



WORLD WATER DAY · REFUGEE DIALOGUE REPORT

Safe water is a refugee issue

A refugee dialogue for accessibility to safe water in
Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda

16–24 March 2023

Theme: Water and Environment Climate Resilient Development



01 THE DIALOGUE Giving refugees a voice on water

The overall goal was to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space for refugees to take part meaningfully in policy discussions on durable solutions for accessing clean water.

95

people in the room

51 men, 44 women

25

online participants

Zoom, Facebook, Instagram

6

panellists

government, partners, leaders reporting to the panel

4

discussion groups

reporting to the panel

In-person participants by gender

Men 51 · 54%

Women 44 · 46%

VENUE

DHL event hall, New Hope village, Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Bukanga Parish, Isingiro District

DATES

16–24 March 2023 (dialogue on 24 March)

REPORT DATE

28 March 2023

PREPARED BY

YAREN Organisation Ltd (Reg. No. 80034185858204), Muganuzi Adonis

Who took part

Refugees and nationals

Host communities in Isingiro

Local well owners

Schools

CBOs

Clinics using our 2021 water filters

Water user committees

WASH partners

Government representatives

District Water Officer

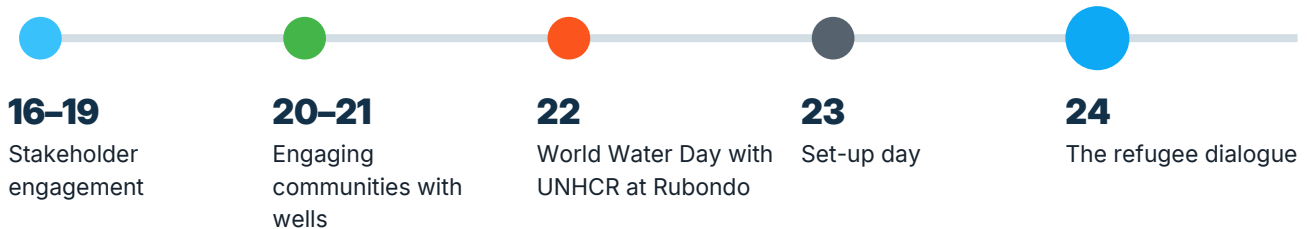
Refugee local leaders

Refugee-led WASH organisations

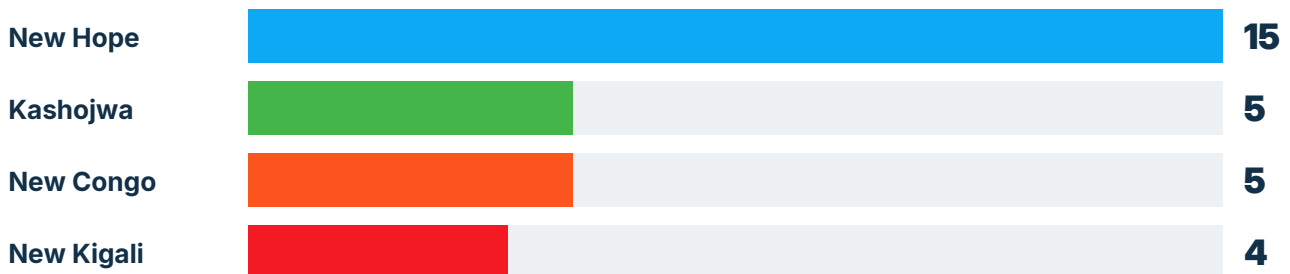
02 PURPOSE Nine specific objectives

- 1** Increase understanding of the frameworks, at all levels, that govern refugees' access to safe water.
- 2** Gather perspectives and experiences of refugees accessing safe water in Nakivale.
- 3** Create a shared space for reflection on trends, challenges and prospects for safe water.
- 4** Give refugees, as water users and key stakeholders, a free space to share experiences and lessons.
- 5** Shape practical strategies and policy recommendations for refugee engagement in WASH.
- 6** Learn to communicate refugees' water problems through the arts, education and news.
- 7** Understand the future of water by sustaining water sources in Nakivale.
- 8** Talk across generations about water as a business and as entrepreneurship.
- 9** Speed up action by putting durable solutions in front of policymakers.

A week of action, 16–24 March 2023



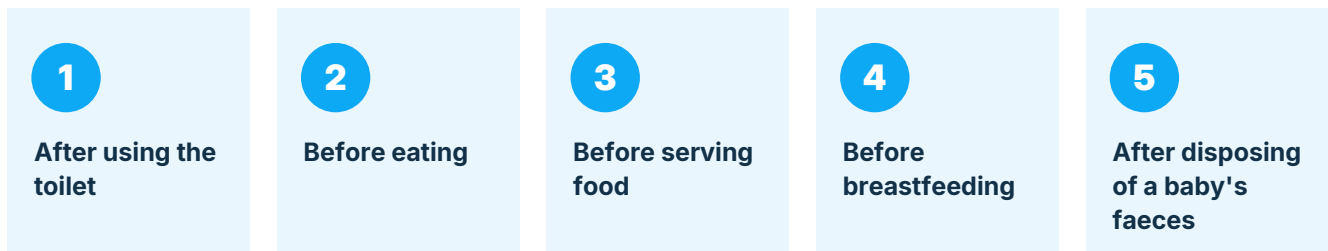
Before the dialogue: visiting local hand-dug wells



What we taught in the community

Our pre-event work engaged local well owners and promoted personal hygiene, the safe water chain and model homes, guided by the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey approach used by WHO and UNHCR.

The five critical moments for handwashing



The safe water chain

Every step that keeps water free of contamination from the source to the cup.



Types of latrines discussed



ABOVE: Pre-activities: collecting water at local sources in Nakivale.

04 THE PANEL

Who spoke, and what they said



Eng. Niwamanya Boaz

Isingiro District, Office of Water and Environment

Refugees may access national water through a River Kagera project funded by the governments of France and Uganda with UNHCR.



Mr. Jean Baptiste

Nsamizi, UNHCR/OPM water implementing partner

Water access, production and distribution, hygiene and sanitation. Water is still not enough and must be managed well to avoid contamination.



Mr. Amoga Benard

Medical Teams International (MTI)

Life-saving links between the environment and ecosystem and refugees' health.



Mr. Frank Bazira

RWC III delegate

Refugees' role in sustaining water sources, and solutions to the current situation.



Mr. Aristarque Ashige

Chairperson, Association of CBOs in Nakivale (ACBON)

The role of refugee-led organisations working on water in Nakivale.



Assistant O.C. Police

Kashojwa Police Station, Nakivale

Protecting local hand-dug wells and tackling problems linked to water.



ABOVE: Panellists, left to right: MTI representative, ACBON Chairperson, Assistant O.C. Police, RWC III representative, Nsamizi delegate.

What the four groups found

Participants worked in four groups (local leaders; women heads of household; schools and clinics; well owners and water sellers). **All four agreed there is a serious problem with access to water.**

Too few taps

for the number of people and families.

Too little water

often one jerrycan per household, after long walks in the sun.

Days without water

two, three days or even a week with no water at the taps.

Unsafe water

sometimes unfit to drink, failing basic water-quality standards.

Consequences raised by the groups

- Women and girls fetching water late at night or very early in the morning are exposed to rape.
- Some women and girls are reportedly forced into sex by some standpipe or water-committee managers to get water. *This was raised in group discussions only, without concrete evidence; YAREN plans to follow up with stakeholders.*
- Unwanted pregnancies that break up refugee homes and increase the number of single mothers.
- Well managers deplored the lack of chlorine to disinfect their wells. Wells are poorly built, with unprotected walls that keep collapsing.

Questions to the panel, and the answers

PARTICIPANTS ASKED

Why are there too few taps? Why is water irregular, and sometimes dirty in colour, smell or debris? Why are some households never served?

NSAMIZI REPLIED

New refugees arrive every day, making it impossible to plan for the emergency; the population exceeds available water capacity. The answer did not fully convince participants.

ISINGIRO DISTRICT SAID

The Government of Uganda, with funding from France, donors and UNHCR, plans to bring water from the River Kagera to the settlements: a durable solution, but not an answer to today's needs. The District agreed to support YAREN and invite it to present its work in the water and WASH programme.



Refugees nicknamed the water in one part of the lake "BIDAMU": Swahili for a lot of clotted blood on the ground.

On water colour and smell in Nakivale

Children sent to fetch water often bathe in it. Water can be so polluted that users show symptoms of typhoid fever; families then accuse each other of witchcraft and poisoning, and only discover the real cause at the hospital. Intestinal parasites and protozoa add to the suffering, which is why so many people, and children especially, look weak and pale.

Recommendations from the participants

Problem	Recommended solutions	Responsible
Water pollution	Sensitise the community on clean water; ban washing vehicles and clothes near water sources; use chlorine; set measures and penalties for polluting water sources	OPM, Police, community and Nsamizi, with local government and policymakers
Not enough materials to supply water	Request plastic tanks; build tanks from sand and cement	Governments, donors, NGOs, implementing organisations
Not enough water	More water points in schools and communities; avoid misuse, especially by children at school; store water in tanks; rainwater harvesting with solar systems	Community, implementing partners, NGOs
Hand-dug well treatment, sanitation and rainwater	Solar-powered boreholes with filtration; biodigester-linked wells sustained by small contributions; treatment tablets at water points; slab making for sanitation; rainwater tanks in schools; quick-impact WASH in public places, schools and churches	YAREN, donors and partners

07 CONCLUSION

A call for large-scale action

The dialogue was an immediate answer to a communication problem: refugees in Nakivale had no space to talk about water. Most deaths in the settlement are due to waterborne infections, such as hepatitis, dysentery, cholera and typhoid fever, which victims often wrongly blame on poisoning by friends, neighbours or witchcraft.

Participants left with enthusiasm and hope after hearing about water from the River Kagera, but that is not a solution for today. Treating water from local hand-dug wells, and using tanks, answers a real community problem now.

OUR REQUEST

Special attention to a large-scale project for refugees and host communities, to save lives threatened by waterborne diseases that have become endemic in Nakivale.

With thanks to our supporters and collaborators

Organised by YAREN with support from **The MBA Academy, Anti-Nuclear Water Waste Discharge** and **LO-OP Center / Open Portal Network** (live stream), in collaboration with **Living in Christ Omega (LICOM), ACBON, Maria Foundation** and the **Learning Assistance Centre**.

Video reports of the group discussions and of the dialogue are available on YAREN's Facebook page.



Closing remarks from Muganuzi Mushongole Adonis, Founder & Executive Director.



Panellists with the Isingiro District delegate, Mr. Niwamanya Boaz (white shirt).

The groups at work



Group 1, local leaders: challenges and possible solutions.



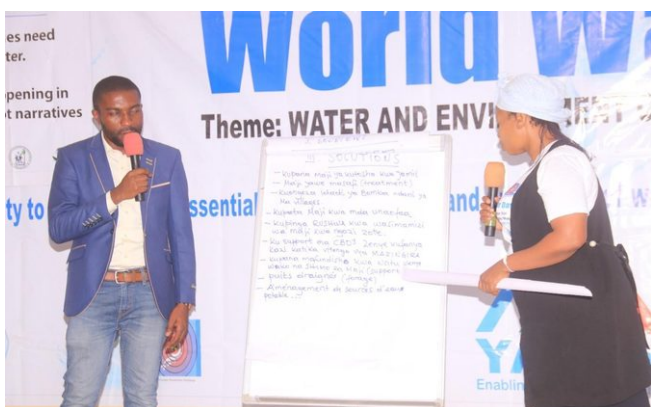
Group 2, women: the possibility of accessing clean water.



Group 3, schools and clinics: the challenges they face.



Group 4, well owners and water sellers: brainstorming.



Women heads of household present their findings.



Local leaders present on access to drinking water.

Voices in the room



Well owners and water sellers present their group's findings.



Refugee WASH representative organisations.



Participants question the panel on access to water.



A participant raises a question for the panellists.



Refreshments for participants.



Participants receive their transport refund.



YAREN Organisation

YAREN empowers refugees and vulnerable communities in Uganda through skills training, livelihoods, education, health and community-led programmes. Since 2017.

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