

# Trauma-Informed Self-Reliance System (TISS)

## Supporting Refugees to Rebuild Livelihoods in Adjumani, Uganda

**Organization:** Voice for Humanity Uganda

**Location:** Adjumani District, Northern Uganda

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### Program Overview

Category	Details
Program	Trauma-Informed Self-Reliance System (TISS)
Location	Adjumani District, Uganda
Target Group	Refugees and vulnerable members of the host community
Program Duration	12-week cohort model
Participants per Cohort	10–15 participants
Annual Reach	40–60 participants
Livelihood Activation	Approximately \$500 per participant

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## The Challenge

Adjumani District hosts **over 230,000 refugees**, many of whom face severe economic hardship and declining humanitarian support. Reduced aid levels have left many families struggling to meet basic needs while also coping with trauma and psychological stress caused by displacement and conflict.

Traditional livelihood programs often focus primarily on vocational training or financial assistance. However, emotional distress and unstable daily routines frequently prevent participants from sustaining income-generating activities.

Without addressing psychological readiness first, many livelihood interventions struggle to produce lasting economic stability.

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## The TISS Approach

The **Trauma-Informed Self-Reliance System (TISS)** integrates mental health stabilization, behavioral development, and livelihood activation within a structured pathway.

Rather than beginning directly with economic training, the program first supports participants in rebuilding emotional stability and consistent routines that enable sustainable livelihood participation.

The program pathway follows five stages:

**Trauma Stabilization → Behavior Consistency → Livelihood Activation → Income Stability → Peer Leadership**

This approach enables participants to move from immediate survival toward sustainable economic self-reliance.

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## Background and Context

Uganda hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world. Adjumani District alone hosts more than **230,000 refugees**, primarily from South Sudan.

Many refugee households face limited economic opportunities and declining humanitarian assistance as international funding for refugee response continues to decrease.

At the same time, displacement and prolonged poverty have created widespread psychological stress and trauma.

Experience from many livelihood interventions shows that emotional distress and unstable routines can interfere with planning, decision-making, and sustained engagement in income-generating activities.

Recognizing this challenge, Voice for Humanity Uganda developed the **Trauma-Informed Self-Reliance System (TISS)** to address both emotional recovery and economic opportunity within a single integrated model.

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## The TISS Program Model

TISS is delivered through a **structured 12-week cohort model** that combines group sessions, behavioral development, and livelihood activation.

Each cohort includes **10–15 participants** who meet regularly throughout the program period.

The model progresses through four key stages:

### **Stabilization**

Participants engage in group sessions focused on stress management, emotional awareness, and trauma-informed support. These sessions help participants rebuild confidence and emotional stability.

### **Behavior Building**

Participants develop consistent daily routines, accountability practices, and positive habits that support long-term livelihood participation.

### **Livelihood Activation**

Participants begin launching small income-generating activities based on local market opportunities. Common activities include:

- vegetable selling
- poultry farming
- baking and food preparation
- small retail businesses

## Peer Leadership

Graduates are encouraged to mentor future participants and strengthen community support networks.

This structure enables participants to build the psychological and behavioral foundations necessary for sustainable economic activity.

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## Program Implementation

The TISS program is currently implemented among vulnerable women living in refugee-hosting communities in Adjumani.

Key implementation elements include:

- cohort-based group sessions
- weekly program engagement over a 12-week period
- livelihood planning and activation support
- community mentorship development

Each cohort includes **10–15 participants**, and the program aims to support **four cohorts annually**, reaching approximately **40–60 participants per year**.

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## Funding Logic

Program funding supports both delivery of the structured program and livelihood activation for participants.

Typical funding structure includes:

- **\$500** supports one participant to start a livelihood activity
- **\$5,000** supports one full cohort
- **\$25,000** supports four cohorts in one year

These resources enable participants to establish sustainable income-generating activities that support their households.

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## Expected Outcomes

The program aims to support refugees and host-community members in rebuilding stable livelihoods while strengthening resilience within their communities.

Expected outcomes include:

- improved emotional wellbeing and stress management
- stronger daily routines and behavioral consistency
- increased participation in income-generating activities
- improved household economic stability
- development of peer mentorship networks

Over time, graduates who become mentors can help expand the program's reach through community support networks.

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## Monitoring and Learning

Voice for Humanity Uganda is committed to continuous program improvement.

The organization monitors several indicators, including:

- participant engagement and attendance
- livelihood continuation over time
- behavioral consistency and routine development
- resilience during economic challenges

These insights help refine program delivery and strengthen future implementation.

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## Conclusion

The Trauma-Informed Self-Reliance System represents an integrated approach to supporting refugee livelihoods by addressing both psychological recovery and economic opportunity.

By combining trauma-informed support with practical livelihood development, the program helps participants rebuild confidence, establish income-generating activities, and support others within their communities.

Voice for Humanity Uganda welcomes collaboration with partners committed to strengthening resilience and economic opportunity for vulnerable communities.