugees and host communities, their **potential remains largely untapped in practice**. Poverty levels among refugee populations remain high, particularly in comparison to Ugandans.<sup>9</sup> Although agricultural activities are the primary source of income in the refugee settlements and regions where they are located, the limited quantity and quality of land distributed often provides insufficient opportunities to establish sustainable agricultural practices.<sup>10</sup> The economic downturn forces many families to rely on limited humanitarian assistance to meet their daily needs. Today, each refugee receives a daily food ration worth only 400 UGX (0.10 euros), which does not even allow for the purchase of a chapati (bread), which costs about 500 UGX (0.12 euros).

The recognition of the risk of increasing aid dependency has made self-reliance a crucial goal for sustainable responses to many protracted displacement situations around the world.<sup>11</sup> In the case of Uganda, this goal will only be achieved by **scaling up initiatives to develop sustainable employment opportunities**. Through its work in refugee settlements and with host communities in the north and west of the country, the Caritas network has worked with individuals and community groups to develop their income-generating activities, both agricultural and non-agricultural.<sup>12</sup> These actions have focused on injecting capital and organizing technical and vocational training in the refugee hosting districts, supporting sustainable family farming on the plots of land provided, and setting up village savings and credit associations (VSLAs). Entrepreneurship and innovation are also emphasized.

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<sup>9</sup> A [2018 World Bank household survey](#) found that around 50% of the refugee population in Uganda were living in poverty, compared to 17% of Ugandans in the same regions.

<sup>10</sup> In 2016, newly arrived refugee families (regardless of their size) were allocated plots of 50x50 m<sup>2</sup>, today this has been reduced to 15x30 m<sup>2</sup> due to land shortages and situations of overcrowding.

<sup>11</sup> In the case of Uganda, see the [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Uganda](#) and the [2020-2025 Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities](#).

<sup>12</sup> For more information about Caritas projects in western Uganda, visit our [dedicated webpage](#).

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*"We started our mushroom production in an innovative way, building a dark room where we are able to grow and cultivate mushrooms in a short space of time. We have created a new market in the area and have already started teaching others in the community how to do the same."*

- Justine Uwimana, 22, is a Congolese entrepreneur born in the refugee settlement of Kyangwali in western Uganda.

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*Justine (right) with her mother Albertine Nzamukunda (left), who fled to Uganda from North Kivu more than 20 years ago. They founded Upendo Group, a VSLA initiative supported by Caritas.*

In order to unleash the full potential of hosting migrants, Caritas' experiences internationally and in Belgium have shown that investing in income generation will allow communities to **break cycles of aid dependency, encourage refugees on the path to greater self-reliance, and contribute to the development of host and home countries.**<sup>13</sup>

The **rights and ambitions of host communities must also be an integral part of strategies for sustainable and peaceful development** in areas hosting refugee populations in Uganda. The precarious situation of host communities, also facing challenges related to poverty, access to services and protection, strengthens the argument for inclusive and sustainable development more generally. In the various regions receiving people in host villages have increased pressure on natural resources, resulting in environmental degradation and deforestation. These issues have become underlying sources of conflict, discrimination, and competition at the individual and community levels, sometimes undermining social cohesion. It is **imperative that sustainable resource management be ambitiously supported** so that Uganda can continue to provide a safe haven while offering socio-economic opportunities, as well as protection, for all.



*Edward is the Chairman of Wazee Tuamkeni – a VSLA founded by a group of local Ugandans. Caritas has supported them to develop sustainable farming activities based on agroecological practices.*

*"We had to adapt to a changing society and climate, changing our traditions and ways of life. We were a fishing community living on the shores of Lake Albert. But we faced a long list of challenges: restrictions from the authorities, threats from bandits, a hostile environment due to decades of deforestation. Today, oil exploration on the lake has also led to the physical displacement of our communities."*

- Edward, 23, is a farmer living near Lake Albert in western Uganda.

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<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the links between migration and development, see Caritas Europa (2019) [Common Home](#).



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### Protection gaps must be at the forefront

Restrictions on humanitarian assistance hit the most vulnerable hardest. As food rations dwindle, the most vulnerable members of refugee communities – single mothers, unaccompanied minors (UAMs), victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) – are falling into even more precarious situations. In addition, **justice and protection mechanisms remain severely underfunded and inaccessible in refugee host villages in Uganda**, including for unaccompanied children and victims of SGBV.

Although the visibility of these issues has increased in recent years, there are still **significant gaps in the protection regime for unaccompanied foreign minors (UAMs)** in Uganda. As of July 2022, 31,609 unaccompanied children were identified across the country, while recent surveys have shown that this population continues to grow: for example, in the past year, nearly 1,000 unaccompanied children were registered at the Congolese border in Kisoro.<sup>14</sup> In practice, these children arrive without their parents or other adult relatives, often because they were killed or became separated during and after fleeing violence in their home countries. Once in Uganda, a guardianship system is in place, but it is scarcely supported, often forcing guardians to abandon the children due to lack of resources. To help address this gap, the Caritas network strengthened the socioeconomic livelihoods of 355 unaccompanied minors in the host villages of Kyangwali and Kyaka II in western Uganda between 2021 and 2022. Further investments in specialized and quality education, child protection case management and skills development remain essential to adequately address the critical needs of every child at risk, regardless of age.



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*" We both lost our parents to the violence in North Kivu. When we first met here in Uganda, I was desperate to find a way to support him. Today, we are a family and Issa does not need to be alone anymore."*

*- Bahati Maneno, 26, and his adopted son Issa Barijunaki, 17, who arrived alone at the Kyangwali refugee settlement in Uganda.*

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*Bahati (left) and Issa (right) were supported by Caritas so that Bahati could become Issa's legal guardian and start a bakery to support their daily needs, such as Issa's tuition fees.*

**Sexual and gender-based violence is also an under-reported and neglected protection trend in the context of the reception of refugees in Uganda.** This is despite an increased risk during and after displacement due to cycles of violence and disruption of family and community structures. The recent COVID-19-related lockdowns and school closures in Uganda have been particularly challenging for youth and have resulted in an increase in reported cases of SGBV and teenage pregnancy. Assessments by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the most frequently reported forms of

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<sup>14</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Uganda - Refugee Statistics July 2022](#).



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SGBV within the household were physical violence (51%), followed by sexual violence (43%), and forced marriage (38%).<sup>15</sup>

**The increase in SGBV cases is not limited to refugee communities**, however, as it is also a growing trend among host populations. At the same time, actors responding to SGBV in Uganda have experienced a drastic reduction in funding in recent years. This lack of resources makes it even more difficult to address pre-existing gaps: lack of regular follow-up with victims, socio-economic reintegration, mediation, and costly access to the justice system.

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*"Individuals and their communities struggle in situations where they find themselves in an unfamiliar environment. For example, we have witnessed first-hand how violence can increase within a household during and after episodes of displacement."*

- Father Francis Xavier Magezi, *Executive Director of Caritas Hoima (HOCADAO), CI.be's local partner in Western Uganda.*



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The serious protection challenges facing refugee and host communities have prompted CI.be and its local partners, Caritas Hoima and Caritas Fort Portal, to develop and advocate for **coordinated responses for the protection of people at risk such as victims of SGBV and unaccompanied children**. This approach includes addressing immediate needs through psychosocial and legal support, as well as covering medical costs and distributing dignity kits for victims of violence.

In addition, Caritas aims to provide tools for socio-economic reintegration through employment and training opportunities for UAM guardians and SGBV victims, enabling individuals to protect their dignity and provide for themselves and their families. This strategy is also driven by the understanding that **protection incidents are not isolated, but rather a community and societal issue that presents multi-sectoral challenges**. As a result, a series of trainings and awareness-raising sessions are organized with authorities and communities at large on issues of social cohesion, gender equality, exploitation and child protection. The overall objective is to contribute to a holistic protection environment in the refugee hosting areas in Western Uganda.

### **Resettlement – a forgotten durable solution for the most vulnerable?**

For some of the most vulnerable refugees, resettlement to a third country is often the only realistic and sustainable option for a safe and dignified life. But **resettlement opportunities are still sorely lacking for refugee populations in Uganda**, including UAMs and victims of SGBV. Since 2016, only 18,776 people have been resettled from Uganda to Europe and beyond, representing about 15% of the 125,403 refugees in Uganda who have been identified

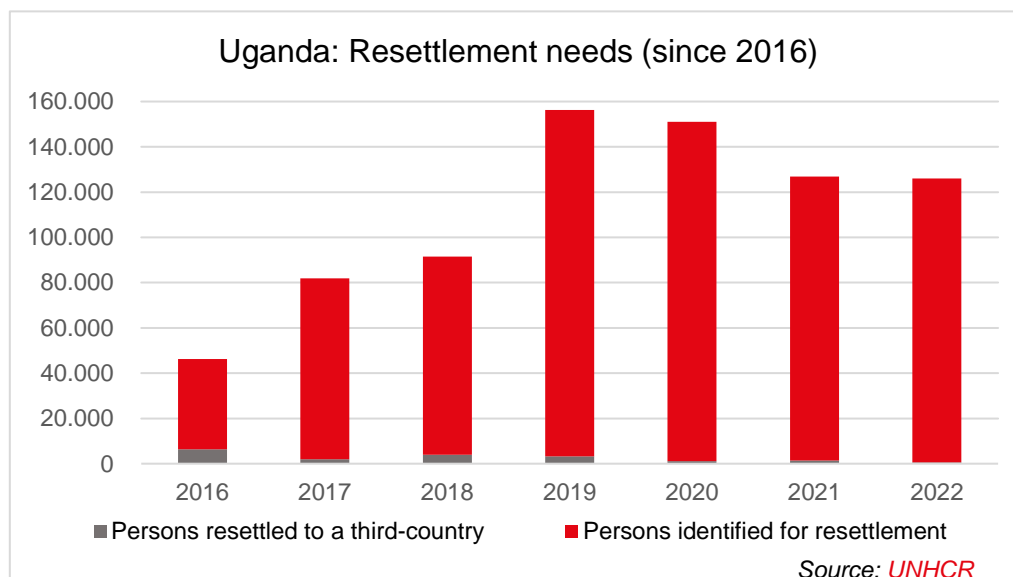
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<sup>15</sup> HCR et REACH (2021) [National Report: Uganda Refugee Operation - Participatory Assessment](#).

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for resettlement.<sup>16</sup> The slow pace of departures in 2022 (765 people resettled from January to August<sup>17</sup>) should serve as a **warning that thousands of people, some of whom have already been waiting for decades, are at risk of having their chance to find real protection further delayed or even abandoned.** Major refugee-hosting countries, such as Uganda, continue to bear the greatest responsibility in the face of deteriorating financial and resettlement solidarity from high-income states.



**The European Union (EU), including Belgium, must make concerted efforts to implement their existing commitments and strengthen their resettlement programs.**<sup>18</sup>

In 2019, EU Member states committed to resettle 30,000 refugees by 2020. While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a significant obstacle, Belgium and its neighbours have been slow to meet their commitments, despite record resettlement needs around the world. Since 2018, Belgium has not resettled a single refugee from Uganda,<sup>19</sup> even though hundreds of people have already had their cases approved by UNHCR and Belgian authorities based on specific criteria.<sup>20</sup> As a result, they have been left in limbo for several years.

In this context, **resettlement must be defended as a crucial durable solution, alongside local inclusion rooted in the promotion of sustainable socio-economic livelihoods and a protective environment for the most vulnerable** (children, victims of violence and abuse, etc.), for both refugee and host communities in Uganda. In the absence of prospects for return to DR Congo or South Sudan, these are the programmatic and political areas that will need to be prioritized in the prospects for durable solutions for refugee populations and their host communities.

<sup>16</sup> According to UNHCR's categories: Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs; Survivors of Torture and/or Violence (including SGBV); Medical Needs; Women and Girls at Risk; Family Reunification; Children and Adolescents at Risk (including UAMs); Lack of Alternative Durable Solutions.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR (2022) [Resettlement Data Finder](#) (consulted in September 2022).

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see Caritas Europa's statement from June 2022: "[Mounting global needs call for renewed European leadership on resettlement](#)".

<sup>19</sup> In 2021 the Belgian Government promised 1,500 resettlement spaces overall but only 964 and 31 people arrived in 2021 and 2022 respectively. None were from Uganda. The State Secretary argues – as did her predecessors – that this is caused by the lack of space in Belgian reception centres.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the stages of the resettlement procedure for vulnerable refugees in Belgium, visit the [dedicated page of Fedasil, the federal agency responsible for the reception of refugees](#).

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

*December 2022 – Refugees in Uganda: What prospects for durable solutions?*

### > **RECOMMENDATIONS to foster durable solutions for refugee populations in Uganda (and beyond)**

In the framework of the **Global Compact on Refugees**, hundreds of governments, including Ugandan, European, and Belgian, have committed to prioritize durable solutions for refugees, as well as the communities that host them.<sup>21</sup>

In order to respect these commitments, **international donors, including Belgium and the EU, must increase their political and financial support for the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and humanitarian appeals** related to the reception of refugee populations in Uganda (and beyond), with particular attention to:

1. **Support local actors and structures involved in protection and reception**
  - Put protection first by supporting **coordinated, holistic, community-based approaches to address SGBV and child protection challenges**;
  - Support initiatives that strengthen **social cohesion, sustainable resource management, and environmental protection** in order to mitigate and prevent conflicts, as well as protection incidents;
  - Develop a budgeted action plan to encourage **greater participation of refugee communities and their representatives in national, regional, and refugee settlement policies**.
2. **Focus on programmatic interventions that emphasize livelihoods and contribute towards socio-economic development**
  - **Invest massively in economic empowerment, livelihoods, and socio-economic development in refugee-hosting regions**, supporting training and employment opportunities for refugee and host communities in the agricultural sector and beyond;
3. **Meet and increase refugee resettlement commitments**
  - The EU and Belgium, should **implement existing commitments and increase their resettlement quotas** for the most vulnerable refugees in Uganda.
  - **At least 20% of Belgium's annual reception spots should be reserved for the Great Lakes region**.

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<sup>21</sup> For more details on the commitments of governments and other actors to local inclusion, resettlement and policy coordination, visit the [UNHCR dedicated platform](#).





## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

**December 2022** – *Return to Burundi, but under what conditions?*

**Cycles of displacement and return to Burundi have been occurring for decades, diversified by geography, duration, or reason for movement.** Return movements had already taken place before, during, and after the transition period ending the civil war that started in 1993. Indeed, the Arusha Peace Agreement signed in 2000 committed the government of Burundi to "encourage the return of refugees and disaster victims and [ensure] their resettlement and reintegration."<sup>25</sup> Fifteen years later, the political crisis of 2015 had the opposite effect and led hundreds of thousands of people to leave the country to flee violence and instability. Today, the perceived improvement in the socio-political context, followed by renewed initiatives by the new government to encourage return, has motivated thousands to return to Burundi.

The situation in host countries also plays a key role in the decision making of returnees. Although the UN stresses the importance of voluntary, dignified and informed return,<sup>26</sup> **certain host countries, such as Tanzania, have been tightening their policies towards refugees for several years.** Although the country has been hosting displaced Burundians for more than fifty years, the Tanzanian government has recently gone back on its commitment to naturalize them,<sup>27</sup> citing a lack of financial and political support from the international community to ensure long-term, dignified reception.<sup>28</sup> Forced returns from Tanzania to Burundi have also been documented as a result of this restrictive policy.<sup>29</sup>

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*"We were not supported enough when we came back. My husband passed away a few years ago, and now I have to work on a field that does not belong to me. But it's not enough to support my five children or even enroll them in school."*

- Jacinthe fled Burundi during the civil war in 1993, taking refuge with her family in Tanzania for twelve years before returning to settle in the northern province of Kirundo.

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<sup>25</sup> [Accord d'Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi \(Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi\)](#) (2000).

<sup>26</sup> See the text of the [Global compact on refugees](#).

<sup>27</sup> ECHO (2018) [Tanzania – Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Withdrawal](#).

<sup>28</sup> According to the [UN](#), the regional response to Burundian refugees has only been funded at 34% of the required funding in 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch (2019) [Tanzania: Burundians Pressured into Leaving](#).

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

**December 2022** – *Return to Burundi, but under what conditions?*

### Returning to a socio-economic context under pressure

Once back in Burundi, the inclusion of exiled populations is a significant challenge on several levels. **Many returnees return without economic (e.g. property or land) or social references**, particularly in the case of those whose families left the country decades ago. Cohabitation with host communities can also be tense due to challenges around pressure on already limited land and resources, and land conflicts. This combination of challenges even push some returnees to have to "relocate" to another community, province, or even another country, due to the lack of solutions to land-related conflicts, difficulties in adapting to the school system, but above all to the precarious socio-economic situations in which they find themselves. The increased vulnerability and the risk of "re-displacement" for returnees call for adapted responses.

In order to meet their immediate needs, households that have returned and that are registered with UN agencies, receive support in the form of "return kits," which include household items, a cash grant, and food assistance. However, **monitoring by these same agencies has shown that "the assistance provided to each household ... has proven insufficient" and "do not last for the intended three-month period."**<sup>30</sup> At the same time, many returnees decide not to use official return channels due to a lack of information or, in the case of some of those who left during the 2015 political crisis, for fear of being targeted. In these cases, they find themselves without assistance and usually in an even more precarious situation. Thus, it is often local organizations such as Caritas, rooted in the communities themselves,<sup>31</sup> that are tasked with identifying their needs and supporting them in their return process.



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"I was able to buy a goat but now I dream of my own plot. Since my return to Burundi I have lived on three different communities and I am struggling to find a place to really settle with my four children."

- *Créssance left Burundi in 1993 but returned in 1999 after six years in a camp in Tanzania. Like 2,000 returnee and displaced households in Kirundo province, her family received cash assistance from Caritas through the Tugabanye program.*

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<sup>30</sup> UNHCR (2021) [Burundi Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan](#).

<sup>31</sup> For more information, see "Local roots and responsiveness: the pillars of Caritas' emergency response" in Caritas International Belgium (2021) [Local Actions, Global Lessons: Overcoming Fragility in DR Congo](#).



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**December 2022** – *Return to Burundi, but under what conditions?*

The limited sustainability of emergency aid implies that **sustainable and dignified reintegration of returnee households should focus on accessing diversified livelihood sources and developing "nexus" synergies between humanitarian and structural development actions.**<sup>32</sup> This analysis is motivated by the context of chronic food insecurity in Burundi, particularly in the border provinces of Makamba, Kirundo, and Ruyigi, where there are both the majority of refugee returnees and some of the worst food scores in the country.<sup>33</sup> Returnees, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs), are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

The vast majority of Burundi's population, including 88% of returnee households, depends on subsistence agriculture.<sup>34</sup> Yet according to the UN, "most returnees reported that they lacked adequate resources to produce their land."<sup>35</sup> One reason for this is a **lack of agricultural inputs and cultivable land.** However, the **degree of restriction on economic activities during periods of exile** can also lead to long periods of inactivity and reduced productivity.<sup>36</sup> Clear differences exist, for example, between living in Uganda, where refugees have access to work (see above "Refugees in Uganda: What prospects for durable solutions?"), and in camps in Tanzania where restrictions on employment are strict. Finally, although the need to support sustainable agriculture and income generation is emphasized in UN and government reintegration strategies in Burundi, these are largely underfunded.<sup>37</sup>

The sustainable and dignified return of refugee populations is also a climate adaptation issue. **Burundi is extremely vulnerable to climatic and environmental shocks such as droughts, erosion, floods, and the complexities of resource governance and related population displacement.**<sup>38</sup> These hazards are more prevalent in the north and east of the country – where a large proportion of the returnee households reside. Given the poor harvests linked to the droughts at the beginning of 2022, the current lean season (September-December 2022) promises to aggravate food crisis situations.<sup>39</sup> Investment in sustainable agricultural practices, more adapted to climate shocks and equitable management of resources among communities,<sup>40</sup> should be firmly integrated into policies supporting refugee and displaced populations.

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<sup>32</sup> For more information, see 11.11.11 (2021) [Triple Nexus: How Humanitarian, Development and Peace Actors can Work Together](#).

<sup>33</sup> IPC (September 2022) [Burundi: Acute Food Insecurity Situation June - September 2022 and Projection for October - December 2022](#).

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR (2021) [Burundi Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan](#).

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*

<sup>36</sup> ACAPS (May 2022) [Burundi - Complex Crisis](#); Fransen, Ruiz, & Vargas-Silva (2017) [Return migration and economic outcomes in the conflict context](#).

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR (2021) [Burundi Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan](#).

<sup>38</sup> According to the [ND-GAIN Country Index](#), Burundi is ranked 165 out of 182 countries in terms of resilience to natural disasters and climate change.

<sup>39</sup> IPC (September 2022) [Burundi: Acute Food Insecurity Situation June - September 2022 and Projection for October - December 2022](#).

<sup>40</sup> For more information, see Caritas International Belgium (2021) [Climate resilience for rural communities in Burundi](#), and the analysis *Climate and Food Insecurity in Niger: Prevention, Agroecology and Human Mobility* below.

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

**December 2022** – Return to Burundi, but under what conditions?

### Mediation, access to justice, and social cohesion

Return movements involve the cohabitation of groups and populations that have been separated for many years or even decades. In a context of population movements, social cohesion is defined by several factors: such as social relationships, the resilience and inclusiveness of social institutions and services, the existence of socio-economic opportunities, memory and reconciliation processes, impunity or even access to justice. When not considered as cross-cutting or prioritized at the policy and programmatic level, **social cohesion issues can be directly linked to situations of injustice, violence (such as gender-based violence), or intolerance.**

Despite acknowledged efforts to register identity documents for Burundian returnees,<sup>41</sup> impunity, **the lack of compensation for returnee families who have lost their land, and the lack of support for victims of violence, all can compromise peaceful coexistence.** In collaboration with the diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions, Caritas provides psychosocial and legal support to displaced and returnees, with a particular focus on protecting the most vulnerable (women, children, the elderly).<sup>42</sup> In the absence of dedicated local structures, people are also trained in techniques for the peaceful resolution of intra-community conflicts. Studies have shown that women are more disadvantaged in land conflicts in Burundi,<sup>43</sup> and these mediators also play an important role in the promotion and protection of women's rights, as well as in the integration of gender equality into policies.

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*"When I returned to my native community, I found that the communal authorities had installed a pumping station on my plot. I went to the commune to claim access to my land, but my rights were not restored. I was then referred to the Caritas teams who helped me put together a file that we presented to the court. Following the hearings, the commune decided to allocate me another plot of land of the same dimensions, without me spending any money."*

- Mariam fled to Rwanda in 2015. She returned to Kirundo after six years in exile.

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<sup>41</sup> UNHCR (2021) [Global Compact on Refugees – Indicator Report](#).

<sup>42</sup> For more information on the protection activities implemented by the Caritas network in Burundi, see our [page dedicated to the ProHumA program, funded by Belgian Development Cooperation](#) (FR).

<sup>43</sup> Mbazumutima (2021) [Land Restitution in Postconflict Burundi](#).

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

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Moreover, the need for mediation and legal support for households, including returnees, testifies to the importance of the role of **civil society actors and local, provincial, and national authorities in promoting living together and a sustainable and inclusive peace among communities in Burundi**. The sensitivity of the issues raised by return movements and institutional fragility should lead actors to integrate these issues into their policies and programs. Holistic responses, in the spirit of the "nexus",<sup>44</sup> should be prioritized as much as possible in order to ensure a sustainable and dignified return where socio-economic needs, both immediate and long-term, are prioritized. This should ensure respect for rights and "Do No Harm" principles, with due attention to interpersonal and intercommunity dynamics.



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*In 2022 in the province of Kirundo, around 20,000 people were sensitized about social cohesion and reconciliation through 100 sport, theatre, and exchange sessions organized in the framework of the [Tugabanye program](#), financed by Belgian Development Cooperation.*

Many of Burundi's refugee and displaced populations were direct victims or witnesses of the violence in 1972 or of the civil war between 1993 and 2005. This reality reminds us that strengthening social cohesion and access to justice for victims of violence and displacement should be **linked as much as possible to reconciliation and transitional justice processes**, such as those led by the communities themselves or by national bodies like the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" or (previously) the "National Land and Property Commission." On the way to a more just, inclusive and prosperous Burundian society, sustainable peace efforts must thus be seen as inseparable from initiatives for the socio-economic and peaceful inclusion of returnees.

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<sup>44</sup> For a concrete example of this type of approach, see "Triple nexus in DR Congo: Towards sustainable solutions for populations affected by complex crises" in Caritas International Belgium (2021) [Local Actions, Global Lessons: Overcoming Fragility in DR Congo](#).



## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

**December 2022** – *Return to Burundi, but under what conditions?*

### **Moving towards a sustainable and dignified return of returnees to Burundi and beyond?**

The European Union's decision in February 2022 to lift political sanctions on Burundi must be accompanied by a **monitoring of the Government's guarantees with respect to the returning population, as well as financial and political support for a sustainable and dignified reintegration**. These perspectives must be framed by the conclusions of the Arusha Peace Agreement with respect to the return of refugee populations, but also be evaluated in light of the commitments made by the government of Burundi in the framework of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).<sup>45</sup> Although the "National Development Plan 2018-2027" integrates economic, legal protection, and security issues for returnees, the government's and the UN's "Joint Return and Reintegration Plan" has only been 21% funded in 2021.<sup>46</sup> Without viable socio-economic opportunities, equitable access to justice, or resolution of underlying conflicts, the promises made to returnees and their families in Burundi may never be kept, with the risk of turbulence this might entail.

The situation in Burundi is no exception. **Issues related to return, as a possible durable solution to situations of forced displacement, continue to be underestimated in international policies**. Although non-binding, the GCR process set two specific objectives to promote conditions for safe and dignified return to countries of origin: the first on increasing funding to support sustainable reintegration, and the second on socio-economic reintegration. Nevertheless, only 4% of the commitments made in the framework of the GCR by a range of actors – states, regional authorities, international organizations, the private sector, civil society – went in this direction.<sup>47</sup> In a global context where the number of returns continues to decline due to economic, political or security obstacles in countries of origin, clear and funded joint commitments will continue to be essential.

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<sup>45</sup> UNHCR (2022) [UNHCR welcomes pledges made by Burundi under the Global Compact on Refugees](#).

<sup>46</sup> UN Burundi (2022) [Aider les rapatriés burundais à se construire un avenir plus prospère et stable \(Helping burundian returnees to build a more prosperous and stable future\)](#).

<sup>47</sup> UNHCR (2021) [Global Compact on Refugees – Indicator Report](#).

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

*December 2022 – Return to Burundi, but under what conditions?*

### > **RECOMMENDATIONS to ensure a durable and dignified return to Burundi**

**International donors, including Belgium, play a key role in monitoring and supporting the commitments made by the Burundian authorities** in the framework of the Arusha Peace Agreement and the Global Compact on Refugees. **The funding of the Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan is a first step to ensure an adequate and holistic response** to the multiple challenges.

Beyond that, several specific actions would also support this goal:

1. **Support local actors and structures involved in protection and reception**
  - Support and formalize **paralegal and mediation structures at local and provincial levels**;
  - Ensure the implementation of a **follow-up system for the missions and outstanding cases of the "Land and Property Commission"**, supporting the resolution of land conflicts and creating a link with reconciliation processes.
  
2. **Invest in the livelihoods of returnees, displaced populations, and host communities**
  - Mobilize structural development resources to focus on **socio-economic inclusion and resilience initiatives**;
  - Contribute to the **empowerment of refugee populations in host countries**, such as Uganda (see chapter above), thereby strengthening socio-economic prospects.
  
3. **Promote the principles and rights outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees**
  - Develop a plan for the **inclusion of young returnees in the Burundian school system**, in order to bridge the gap with the education systems in countries of asylum;  
  
Defend the importance of **dignified, informed, and voluntary return** decisions towards international bodies and host countries.



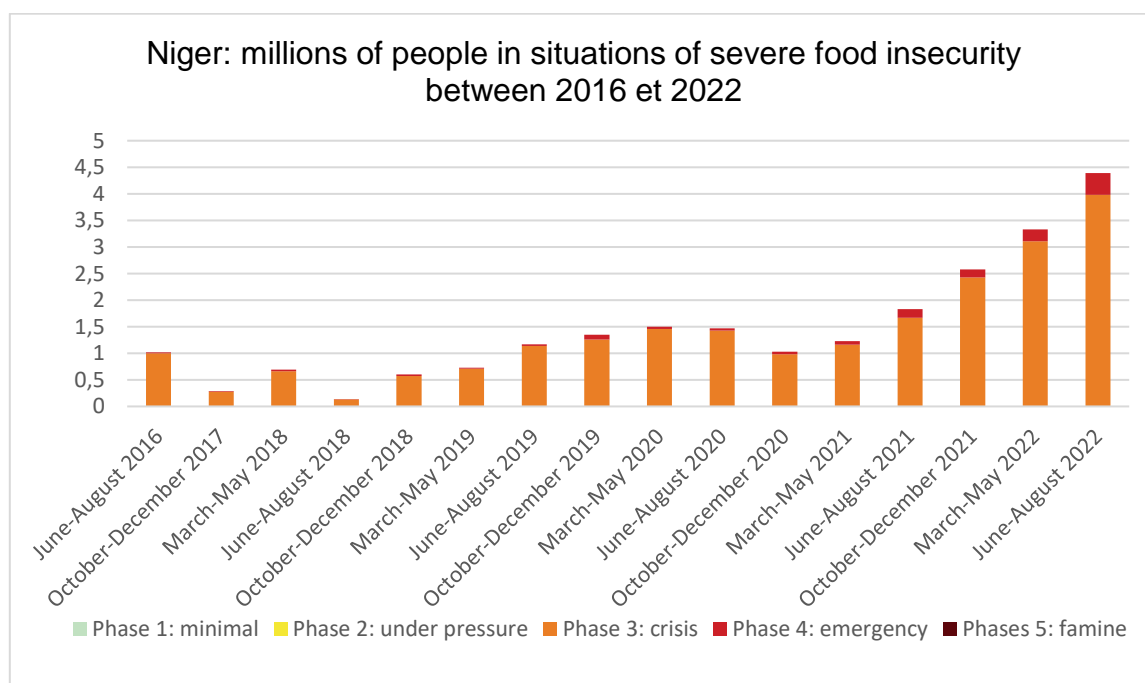
## Climate and food insecurity in Niger: Prevention, agroecology, and human mobility

This analysis was written in partnership with [CADEV Niger](#).

*In Niger, perhaps more than elsewhere, the challenge of food security will go hand in hand with climate adaptation. Three ways of intervention are emerging today: investing in the prevention and anticipation of climate risks, supporting agroecology to transform food systems, and making human mobility a cross-cutting issue in the framework of climate and cooperation policies.*

### Increasingly fragile food systems

In 2022, the people of Niger and the Sahel are experiencing their worst period of food insecurity in decades. In the Sahel region,<sup>48</sup> 12.7 million people were in a food crisis situation during the lean season (June to August) of 2022.<sup>49</sup> This represents an increase of 62% compared to the same period in 2021. Niger is not immune to this dramatic worsening of the situation, with an estimated **4.4 million people in a situation of severe food insecurity** (+140% between 2021 and 2022).



Data from the [Food Crisis Prevention Network \(RPCA\)](#), accessed in August 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

<sup>49</sup> Data from the [Food Crisis Prevention Network \(RPCA\)](#), accessed in August 2022.

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

*December 2022 – Climate and food insecurity in Niger: Prevention, agroecology, and human mobility*

Why is food insecurity on the rise? In Niger, as elsewhere, food systems are collapsing due to a multitude of interrelated crises. More than 80% of the populations of Niger and the Sahel depend on agriculture and livestock to survive, but these livelihoods are **particularly vulnerable to environmental, societal, and economic disruptions**. Niger is considered one of the most vulnerable but least prepared countries in the face of climate change.<sup>50</sup> This translates into accentuated desertification and increasingly erratic rainfall patterns, resulting in both prolonged droughts and flash floods that damage agricultural crops, cause the loss of livestock and destroy infrastructure. As a result, in 2021 Niger produced around 40% less food than the average of the last five years.<sup>51</sup>



© Johanna de Tessières / Caritas International

*The drought has particularly impacted crops in several parts of the country, such as the Zinder region in southern Niger.*

In regions affected by violence and displacement (Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéry), the **activities of armed groups continued to obstruct access to markets and fields and to starve entire communities**. In addition to the instability caused by the activities of armed groups over the past several years and the COVID-19 related border closures since 2020, the war in Ukraine has weakened food systems by **driving up the prices of imported commodities (between 18% and 40%)**, such as wheat, rice, or vegetable oils, which Nigerien markets and households depend upon.

In this troubled context, climate disruption raises a crisis with two faces: humanitarian and structural. Yet, despite advances in awareness of the vicious circles that feed food insecurity, **responses continue to focus on "reactive" emergency aid, rather than long-term strategies**. These trends are not unique to Niger, or even to the Sahel.<sup>52</sup> Over time, it is necessary to build on proven disaster risk reduction (DRR) approaches, initiate a profound transformation of food systems, and integrate human mobility into policies and responses.

<sup>50</sup> According to an aggregation of environmental, social and economic factors analysed and compiled by [ND-GAIN](#).

<sup>51</sup> RPCA (2021) [37th Annual Meeting – Summary of Conclusions](#).

<sup>52</sup> IPCC (2022) [Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#).



## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

December 2022 – Climate and food insecurity in Niger: Prevention, agroecology, and human mobility

### Anticipating and managing risk before the crisis

The latest analyses, including those by the IPCC,<sup>53</sup> confirm that climate-related disasters will continue to increase and produce humanitarian crises around the world. In 2022, the prolonged drought in Niger has left hundreds of thousands of farmers dependent on food aid, while UN projections indicate that more than 350,000 people could be affected by floods in 2022 (up from nearly 250,000 in 2021).<sup>54</sup> In the face of these emergencies, humanitarian organizations such as Caritas are deploying life-saving responses through food distributions or cash transfers. However, the inability to drastically mitigate the impacts of climate change around the world leads to the perpetuation of a **system where emergency aid, in addition to being underfunded,<sup>55</sup> is not adapted to respond to cyclical shocks of such magnitude.<sup>56</sup>**

A **priority must be to strengthen DRR**, which helps avoid more costly and desperate humanitarian responses later on.<sup>57</sup> Several studies have shown that every dollar spent on DRR actions saves two to seven times more in future emergency humanitarian costs.<sup>58</sup> In practice, DRR actions in a climate-fragile context such as Niger include initiatives related to sustainable community-based water management, the construction of improved stoves (which consume less firewood), the establishment of cereal banks, or even the prevention of child malnutrition. In recent years, the concept of "anticipatory action" (AA) has been used to describe measures that complement DRR strategies by defining funding frameworks and progressive thresholds to initiate emergency response at the first signs of an emergency. While the establishment of new AA programs in Niger, such as the one led by OCHA,<sup>59</sup> is encouraging, DRR and AA strategies remain neglected in funding, coordination between authorities, or decentralization of responses.<sup>60</sup>



*The prevention of child malnutrition is a key activity of CADEV Niger in the Maradi region in the south of the country. This approach is based on the training of community focal points and the dissemination of nutritious recipes that are derived from local products.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>54</sup> OCHA (August 2022) [Niger - Flash Update # 2 : Bilan des inondations au Niger \(au 21 août 2022\)](#).

<sup>55</sup> In 2021, the humanitarian needs for the Sahel countries (USD 2.3 billion) were only 43% funded on average, compared to 61% in 2020. At the halfway point in 2022, the Humanitarian Appeal for Niger was 24% funded. Data from [OCHA](#).

<sup>56</sup> Jameel Observatory, Oxfam, Save the Children (2022) [Dangerous Delay 2: The Cost of Inaction](#).

<sup>57</sup> Gerber and Mirzabaev (2017) [Benefits of Action and Costs of Inaction: Drought Mitigation and Preparedness – A Literature Review](#).

<sup>58</sup> Idris (2018) [Cost-effectiveness in humanitarian work: preparedness, pre-financing and early action](#).

<sup>59</sup> Anticipation Hub (2022) [A new OCHA-facilitated project to protect the most vulnerable people in Niger from drought](#).

<sup>60</sup> REAP (2021) [Anticipatory Action: The Enabling Environment Case Studies \(Niger\)](#).

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

*December 2022 – Climate and food insecurity in Niger: Prevention, agroecology, and human mobility*

To be most effective, prevention strategies must be **rooted in the principles of localization and participation of directly impacted communities**.<sup>61</sup> In the case of Caritas actions in Niger, risk analyses and the implementation of DRR plans are led by local authorities, organizations, and communities themselves. At the same time, donors and national authorities must also support localized responses to global warming. For example, **in 2021, national and local civil societies received only 0.4% of humanitarian funding in three Sahelian countries**.<sup>62</sup> These proportions contradict the promises of the "Grand Bargain" process, begun in 2016, which commits humanitarian donors to allocate 25% of funding directly to local actors. Similarly, farmers in Niger and elsewhere are the most impacted by climate hazards but receive only 1.7% of global funds allocated to climate action, including adaptation.<sup>63</sup>

### Agroecology as a pillar of sustainable food systems

The damage caused by climate disasters underscores the need to **rethink and localize agricultural and food systems to be more inclusive and resilient to long-term shocks**.

Agroecology is widely recognized as a **set of agricultural practices, as well as an economic and social model, that can address the major climate and food challenges** in Niger and the Sahel region.<sup>64</sup> Agroecological practices, such as soil regeneration, reforestation, and polycultures, support adaptation strategies that strengthen the resilience of food production systems to disasters and make them less dependent on fossil fuels.<sup>65</sup> The benefits of agroecology for food security have also been proven,<sup>66</sup> both quantitatively and qualitatively, but also in the fight against poverty – a factor of climate vulnerability – by guaranteeing access to a decent income for farmers through diversification of income sources and strengthening the rural economy. In the case of Niger, this allows rural communities to have the tools to mitigate the impacts of crop failure due to drought and desertification. Localizing agricultural and food production leads to sovereignty in the face of markets weakened by insecurity and unfair trade dynamics – (inter)national and regional instabilities that can have a direct local impact despite physical distances.

**Agroecology also integrates a social and political dimension, advocating for equity and participation of marginalized groups** – families with small plots of land, led by women, the poorest – who are more vulnerable to climate and food risks due to unequal access to resources. A CADEV Niger study on the right to food showed that, although this right is enshrined in Niger's legislation and constitution, its realization requires increased mobilization to influence local policies in this area. The agroecological transition therefore also involves developing the capacities of rural communities to defend their interests and rights with political authorities and bodies.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The localisation of aid is a collective process of the different stakeholders in the humanitarian system (donors, UN, NGOs) which aims to give local actors a more important and central role. For more information, see "Local roots and responsiveness: the pillars of Caritas' emergency response" in Caritas International Belgium (2021) [Local Actions, Global Lessons: Overcoming Fragility in DR Congo](#).

<sup>62</sup> Data from [OCHA](#).

<sup>63</sup> IFAD (2020) [Examining the climate finance gap for small-scale agriculture](#).

<sup>64</sup> Agroecology applies ecological principles to agriculture in order to optimise the interactions between plants, animals, humans and nature, focusing on sustainability and justice within food systems. Agroecology uses locally available resources and knowledge and adapts to the reality of family farming in each context.

<sup>65</sup> For a summary of this evidence, see CGIAR (2021) [Agroecology and climate change rapid evidence review: Performance of agroecological approaches in low- and middle- income countries](#).

<sup>66</sup> HLPE (2019) [Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition](#).

<sup>67</sup> For more information on Caritas programmes in this area, see [COHERENCE Niger](#) (FR).

## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

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*Agroecological practices, as promoted by Caritas, are particularly effective in contexts such as Niger where access to water and desertification are major challenges.*

Despite the recognition of its contribution to food security and climate adaptation, **the agroecological transition is struggling to be initiated, both globally and in Niger**. In Niger, agroecology faces limited political support, as well as several obstacles related to access to finance, organic seeds and inputs, and land grabbing.<sup>68</sup> The Nigerien government has announced its intention to dedicate 15% of the national budget to agriculture over the next five years,<sup>69</sup> but this promise has not yet been realized and agroecology is struggling to be recognized in state policies.<sup>70</sup> In the context of Belgian Development Cooperation, the Coalition Against Hunger (CCF) noted that only 16% of agriculture-related funding supports agroecology,<sup>71</sup> while a recent evaluation of Belgium's international climate finance found a lack of "clear guidelines ... on the types of agricultural models to support."<sup>72</sup> Other approaches put forward (such as climate-smart agriculture) also aim to improve the sustainability of food systems, but they remain focused on certain aspects (climate, input efficiency) rather than a systemic response to climate risks, food insecurity, and inequality issues in all their forms.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> IPES-Food (2020) [The added value\(s\) of agroecology: unlocking the potential for transition in West Africa](#).

<sup>69</sup> ANP (2021) [Le Président Mohamed Bazoum prévoit d'investir 15% du budget national dans le secteur agricole durant les 5 prochaines années \(President Mohamed Bazoum plans to invest 15% of the national budget in the agricultural sector over the next 5 years\)](#).

<sup>70</sup> Amadou, Cantoreggi et Jaubert (2018) [Les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens : quelles perspectives pour les exploitations familiales ? \(Nigeriens feed Nigeriens: what prospects for family farms?\)](#).

<sup>71</sup> CCF (2020) [Pour une aide publique au développement belge qui soutienne la transition agroécologique \(For a Belgian public development aid that supports the agroecological transition\)](#).

<sup>72</sup> Special Evaluation Office of the Belgian Development Cooperation (2021) [Evaluation of international climate finance. How is Belgium tackling the global climate challenge in vulnerable countries?](#)

<sup>73</sup> CCF (2021) [Soutenir l'agroécologie pour transformer les systèmes alimentaires \(Supporting agroecology to transform food systems\)](#).



## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

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### The underestimated contribution of human mobility

In addition to disaster risk reduction and food system transformation, **human mobility also represents a strategy for adapting to climate and food challenges in Niger and the Sahel**. Food crises and other disasters drive individuals and households to migrate in search of alternative sources of income or simply for protection. At the same time, migration can have the merit of supporting food systems and food security through remittances, which often dwarf Official Development Aid (ODA) amounts, and other types of transfers (technology, knowledge).<sup>74</sup> This is particularly the case during lean or drought periods in Niger, where circular migration to neighbouring countries (Nigeria, Libya, Algeria) can contribute to more flexible management of intra-household food and income deficits.<sup>75</sup> Thus, migration can be both a result of the failure to implement other adaptation strategies (DRR, agroecology), but also a positive approach to development and climate resilience.

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*"I migrate regularly to Nigeria to provide for my family's food needs. The crops are meagre and do not allow us to survive in the long term. They are all consumed within three months."*

- Amadou, 31, lives in the Zinder region of south-eastern Niger

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A recent Strategic Note from the Belgian Development Cooperation – "Migration as a lever for sustainable development" – calls for **"the systematic and cross-cutting integration of the theme of migration in policies, strategies, programs and interventions"**.<sup>76</sup> It is important to adapt policies and actions related to food security and climate adaptation according to the role played by migration in the resilience strategies of each targeted community and territory. This ensures that no one is left behind, including households unable to migrate. This cross-cutting vision is **complementary with the principles of agroecology, as a structural approach that brings both economic and social benefits, based on rights and equity**. The integration of different populations on the move in Niger (refugees, displaced people, victims of climate disasters) into strategies can also have a positive impact on environmental management and conflict prevention, particularly in framing the exploitation of increasingly limited resources (see also the chapters on Burundi and Uganda in this publication).

However, these efforts at policy coherence continue to be undermined by (European) policies related to preventing migration and addressing its "root causes."<sup>77</sup> In contrast to a repressive approach, safe and legal pathways should be advocated as mechanisms that promote the contributions of migration to food systems: the degree to which this positive contribution is made is directly related to the availability of accessible, safe, and sustainable options for migration. **Regional and global free movement policies promote the benefits of migration for food security and climate adaptation, while minimizing the risks linked to irregular routes leading to the exploitation of people on the move**. ODA must focus on the fight against poverty and food insecurity, while guaranteeing people's mobility choices and preventing them from being forced to migrate for lack of alternatives.

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<sup>74</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the links between migration and development, see Caritas Europa (2019) [Common Home – Migration and Development in Europe and Beyond](#).

<sup>75</sup> For more details and testimonies, see Caritas International Belgium (2019) [Circular migration and food security](#).

<sup>76</sup> DGD (2022) [Strategic Note: Migration as a lever for sustainable development](#).

<sup>77</sup> For a recent example from Niger, see European Commission (2022) [Strengthening cooperation in the fight against migrant smuggling: the European Union and Niger launch operational partnership to tackle migrant smuggling](#).



## LOCAL ACTIONS, GLOBAL LESSONS

December 2022 – Climate and food insecurity in Niger: Prevention, agroecology, and human mobility

### > RECOMMENDATIONS for addressing food insecurity and contributing to climate adaptation in Niger

In the short term, **contribute immediately to the 2022-2023 and future humanitarian appeals for Niger and the Sahel** to enable humanitarian actors to meet the food security and nutritional needs of millions of people.

In the medium and long term, address the sources of food and climate insecurity:

#### 1. Invest in local structures and in the prevention of climate and food risks

- Dedicate **special attention to risk reduction and anticipatory actions in funding and programs related to climate adaptation**;
- Follow the commitments of the "Grand Bargain", by making **direct support to local actors a priority, both in climate financing and in cooperation programs**.

#### 2. Support agroecology to transform food systems

- Align the **implementation of the new regional climate and bilateral portfolios of Belgian Development Cooperation with the updated Strategy for Agriculture and Food Security (2021)**,<sup>78</sup> in order to support a transition towards sustainable, resilient systems based on agroecological principles;
- Ensure the coherence of Belgian cooperation policies across all sectors (agriculture, trade, defence, water, education, environment), from the local to the national and international levels, so **as to not undermine the social and environmental objectives of transforming food systems**.

#### 3. Mainstream human mobility in policies and programs

- **Concretize and evaluate the integration of the objectives of the Belgian development cooperation's Strategic Note "Migration as a lever for sustainable development" (2022)**<sup>79</sup> within the actions and new programs of bilateral and regional cooperation in Niger and the Sahel;
- Support the **establishment of safe and legal channels and the application of mobility policies in the region** to promote the benefits of migration for food security and as an adaptation strategy.

<sup>78</sup> The text is available in French [here](#).

<sup>79</sup> The text is available in French [here](#).



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