



POVERTY AND EQUITY PRACTICE
2021

POLICY BRIEF

One year in the pandemic

RESULTS FROM THE HIGH-FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEYS FOR REFUGEES IN UGANDA


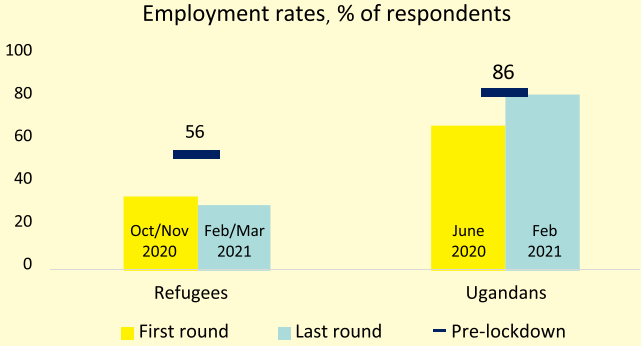
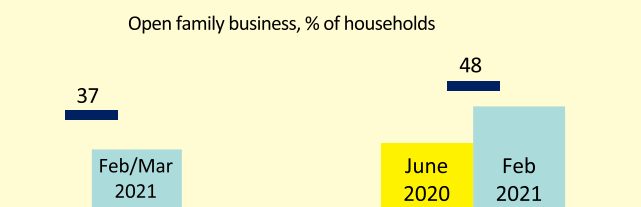
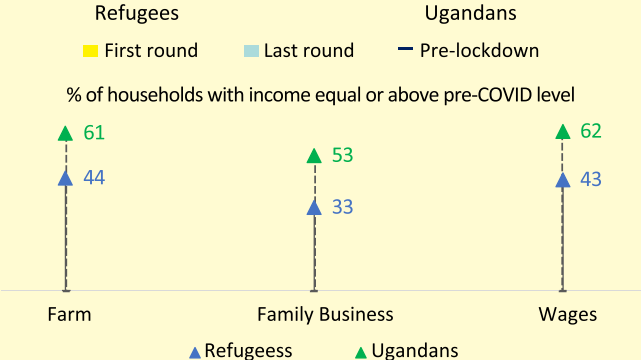
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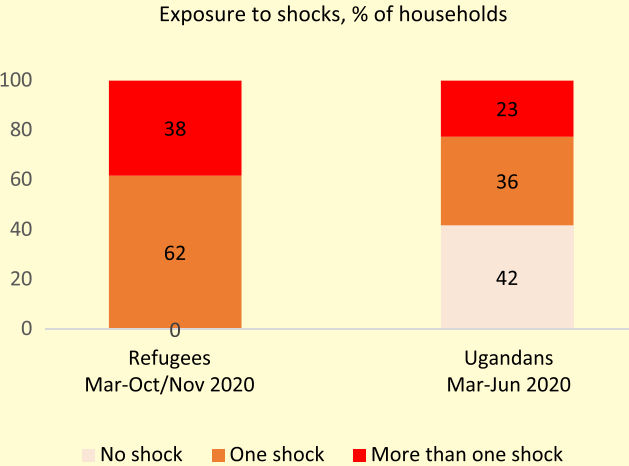

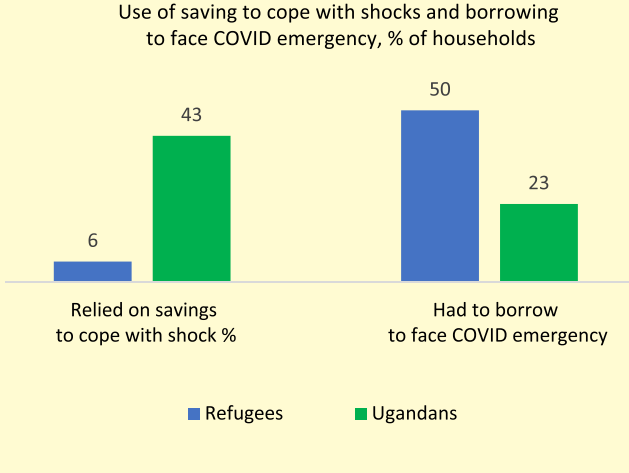
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What are the main impacts of COVID-19 and how can the URHFPS help inform policy planning and programming?


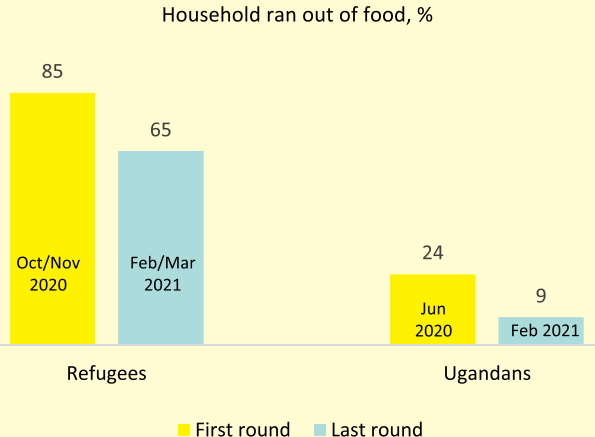

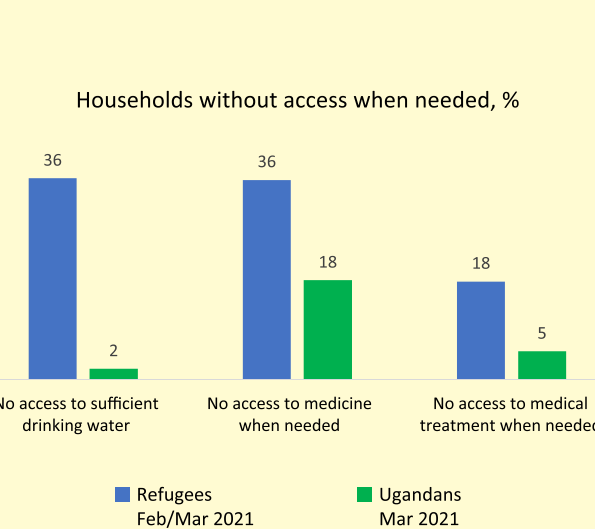

IMPACTS	EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE	POLICY OPTIONS																																						
LABOR MARKET AND INCOME																																								
 <p>One year after the beginning of the pandemic, employment rates among refugees have not returned to the pre-lockdown March 2020 levels. This was in contrast to a full recovery of employment among Ugandans during the same period.¹ These developments have widened the existing employment gap between refugees and Ugandans to more than 50 percentage points.</p> <p>COVID-19 related lockdown affected employment among refugees in Kampala and the South West the most. While drops in employment in the West Nile were largely driven by seasonal changes.</p> <p>Ugandan family businesses recovered more successfully (though not fully) than among refugees.</p> <p>Overall, refugees were less likely to get labor income from farm, family business or wages than Ugandans. Refugees were also less likely to experience recovery in income levels making them particularly dependent on humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>Men were more likely to be employed than women both among refugees and Ugandans.</p>	<p>Employment rates, % of respondents</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Employment rates, % of respondents</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Round</th> <th>Pre-lockdown</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Refugees</td> <td>First round (Oct/Nov 2020)</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round (Feb/Mar 2021)</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Ugandans</td> <td>First round (June 2020)</td> <td>86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round (Feb 2021)</td> <td>86</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Open family business, % of households</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Open family business, % of households</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Round</th> <th>Pre-lockdown</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Refugees</td> <td>First round (Feb/Mar 2021)</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round (Feb 2021)</td> <td>37</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Ugandans</td> <td>First round (June 2020)</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round (Feb 2021)</td> <td>48</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>% of households with income equal or above pre-COVID level</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>% of households with income equal or above pre-COVID level</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Refugees</th> <th>Ugandans</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Farm</td> <td>44</td> <td>61</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family Business</td> <td>33</td> <td>53</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wages</td> <td>43</td> <td>62</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	Round	Pre-lockdown	Refugees	First round (Oct/Nov 2020)	56	Last round (Feb/Mar 2021)	56	Ugandans	First round (June 2020)	86	Last round (Feb 2021)	86	Group	Round	Pre-lockdown	Refugees	First round (Feb/Mar 2021)	37	Last round (Feb 2021)	37	Ugandans	First round (June 2020)	48	Last round (Feb 2021)	48	Category	Refugees	Ugandans	Farm	44	61	Family Business	33	53	Wages	43	62	<p>Prioritizing the finalization of Uganda’s Private Sector Engagement Strategy for Refugees and Host Communities can help to better engage the private sector to support the creation of jobs.</p> <p>Providing targeted support to refugee and host community businesses and self-employed can contribute to the mitigation of shocks while fostering job creation in refugee hosting districts. For example, providing reskilling technical and vocational trainings can help refugees get better jobs and wages right from the start.</p> <p>In the medium-term, a system that recognizes non-Ugandan qualifications, especially those from the region, would facilitate positive employment outcomes for both refugees and hosts.</p> <p>Gender responsive approaches are needed to reduce the employment gender gap. Policy measures should aim at reducing the education gap for women, removing barriers to land ownership by women, and promoting female labor force participation through proactive measures to encourage firms to hire women, as well as supporting them to start and grow businesses – including through the provision of low-cost access to finance.</p>
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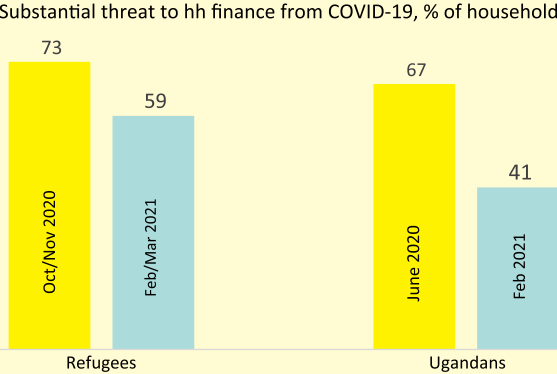


¹ According to the World Bank-UBOS socioeconomic survey for refugees and hosts, in 2018, only 28 percent of refugees reported to be employed compared to 64 percent of host (World Bank 2019). Hence the employment gap between refugees and host community members has existed even before the COVID-19 outbreak. Importantly, the World Bank-UBOS socioeconomic survey covers employment rates of refugees overall, while for the phone survey it focuses on the employment status of respondents who in many cases are the heads of household.

IMPACTS	EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE	POLICY OPTIONS												
SHOCKS AND RESILIENCE														
 <p>Refugees experienced significantly more shocks than Ugandans. The most common shock among refugees was an increase in the price of key food items, followed by illness, injury or death of income earning household members. Reducing food consumption remained the most frequently used coping strategy among refugees during several rounds.</p> <p>Use of savings as a coping strategy was almost non-existent among refugees, but used by more than 40 percent of Ugandans, suggesting a lack of savings to draw from.²</p>	<p>Exposure to shocks, % of households</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Exposure to shocks, % of households</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>No shock</th> <th>One shock</th> <th>More than one shock</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Refugees Mar-Oct/Nov 2020</td> <td>0</td> <td>62</td> <td>38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ugandans Mar-Jun 2020</td> <td>42</td> <td>36</td> <td>23</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	No shock	One shock	More than one shock	Refugees Mar-Oct/Nov 2020	0	62	38	Ugandans Mar-Jun 2020	42	36	23	<p>Continue the roll out of shock-responsive cash-based assistance to help refugees increase their consumption options</p>
Group	No shock	One shock	More than one shock											
Refugees Mar-Oct/Nov 2020	0	62	38											
Ugandans Mar-Jun 2020	42	36	23											
 <p>Compared to less than a quarter of Ugandan households, at least half of refugee households borrowed money to cope with the impacts of the COVID-19 emergency. Most refugee households borrowed from friends, neighbors or saving groups. Borrowed money was used by refugee households mainly to buy food and to pay for health expenses. In Kampala, money was also used to pay rent.³</p>	<p>Use of saving to cope with shocks and borrowing to face COVID emergency, % of households</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Use of saving to cope with shocks and borrowing to face COVID emergency, % of households</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Refugees</th> <th>Ugandans</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Relied on savings to cope with shock %</td> <td>6</td> <td>43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Had to borrow to face COVID emergency</td> <td>50</td> <td>23</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Refugees	Ugandans	Relied on savings to cope with shock %	6	43	Had to borrow to face COVID emergency	50	23	<p>Remove barriers and increase access to formal financial services coupled with financial literacy programs to support informed decision making while preventing households from falling into long-term debt.</p> <p>Support the development of a shock-responsive social protection framework in Uganda that includes refugees and Ugandans.</p>			
Category	Refugees	Ugandans												
Relied on savings to cope with shock %	6	43												
Had to borrow to face COVID emergency	50	23												




² Recall period was different across URHFPS (March-October/November 2020) and UHFPS (March-June 2020).

³ Recall period was different across URHFPS (March-October/November 2020) and UHFPS (March-July/August 2020).

IMPACTS	EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE	POLICY OPTIONS													
Access to Basic Services and Food															
 <p>Food insecurity remains much higher among refugees than Ugandans. Ration cuts coupled with COVID-19 impacts deteriorated food security among refugees substantially. It has gradually improved over the last 12 months but remains worse than in 2018.</p> <p>Among refugees, female headed households experienced lower access to food.</p>	<p>Household ran out of food, %</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Household ran out of food, %</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Round</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Refugees</td> <td>First round (Oct/Nov 2020)</td> <td>85</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round (Feb/Mar 2021)</td> <td>65</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Ugandans</td> <td>First round (Jun 2020)</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round (Feb 2021)</td> <td>9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	Round	Percentage	Refugees	First round (Oct/Nov 2020)	85	Last round (Feb/Mar 2021)	65	Ugandans	First round (Jun 2020)	24	Last round (Feb 2021)	9	<p>Strengthening digital connectivity and access to sim-cards (and mobile money) for refugees will be key to facilitate the ongoing transition to cash-based food assistance.</p>
Group	Round	Percentage													
Refugees	First round (Oct/Nov 2020)	85													
	Last round (Feb/Mar 2021)	65													
Ugandans	First round (Jun 2020)	24													
	Last round (Feb 2021)	9													
 <p>Refugees had significantly lower access to medicine, medical treatment and sufficient drinking water in February/March 2021 than Ugandans. No significant differences were found with regards to access to masks and soap.</p>	<p>Households without access when needed, %</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Households without access when needed, %</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Refugees (Feb/Mar 2021)</th> <th>Ugandans (Mar 2021)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No access to sufficient drinking water</td> <td>36</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No access to medicine when needed</td> <td>36</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No access to medical treatment when needed</td> <td>18</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Refugees (Feb/Mar 2021)	Ugandans (Mar 2021)	No access to sufficient drinking water	36	2	No access to medicine when needed	36	18	No access to medical treatment when needed	18	5	<p>Development interventions under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) should target areas where access to water, medical treatment and medicines continue to be a challenge to improve services across refugees and host communities.</p>	
Category	Refugees (Feb/Mar 2021)	Ugandans (Mar 2021)													
No access to sufficient drinking water	36	2													
No access to medicine when needed	36	18													
No access to medical treatment when needed	18	5													
 <p>Most refugee children engaged in learning activities. However, a sizable share of them engage solely in activities with the lowest learning potential, such as studying alone or doing homework provided by parents. Refugee households in Kampala were the most likely to have members who would not return to school when schools reopened.</p>		<p>As schools reopen, ensuring children transition back into school and are supported in higher potential learning activities must be prioritized.</p>													

IMPACTS	EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE	POLICY OPTIONS																																																								
Perceived safety, Behavior, and Information Needs																																																										
<p> Refugees were less likely to feel substantial threat from COVID-19 to their households' finances in February/March 2021 compared to October/November 2020. Still, concerns remained very high and higher than those among Ugandans.</p> <p>Perceptions of safety at home among refugees varied according to country of origin. Burundian and Congolese respondents in South West felt less safe at home since the COVID-19 outbreak than South Sudanese and Somali respondents.</p>	<p>Substantial threat to hh finance from COVID-19, % of households</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Refugees</th> <th colspan="2">Ugandans</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Round</th> <th>Period</th> <th>Round</th> <th>Period</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>First round</td> <td>73% (Oct/Nov 2020)</td> <td>67% (June 2020)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Last round</td> <td>59% (Feb/Mar 2021)</td> <td>41% (Feb 2021)</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Refugees		Ugandans		Round	Period	Round	Period	First round	73% (Oct/Nov 2020)	67% (June 2020)		Last round	59% (Feb/Mar 2021)	41% (Feb 2021)																																										
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<p> Majority of refugees and Ugandans reported readiness to be vaccinated if free and safe vaccines would be available.</p> <p>There was a decline in reported safe behavior in both groups. More refugees than Ugandans reported wearing masks all or most of the time when in public. There is some evidence though that this might be substantially overreported which raises concerns about other indicators such as vaccine acceptance where chances of getting socially desirable answers are high.⁴</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="3">Refugees</th> <th colspan="3">Ugandans</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>Pre-Mar 2020</th> <th>R1: Oct/Nov 2020</th> <th>R3: Feb/Mar 2021</th> <th>Pre-Mar 2020</th> <th>R1: June 2020</th> <th>R5: Feb 2021</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="7">Safe behavior (respondents, %)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avoid groups of more than 10 people</td> <td></td> <td>83</td> <td>56</td> <td>91</td> <td>41</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Masks wearing all or most of the time while in public</td> <td></td> <td>98</td> <td></td> <td>66</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Agree to be vaccinated if free and safe vaccine is available</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>90</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>88</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="7">Mental health (respondents, %)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Respondents with depression, %</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>54</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Refugees			Ugandans				Pre-Mar 2020	R1: Oct/Nov 2020	R3: Feb/Mar 2021	Pre-Mar 2020	R1: June 2020	R5: Feb 2021	Safe behavior (respondents, %)							Avoid groups of more than 10 people		83	56	91	41		Masks wearing all or most of the time while in public		98		66			Agree to be vaccinated if free and safe vaccine is available			90			88	Mental health (respondents, %)							Respondents with depression, %			54			5	<p>Continue to promote prevention measures against COVID-19 in refugee and host communities through various channels including radio, TV, social media and NGOs.</p> <p>Ensure development partners support to finance refugee and host community vaccination roll-out consistent with Uganda's COVID-19 vaccination action plan.</p>
	Refugees			Ugandans																																																						
	Pre-Mar 2020	R1: Oct/Nov 2020	R3: Feb/Mar 2021	Pre-Mar 2020	R1: June 2020	R5: Feb 2021																																																				
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<p> The most trusted sources of information about COVID-19 among refugees include radio and NGOs. Preferred sources vary across regions though. In Kampala the most trusted sources of information are TV, social media and friends while in camps, refugees tend to prefer NGOs as trusted sources.</p>																																																										

⁴ This indicator is reported for December 2020 for refugees and for July/August 2020 for Ugandans.

IMPACTS	EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE	POLICY OPTIONS								
Mental Health and Social Cohesion										
 <p>More than half of refugee respondents experienced depression symptoms, with a higher incidence among female refugees, elderly, and those living in the West Nile region. More than half of those who experienced at least one depression symptom felt it made their lives extremely or very hard. This is ten times higher than Ugandans.</p>	<p>Respondents with depression</p>  <table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="font-size: 24pt;">54%</td> <td style="font-size: 24pt;">5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Refugees</td> <td>Ugandans</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Feb/Mar 2021</td> <td>Feb 2021</td> </tr> </table>	54%	5%	Refugees	Ugandans	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>		Feb/Mar 2021	Feb 2021	<p>Mental health support is needed to target refugee needs. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-based interventions as part of skills development and employment support can help address potential barriers to productive employment and self-reliance.</p>
54%	5%									
Refugees	Ugandans									
<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>										
Feb/Mar 2021	Feb 2021									
 <p>COVID-19 outbreak and restrictive measures to curb the spread of the virus made interactions of refugees with their host communities less frequent. This may have a negative impact on social cohesion and integration efforts, at least in the short run.</p>		<p>Social cohesion efforts under the CRRF need to focus on the additional challenges posed by COVID-19 between refugees and host communities.</p>								

What is the High Frequency Phone Survey for refugees in Uganda (URHFPS) and what does it track?



The URHFPS tracks the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on refugees. The World Bank (WB) in collaboration with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) launched and conducted the URHFPS. The URHFPS tracked the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic between October 2020 and March 2021.⁵ This brief discusses key selected results while providing policy options. Where possible and appropriate, findings are compared to Ugandans by using the national High-Frequency Phone Survey (UHFPS) conducted by UBOS with the support from the World Bank since June 2020.⁶ Detailed analysis from the URHFPS and UHFPS rounds can be found in (World Bank 2020abc & Atamanov et al. 2021abc)



The sample for the refugee survey included respondents with active phone numbers that were selected randomly from the Profile Global Registration System (ProGres) of UNHCR, and the refugee household survey carried out by UBOS and the World Bank in 2018.⁷ URHFPS targeted to achieve 2100 observations representative at seven strata constructed as a combination of regions and different countries of origin: Kampala-Somalia, Kampala-other (Burundi, DRC, South Sudan), South West-Burundi (SW-Burundi), South West-DRC (SW-DRC), South West-South Sudan (SW-South Sudan), South West-Somalia (SW-Somalia), and West Nile-South Sudan (WN-South Sudan).⁸ The realized sample sizes for three rounds were: 2010, 1852 and 1985 observations. To reduce the bias related to only interviewing households with phone numbers and non-response, the data from the 2018 representative refugee household survey was used to produce and calibrate weights.

⁵ Data was collected in three rounds, with the first one taking place between October 22 – November 25, 2020, the second one between December 5-24, 2020, and the third one between February 8-March 14, 2021.

⁶ The survey aimed to recontact the entire sample of households that had been interviewed during the Uganda National Panel Survey (UNPS) 2019/20 round and that had phone numbers for at least one household member or a reference individual.

⁷ World Bank (2019).

⁸ Selected country of origins accounted for about 97 percent of all refugees in Uganda in 2020.

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