

Inception report

# Scoping mission Uganda

6-13 March 2020

Circular Refugee Settlements,  
Feeding Cities and migration & Changing Routes

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In order to get a better understanding on the current refugee settlements in Uganda with the focus on challenges of nature resource management, food supply and agricultural practices, and also clearly link it to a broader perspective also linked to urbanization, a food system approach and a circular approach, a scoping mission was organized to Uganda. This report brings together the observations and main findings from the field visits and different discussions held in the field and with different strategic stakeholders. It provides valuable insights for follow up activities in the framework of Circular Refugee Camps and Feedings cities and migration.

Keywords: Uganda, refugee settlement, food system approach, migration, circular solutions, natural resource management

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# Summary

In order to get a better understanding of refugee settlements in Uganda and their host communities, with the focus on challenges of natural resource management, food supply and agricultural practices, and also clearly link it to a broader perspective also linked to urbanization, a food system approach and a circular approach, a scoping mission was organised to Uganda. A dedicated eight day program including site visits to two totally different refugee settlements, an adjacent National Park and four meetings with local authorities and strategic partners and stakeholders was organized. Besides the focus on refugee settlements, also the current challenges in Kampala -also related to urban refugees and slums, were discussed.

The field visits to both refugee settlements showed differences, but also clear linkages in primary issues. The different meetings with stakeholders have provided a broader image of the refugee settlements, the broader perspective and the challenges. First of all, the adaption of good agricultural practices remains the biggest challenge. A lack of agricultural knowledge, the disconnection between economic and agriculture departments, and the missing link between local government and refugee settlement, were mentioned as the main issues. Secondly, there is no clear evidence forest degradation is caused by refugee or refugees only, moreover also local communities come in sight. In many areas the needs of host communities and refugee communities are alike. Furthermore, the linkages between rural and urban food system still seem weak. Last but not least, urban refugees (international refugees and rural-urban migrants) are causing pressures on urban infrastructures and services. Therefore an supportive and connected spatial planning is needed.

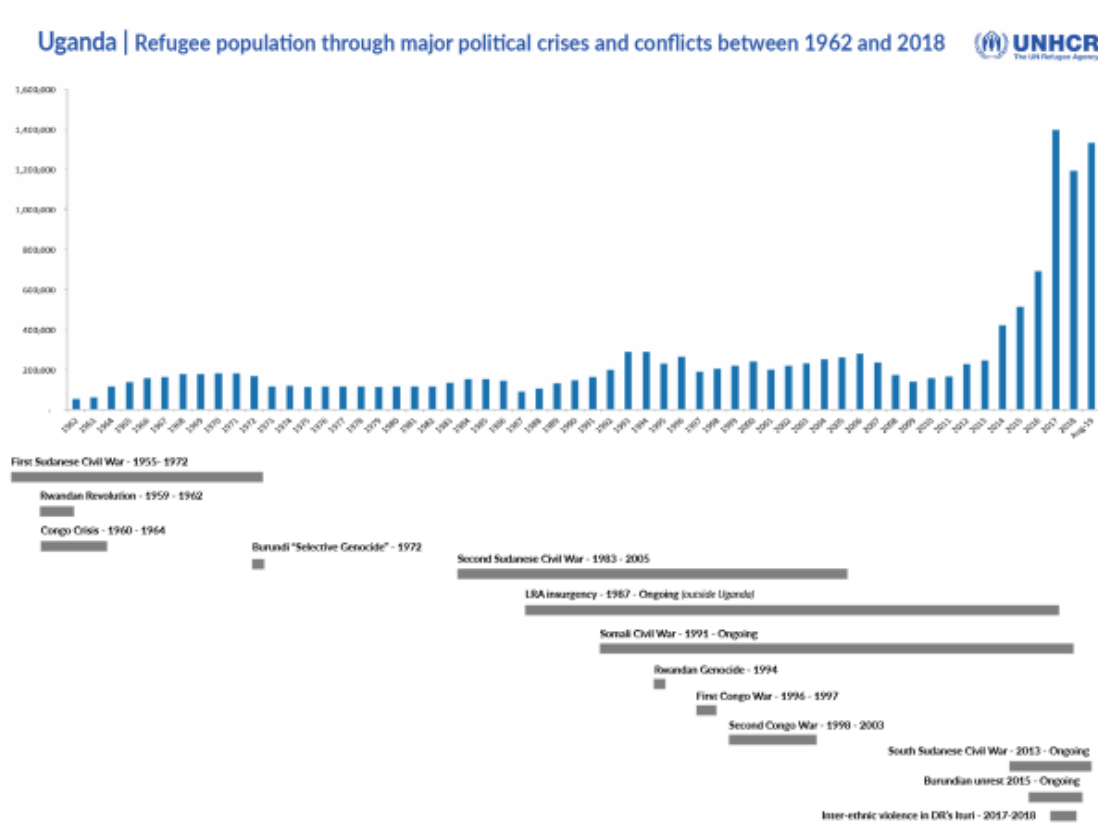
These valuable insights will be taken up into the activities within the projects of Feeding Cities and migration and Circular Refugee Camps.

# 1 Objective

The purpose of our visit to Uganda was to get a better understanding of the actual situation in refugee settlements in Uganda with an emphasize on the challenges concerning natural resource management, food supply, agricultural practices and the present situation of sustainability and future opportunities for circular concepts and livelihood opportunities. It also clearly links it to a broader perspective also linked to urbanization, a food system approach and a circular approach.

This scoping mission benefits current and future projects, programs and binational cooperation of Wageningen Research. In these current projects and the preparation of future multidisciplinary projects and programs Wageningen University & Research has committed together with Dutch business community, government and several NGO's to support refugee responses and host communities in close cooperation with local authorities and organizations; and also dives into the food system perspective which closely relates.

Besides getting a better understanding, the mission also aims to share insights, thoughts and ideas with different organizations locally and actively involved, towards future strategies and solutions.



**Table 1** Refugee population through major political crises and conflicts between 1962 and 2018 (source: UNHCR)

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## 2 Program

The scoping mission had a concise, dedicated, well-prepared program:

Friday March 6	Travel Amsterdam to Kampala
Saturday March 7	Travel Kampala to Masindi
Sunday March 8	Visit Murchinson Falls National Park
Monday March 9	Visit Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement
Tuesday March 10	Visit Kyangwali Refugee Settlement
Wednesday March 11	Meeting in Kampala
Thursday March 12	Meetings in Kampala Travel Kampala to Amsterdam

In the following chapters the preparation, different visits and discussions have been brought together to take you along the journey, the observations and main outcomes.



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## 3 Preparation

In the preparation for this mission we have examined and sought intensive contact with the different organizations involved or responsible for the situation of refugees in Uganda. We have selected two refugee settlements that are less in the picture at present (as most emphasize in the media is currently on Rhino Settlement and Bidi Bidi, the biggest two settlements in Uganda). Kiryandongo and Kyangwali were selected due to several reasons as follows. They are operationally connected as resettlement took place recently from Kiryandongo to Kyangwali. They are relative older refugee settlements, and this caught our attention as well. Besides, it also seemed to us that the proximity of a big National Park and Lake Albert is worth to pay attention to, because it has potential linkages between high value water, natural resources and refugee settlements.

Along with the selection of visiting sites, the briefings were carried out with some of the consortium partners of the Circular Refugee Settlements initiative. One of the consortia is aiming at a preliminary reconnaissance project carried out by students. They provided some questions for us to discuss in the field:

### General questions

- What language do they speak in the refugee settlements?
- Can people in general speak English?
- How much income do the citizens of the refugee settlements have on average and what do they spend it on?

### Safety questions

- Who is responsible for the refugee settlements?
- Who is responsible for the safety of the refugee settlements?
- Is it safe to be left alone in the refugee settlements?

### Sanitary questions

- What does their sanitation process look like?
- Where do they get drinking water?
- Is this drinking water, clean drinking water?
- Where and how do they go to the bathroom?
- How are the hygiene standards? E.g. are they familiar between the difference of clean and contaminated drinking water?
- How much money do they spend on clean drinking water?

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## 4 Field visits and Meetings

### 4.1 Visit National Park Murchison Falls

On March 8, 2020 the team visited National Park Murchison Falls. Murchison Falls is one of the largest National Parks in Uganda. The park is not fenced. It is a home to many wild lives with a large biodiversity. Currently, the dirt road leading to the tourism center of the park is being asphalted and a bridge is being created to connect the two shores of the river Albert Nile. These actions indicate that tourism is gaining more attention in the park and tourism does benefit the community. We are curious about what impact it will bring on the natural resource and the wildlife.

Murchison Falls National Park covers an area of 3860 km<sup>2</sup>. In this park there are the Murchison Falls. The White Nile flows from east to west through the park and has formed wild waterfalls with rapid currents. The park is home to Rothschild giraffes, hippos, Nile crocodiles, elephants, buffaloes, lions, various species of antelope (including the Ugandan Kob) and various species of birds.

There are many issues with poaching, illegal lodging, land grabbing and wildfires. This is partly due to the regular communities, but it was said that a large number was accounted to refugees who have entered the park. It was not only limited to the outskirts, but even reached the very core of the park. The refugee settlement of Kiryandongo was mentioned.

Conclusion is that there is a potential link between the refugee settlements and this important natural area. It is of utmost important to investigate on this potential linkage.



**Figure 1** National Park Murchison Falls  
(Photo credits: Wageningen Environmental Research)

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## 4.2 Visit Refugee Settlements

### 4.2.1 Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement

The settlement is organized in clusters. Approximately each cluster consists of 150 households. There is a separate area for disabled and single mothers. And commonly, nationalities are grouped. For instance, Ugandan IDP's (of the earthquake 2011) have been granted a place. The settlement is not fenced, but the main road has a checkpoint and the boundaries are marked. Each household has a plot of 50 x 50m for housing (new arrivals start with 25x25m) and self-sufficient farming activities. The plot in the settlement is often not enough and if one has any opportunity, they will hire extra land outside the settlement. The quality of the settlement plots diver due to the different topographies of their locations. The knowledge on farming varies with the background of the people, which depends on their originality (from countryside or city) and their age.

People rely on the food that is provided once per month. The average amount of food support is 10 kg of Maize, 5 kg of beans and 1 liter of cooking oil per month per head (and salt). People can also decide to get an equivalent in cash. And people sell their produce or trade it with other items. It was also mentioned that sometimes food provided by aid organizations is been sold to cover other expenses, like medicines. The food distribution is not always fair and seems corrupt. There are also cases of host community members jumping in the settlement to get free food and succeed. Food shortage as well as shortage of firewood seems to be common: if one is not able to have enough harvest from their plot and does not have enough possibilities to rent extra land, the total amount of food will not be enough. It was also mentioned that there is challenge concerning climate change as this causes changes in the moment one can plant and harvest due to water availability for proper cropping.

There are several markets in the settlements. Some of them are with a limited variety in fresh products. Sometimes refugees buy food outside the settlement and trade it in the settlement. In general, there is a lot of trading activities between the host community and the refugee community. It is mentioned that refugees have good contacts and feel related to the host community (as they also partly have the same struggles).

Some households have small solar panels for basic light. For cooking they all rely on charcoal or firewood. Charcoal is very expensive (100.000UGX per sack) and prices still go up. The charcoal is traded from host communities, which often produce it themselves from local resources. Here we see a clear connection with the challenges to maintain natural resources. It has been told that there is no agricultural extension program, offices or training.

There are several water points (taps) throughout the settlement. This is only for drinking and cooking water. There are some latrines, mostly shared by different households. But no sewage or treatment system is available.

White people entering the settlement always cause a lot of excitement, but also tension. Some see potential hope, some see the cause of their problem... for instance, the West didn't do enough in previous conflicts even though they are accountable. Besides, there are NGO's that seem to get revenues from the situation without aid money and actions actual reaching the refugees themselves.



**Figure 2** Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement  
(Photo credits Wageningen Environmental Research)

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#### 4.2.2 Kyangwali Refugee Settlement

Kyangwali has an older center and has grown since December 2018 again. Recently influx has been decreasing, but there is still an influx of refugees. Most come from DRC, only 3000 persons from South Sudan.

The reception center for new arrivals (Kagoma), the food distribution center, the tree nursery and Bugoma forest reserve have been visited. In natural resource management, conservation and reforestation have started. Currently trees dry up and forest is depleted due to the needs of firewood and fuel.

The reception center is a fenced area where new arrivals are received. Most of them arrive from the shores of Lake Albert, where they come by boats. They are registered by OPM and UNHCR. They will stay 2 to 3 days in the center. During their stay they are provided with meals (cooked on firewood) or are allowed to cook themselves. Solar panels provide basic light. Water is partly harvested, but the center also relies on water distribution. Refugees are medically checked, and toilets are cleaned by volunteers with protective cloths and personal protective equipment.

After the 2 to 3 days refugees are granted a plot of land, according to the standards. Allocation of land is already prepared by OPM. Observations show also here common agricultural practice is low. There is little trade or relations with the host community.

The WFP food distribution center is very well organized. Refugees can monthly get cash or basic food commodities. The logistic process is well organized via biometric identification and the global distribution tool. We also noticed and discussed the start of a sacked gardening project (kitchen gardening with additional more nutritious crops).

The last sight we visited was the nursery, where different species of trees and crops/vegetables are growing. This is part of reforestation project in which refugees are also involved. Forests are now regulated. Refugees are sometimes only allowed to gather some deadwood for firewood.

In general, this settlement seems greener, more fertile and has a more friendly ambiance (Kiryandongo felt sometimes little hostile). The settlement is fully in focus on numbers of organizations and seems well organized. With the reforestation project a first step is made for environmental improvement. However, the basic needs still rely on food aid and there is poor common agricultural practice. With 120.000 residents it is a real city. The infrastructure is however partly absent.



**Figure 3** / Kyangwali Refugee Settlement

(Photo credits: Waeningen Environmental Research)

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## 4.3 Meetings and Findings

There were four meetings organized in Kampala. Local livelihood coordinator, program leader, communication officer, policy officer and strategy directors are invited to the meetings. The main findings from these meetings are summarized in the next paragraphs..

### 4.3.1 The livelihood development and adaption on good agricultural practices are challenging

Uganda is still a developing country. The government policy focuses on becoming a middle-income country by 2040, but this means still enormous progress should be made. The average yearly income is now below \$500 and 60% population is in poverty. Currently, donors are generally not really satisfied with the present livelihood development. Denmark has taken the lead to support jobs and livelihood plan. The Netherlands is a key partner in Refugee Law project, together with Makere University. The particular focus of the embassy is on:

- Rule of law (justice)
- Agriculture and food security:
  - > Annual competition,
  - > Dairy sector, horticulture, large scale agriculture.
- Trade and investment: link from aid to trade
- Health and rights
- Cross cutting themes are humanitarian affairs and climate change.

It is also mentioned that the WCDI project on nutritious food, but as SNV/World Vision initiative on agricultural processing, livelihood development and market orientation (food security) and access to modern energy in Bidi Bidi (SNV/Save the Children). Besides there's also focus on agribusiness skills for youth as part of food security. The actions on trade and investment focuses on horticulture, dairy equipment and raw materials for feed; as such emphasis on agricultural sector. Import tropical fruits, dried foods, coffee and tea.

Primary livelihood in Uganda now is depending on self-sustainable agriculture. There is a mismatch in traditional practice and good agricultural practice. Frankly, there remains a lack of knowledge of good agricultural practices. The program in school is regularly based on language and math, with limited\no agricultural education or concrete skills. There is a need for development of standard skill sets, short term job creation (soft and hard skills), vocational training system. Besides, the knowledge about food standards (safety/market oriented) lacks. There is also a mismatch between private sector and producers. Further, little linkage between emergency response and a development perspective is made. Therefore, the adaption on good agricultural practices is the biggest challenge in Uganda.

Someone says agriculture doesn't work as leverage, but that's from self-sustainable farming perspective. The current market-demand analysis is often missing and would point out that the system is highly inefficient. Besides, climate change is going on. It is hard to determine when seasons start or end nowadays. Besides the value of the environment is generally not seen by refugee communities and host communities. They just don't know that the environmental depletion and degradation are going on. So, there is an imperative need to adopt these issues in agricultural practices!

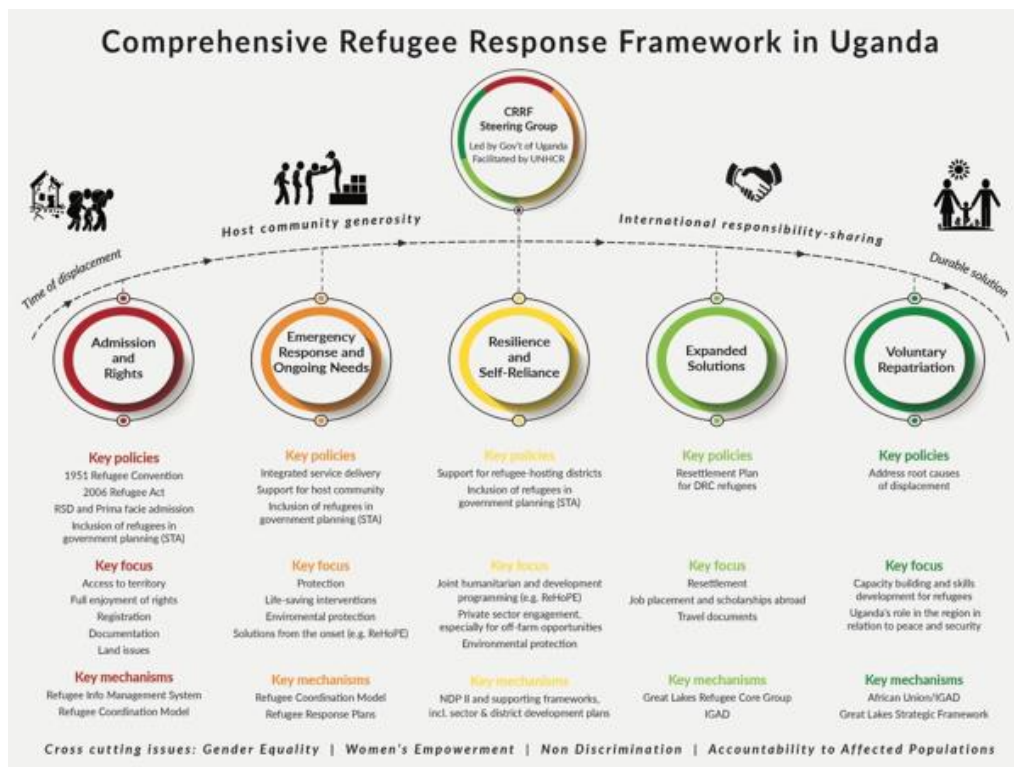
In Uganda agriculture and economics are separated. The Ministry of Agriculture misses the connection. There is agricultural extension in local government, but outreach/uptake is limited. The governance is really in silos. National Development Plan 3 (NDP3) (National Planning Authority, 2020) is now under development and still needs a couple of months to be ready. But it will be a start for a more integral and programmatic approach to link the silos. The question is how will this work and how to make it inclusive? Think smarter about investments on extension services, centers of learning and focus on both communities of hosts and refugees. Also bring sense of purpose and community building in social linkages and natural social networks. What is most important to take into account is the 70/30-rule. Each investment should cover at least 70% refugee response and 30% host community response!

The disconnection between local district government and refugees is obvious. At sub county level migrative population increases often over 50%. The social infrastructure is also stretched. Often local government doesn't know exactly what happens. There is a human resource gap which is not adequately stated, both for host and refugee community. Capacity of agents are not practical. How can we develop towards a multifaceted approach?

### 4.3.2 Refugees are not causing more environmental degradation

The World Bank assessment on forest resource degradation and intervention options in refugee-hosting areas of northern, western and southwestern Uganda, has highlighted that in refugee-hosting areas in northern Uganda the average wood-fuel consumption per person for cooking is about 20 percent higher in host communities than in the refugee settlements. The assessment found that in southwestern Uganda, there is no consistent link between loss of forest cover and refugee influxes (World Bank FAO, 2020).

There is no need to be illegal in Uganda, when you arrive as a citizen from another country, you automatically get a registration. There is a well-organized governance structure of the Refugee Coordination Model. For example, there are high-level structures meetings, intersectoral meetings and clear division in different districts etc. Nevertheless, to solve the forest degradation problem, recently an Education Response Plan is made for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018) to avoid coming environmental degradations. Moreover, some development program has its main focus on human right affairs: access to justice, delayed justice, LGBT, women rights, children rights and refugees' access to justice. It is still not common that refugees also have (the same) rights. In politics religion is relatively interwoven. Refugee settlements are relatively safe, but it is best to be accompanied by a local partner at all times! The southwestern settlements are best facilitated.



#### Key features:

- Includes over 100 partners
- Covers all refugees in Uganda
- Two-year planning cycle
- Targets for host communities
- Resilience element
- Aligned to government sector plans
- Results framework for performance monitoring
- Based on joint needs assessment

#### Key priorities:

- Refugee protection
- Emergency response
- Education
- Environment
- Livelihood
- Urban refugees

**Figure 4** Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Uganda (source: UNHCR)

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### 4.3.3 Rural and urban linkages are weak

Most urban refugees have linkages with refugee settlements and moved to Kampala. It's a coping strategy. When you arrive and are given a plot of land, but you don't have the agricultural knowledge, the best you can do is to go to the city. Nevertheless, no support is provided in the city. They have to manage it themselves. If something positive happens in refugee settlements, sometimes they return. Some refugees head directly to Kampala (instead via refugee settlements). The World Food Program (WFP) is moving away from food assistance: the refugees can have choice on food or cash support.

There are linkages between urban and rural, but not really specific or clear. Water support is not one of the priority areas. Climate change is one of the cross-cutting issues. Several projects have focus on empowering local communities to support and promote sustainability; especially involving young people. The aim is to program jointly. Better labor market via education and better understanding are needed for more employment opportunities. But how this will fit in an overall development strategy. It's not really about agriculture, instead broader or additional service. It requires skills and education.

### 4.3.4 The need for supportive urban spatial planning

There are many urban refugees and migrants, both international as well as rural-urban migrants. Although they should register at OPM, in reality not many do. The urban infrastructure is heavily challenged. Migrants have disadvantages and are in focus on many aid programs (support programs). This could cause issues with host communities by all sort of negative effects. How can host communities not feel burdened? And how can we address and play around with skills of the migrants; as many have an agricultural background!? Migration also causes a potential disbalance in rural-urban population. Most influx is young people with low income. Support services are highly challenged. How can infrastructure cope with this?

Focus should be on Greater Kampala. Urban sprawl/expansion currently exists. It is unplanned and often happened in wetland areas and flood plains (encroachment). It is causing environmental degradation and leading to unsecure situations (floods) for the vulnerable. How fast can we move towards a planned urban development? And how to include livability and climate actions. Spatial planning is crucial.

It is mentioned that the concept of economic growth center with a clear social inclusion strategy. How can we build an urban agricultural value chain and a rural-urban value chain? The transport value chain is currently far from efficient too. And how can we link employment to public works and development? I.e. only 29% is paved; can we create jobs and combine opportunities and building capacities. And what about the combination of agriculture practice, soil improvement and circularity. How can we support land management?

## 5 Conclusions

The main conclusions deriving from this scoping mission are:

- Livelihood development and good agricultural practice are challenging for both host communities and refugee communities. Primary rural agriculture is mainly focused on self-sufficient farming. It is needed to improve the skills, education and quality of materials and practices; but also to link economic development, livelihood perspectives and agriculture in a more comprehensive way.
- Refugees are not causing environmental degradation, encroachment, poaching and deforestation per definition. Much can also be accounted to the host communities. Mainly this is to fulfill livelihood needs, due to lack of sustainable alternatives or knowledge.
- Current rural-urban linkages in the food system are weak and underdeveloped. The structure and logistics are inefficient. A food system approach would be helpful.
- The urban infrastructure and services are heavily challenged. An integrative spatial planning is needed.

In general, the scoping mission provided better insights and highlighted the potential of circular approaches and a food system approach, once correctly grounded and embedded. These valuable insights will be taken up into the activities within the projects of Feeding Cities and migration and Circular Refugee Camps.



**Figure 5** Street view

(Photo credits: Wageningen Environmental Research))



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