

Learning event on self-reliance and resilience for displacement affected communities

Key points

- There is need for more support from the international community to ensure that those affected by displacement can access better credit for greater financial stability. Partners could share the risk that denies refugees loans, for instance by giving guarantees on behalf of the refugees, then they could be supported to access more loans in order to be more self-reliant and resilient.
- To have meaningful engagement with communities, actors can adopt a Community Engagement Scale as a way of assessing where the staff and communities are in terms of programme involvement and progress. This would require that communities are informed, meaningfully consulted and their input integrated, and for communities co-design and co-manage projects.
- It should be recognized that refugees and displaced populations are not just passive victims and that they have skills, talents, and aspirations (as depicted in the documentary *A journey through my city*). While many are in need of assistance, they have capacities as well as vulnerabilities.
- There is a need to document good practices of self-reliance and resilience emerging at the local level and in the region to promote cross-learning.
- An enabling environment, especially the legal environment—access to documentation, freedom of movement and access to micro-credit—is critical for displaced persons to develop self-reliance and resilience whereby the national

government adapts a ‘whole of government approach’ working together with international agencies to support this process.

- A competitive stance often develops among NGOs, making coordination difficult and leading to disjointed efforts. It is critical to enhance collaboration through the leveraging on each other’s strengths and capacities to ensure that efforts aimed at building refugee and host community self-reliance and resilience were done in a holistic manner, working on a common vision.

Introduction

On 5 October 2017, the Rift Valley Institute, in collaboration with the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) and IGAD, convened a half-day learning event on ‘Self-reliance and resilience for displacement affected communities’. The event aimed to bring together multi-sectorial stakeholders to discuss how to link and adapt self-reliance and resilience approaches, as well efforts by humanitarian and development actors to avoid the creation of parallel systems in order to enhance protection and solutions for displacement affected communities. The event began with a panel discussion, asking: ‘How can self-reliance and resilience approaches be best applied in forced displacement contexts?’ Following the panel, the event’s 63 participants from government, development, humanitarian, refugees, academia and private sector stakeholders, split into five smaller groups to discuss key issues around self-reliance and and resilience.

Participants

Martijn Goddeeris (Chair), *Chief of party, Building Resilient communities in Somalia (BRCiS) Consortium*

John Paul Magezi, *Protection/Environment and Energy Focal Officer, Office of the Prime Minister, Department of Refugees, Government of Uganda*

Hasina Akhter, *Country Representative, BRAC Uganda*

Agnes Wanjuki Ndwiga, *General Manager, Corporate & Public Sector Banking, Equity Bank*

Dustin Caniglia, *Resilience Programme Manager, Concern Worldwide*

Refugee experiences

A short documentary by the SPARK Programme, *A journey through my city*, was screened at the event. It highlighted that refugees and displaced populations are not just passive victims and that they have skills, talents, and aspirations. While many are in need of assistance, they have capacities as well as vulnerabilities. Rather than assuming a need for indefinite care and maintenance, interventions should nurture such capacities. The documentary also placed emphasis on the importance of enhancing social cohesion between refugees and the host communities (Turkana) to mitigate potential conflict. The documentary is a product of the SPARK Livelihoods programme which is being implemented by five agencies operating in Kakuma, in Kenya.

In line with ReDSS commitments and recommendations to putting displacement affected communities at the centre, two entrepreneurs who shared their personal refugee experiences on attaining self-reliance and resilience were present at the event. This aided in framing the event through the eyes of the refugees.

Joseline Tuyisenge, from Rwanda, is a refugee in Nairobi. She is a tailor and a mother of three. She sells her wares at the open-air Maasai Markets located at various places in the city on different days.

She came to Kenya in 1998 as a young girl after a brief stay in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). 'I did not know about life ...' she says, 'I had to get married, [the marriage] collapsed ... and I was left as a single mother.' To make ends

Definitions

- **Resilience** is the ability of people, households, communities, countries and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth (USAID, 2012)
- **Self-reliance** is the **social and economic ability** of an individual, a household or a community to **meet essential needs** in a sustainable manner and with dignity. Self-reliance, as a program approach, refers to **developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern**, reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian or external assistance (UNHCR, 2005)
- **Early solutions planning** encompasses steps to build the self-reliance and resilience of returnees and host communities in the early stages of return (ReDSS & IRC, 2016)

meet, she began hawking *mitumba* (second-hand clothes) that she sourced from Gikomba Market. She bought these clothes with KES 3,000 that she borrowed from a friend. With support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Danish Refugee Council, she began selling handicrafts at supported markets twice a month. She initially sold other peoples' handicrafts but with time, she made a profit of KES 40,000 which she used to purchase her own electric sewing machine. Today, she makes handicrafts with her aunt and her stock is worth KES 200,000.

Tuyisenge is thankful to the Kenyans who welcomed her and to the UNHCR and the Danish Refugee Council for the entrepreneurial support. However, she says they still need more support to be able to access credit and do more business as they currently cannot get loans from banks.

Kapya Katungwa, also recounted his flight from Congo (DRC). Katungwa arrived in Kenya in 2000. After several years, he was introduced to the Danish Refugee Council. After an interview he was trained on how to do business. He received a grant to buy tools and materials to begin working



Refugee market. Photograph by Rufus Karanja, ReDSS

as a wood carver. However, he could not get enough customers to buy his items. The Danish Refugee Council assisted him with more training on basic business skills, product development and marketing.

Katungwa is happy that the Government of Kenya allowed him to stay in the country, to work and acquire an identification card. He is also in a registered village savings and loans (VSLA) group with four Kenyans and their business is doing well. Nevertheless, they face a challenge in the quality of their tools.

The stories of Tuyisenge and Katungwa illustrate the importance of a comprehensive approach to building self-reliance for refugees through the provision of training, start-up capital, resources, advocacy for access to documentation for refugees and microcredit financing, follow-up interventions in the event of failure and peer support.

Panel discussion: How can self-reliance and resilience approaches be best applied in forced displacement contexts?

Focus on Uganda: Strengthening the conditions for self-reliance and resilience—John Paul Magezi, a Protection, Environment and Energy Focal Officer in the Department of Refugees under the Office of the Prime Minister

The critical role of a robust legal framework and strategy in hosting refugees has been underscored by the Ugandan example. The success of the Uganda's progressive refugee policy is largely due to political goodwill from national leaders and the generosity of the host communities who welcome the refugees which has enabled the government to keep its borders open, even as new arrivals have increased in the past months.

Magezi underlined the need to support countries hosting such large numbers of refugees, through a well-coordinated national to grass-roots settlement approach. For example, through the provision of land to refugees for cultivation benefits Uganda

both domestically and commercially. However, the support from key ministerial technical teams that support self-reliance and resilience also remains key to this success. Uganda shifted from the traditional care and maintenance approach to one that strengthens self-reliance through freedom of movement and right to work—and integrated programming for both displaced and host communities.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to be done to support Uganda's tremendous effort as the fragile regional situation particularly with the current South Sudan crisis means that new refugees are coming in even as the country struggles to cater to those already there. This issue is compounded by local political dynamics. In some areas hosting refugees there is a perception of refugees being treated better than nationals. To manage these challenges, Uganda has included refugees within the scope of its National Development Plan II (NDP II). NDP II requires the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to develop and implement a Refugee Settlement Transformative Agenda to achieve self-reliance and local settlement for refugees, and to promote social development in the refugee hosting areas as a durable solution to the refugee problems, while protecting national and local interests.

Multi-sectorial approaches to strengthening self-reliance and resilience approaches—Hasina Akhter, Country Representative of BRAC Uganda

The BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Approach, which originally initiated in Bangladesh, aims to build secure livelihoods for the poor through improving food security, better health, social capital, financial literacy and productive skills. The Graduation Approach is a time-bound sequenced intervention that is focused on long-term development. Due to its sequenced nature, all steps in the programme must be implemented within the two years to avoid failure.

In 2016, BRAC conducted a baseline survey of 1,650 households in the Kiryandongo area in Uganda among host and settlement populations, in preparation for the programme. The biggest challenges has been programme costs. In Bangladesh it costs USD 300 per beneficiary, while in Uganda the amount is much higher at USD

1,400 per beneficiary. This is due to high food insecurity, poor access to basic health, water and sanitation facilities. Inequalities caused by lack of education and proper infrastructure contribute to limited technical and life-skills capacities.

Nevertheless, BRAC has been able to proceed with training and transfers of assets. The beneficiaries also receive a monthly cash stipend of around USD 30 for 18 months. They have pooled their savings in a revolving fund to be used for implementing business plans as a group for better access to markets. Health services are also offered at reduced rates, through a voucher system, for both host and settlement communities. To evaluate progress of this model, social audits are done regularly through public hearings to receive any suggestions or complaints.

Strengthening linkages with private sector—Agnes Ndwiga, Equity Bank General Manager, Corporate & Public Sector Banking

There is a growing need to find better ways for refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and serve as economic engines in their host countries. However, the financial infrastructure in these communities, particularly in banking, payments and remittances, remains inadequate. Equity Bank is one of the few financial institutions that offers financial inclusion services to displacement affected communities within the East Africa region.

Holistic and cross cutting approaches for self-reliance and resilience for displaced communities illustrated in Equity's work

1. Resilience and Emergency Support
 - Payments Service Provider (PSP) Hunger Safety Net Programmes in Kenya for host communities DFiD and Australian Aid to increase resilience against cyclical drought and hunger
 - Cash payments to refugees in Kenya, South Sudan, and Rwanda with partnership of WFP and UNHCR in refugee camps and in Urban centres with HIAS and DRC
2. Financial Inclusion and Enterprise support
 - Provision of full banking services in Kakuma and Dadaab and Urban Refugees including

loans to groups and individuals in partnership with AAHI

- Innovative banking model with a last mile reach to every village through agency mobile money and our own MVNO Equitel
 - Banking facilities at refugee camps through agents for Sustainable Rural Financial System Infrastructure supporting local cash economy
3. Innovative Models
- Biometric and mobile banking services
 - Payment services through Integration with all money transfer organizations like Western Union, Money Gram, Paypal, Zoom, Equity Direct
 - Electronic Delivery and Cash Transfers
4. Livelihood Support
- Working with WFP in refugee camps for Fresh food vouchers settlement
 - Member of the Humanitarian Private Sector Partnership Platform(local partnerships promoting ownership, self-reliance, integration and social cohesion
 - Microfinance & other credit facilities -Support to refugees with loans(direct & partnerships), financial literacy education Entrepreneurship training

Agnes expressed a need for more support from the international community to ensure that those affected could access better credit for greater financial stability. Unfortunately, refugees are classified as high-risk clients, as they do not have assets, which limits how much risk the bank could take. However, if partners agreed to share the risk, for instance by giving guarantees on behalf of the refugees, then they could be supported to access more loans in order to be more self-reliant and resilient.

‘No matter how perfect a model is, it will fail without the right mentality’—Dustin Caniglia, Resilience Programme Manager of Concern Worldwide

As one of the BRCiS members, Concern Worldwide, has been using a multi-faceted approach to strengthening the resilience of local

communities in Somalia. The programme, adopts a flexible bottom-up approach that takes up to four years. It is modelled on self-help groups, which receive grants for various projects that provide safety nets to the beneficiaries. The main argument underpinning this approach is that by building a mentality of self-reliance and resilience, the beneficiary would be able and more willing to take up other projects early and creatively. Through this programming approach, Concern has been able to see the groups give literacy and numeracy training to other members of the community out of their own initiative. In the recent drought situation that has affected thousands of people in Somalia, some of the groups have collected basic emergency NFIs to distribute to those hard-hit by the severe drought. According to Caniglia, these and other successes demonstrate that:

- Development is possible no matter how protracted a displacement situation is. The groups in Somalia understand how important the projects are for their livelihoods and resilience.
- Major protection oversight has been creating dependency therefore this should be avoided when implementing these programmes. It is important to challenge groups to engage with their communities to pass on lessons and training to others.
- These innovative models seem scalable in urban contexts to help more displacement affected communities who are likely not to go back home anytime soon.

Group discussions

Group 1: How can the mainstreaming of displacement affected populations into development programming (donors and implementing partners) and national development plans (country, regional and local level) be strengthened and supported?

- It is critical to support leadership and coordinating role of the Government and strengthen national systems. States hosting refugees must be adequately supported.
- Involve national planning authority and line ministries to build in National Development Plan and systems

- Donors and agencies should support the national governments to implement and deliver programmes targeting populations according to poverty and vulnerability criteria for refugees and host communities
- Planning and delivery of assistance should include national and local service providers from the outset. This requires the involvement and inclusion of line ministries and District Local Governments.
- Enhancing national and the district-level authorities' capacity to provide assistance and deliver the same services to refugees as to its own citizens.
- Recognize that refugees and displaced populations are not just passive victims and that they have skills, talents and aspirations (as depicted in the documentary *A journey through my city*). While many are in need of assistance, they have capacities as well as vulnerabilities. Rather than assuming a need for indefinite care and maintenance, interventions should nurture such capacities. This involves improved opportunities for education, skills development, access to microcredit and financial markets, business incubation and improved internet access.
- An enabling environment, especially the legal environment is critical for displaced persons to develop resilience and self-reliance whereby the national government adopts a 'whole of government approach' working together with international agencies to support this process.
- Enabling factors, such as the dynamics of local markets, the capacities of displaced communities and the environment for external interventions need to provide a good overview of the self-reliance programming opportunities in country. Such an approach requires an enabling environment, with local impact assessments and market analysis, a good knowledge and effective participation of displacement affected communities.
- Documenting good practices of self-reliance and resilience emerging at the local level and in the region to promote cross-learning

Group 2: How can the comparative advantages of all actors best be used to enhance self-reliance and resilience programming?

- Leveraging the different mandates and expertise of different actors should be the basis for strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. All actors need to play different roles, and focus on comparative advantages in a coordinated approach within a common framework.
- Need for strong inter-sectorial coordination and planning amongst different actors. Joint planning maximizes available resources and has a greater impact on affected populations.
- Create synergies between organizations and reduce competition over resources.
- Building self-reliance and resilience in refugee operations is a challenge. This is made worse by the difficulty of different players working in the same area to coordinate their activities effectively.
- A competitive stance often develops among NGOs, making coordination difficult and leading to disjointed efforts. Five NGOs, namely Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Action Africa Help International, Film Aid Kenya and Handicapped International working in Kakuma, Kenya came together in 2016 with a goal of enhancing collaboration, leveraging each other's strengths to ensure that efforts aimed at building refugee and host community self-reliance and resilience were done in a holistic manner, working on a common vision.
- Partnerships to be based on market assessments and how skills are matched with capacity building opportunities, such as the SPARK approach. It seeks to answer what the market needs and which gaps can be filled in a sustainable way
- This requires a multi-stakeholder and sectoral, rights and needs based programming approach. Therefore, the process must be viewed as collective action rather than mandate driven based on an inclusive, participatory and consensus

building approach. The common goal is to give the millions of displaced persons a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance.

- Collection of evidence should be strengthened, to inform more innovative livelihood and economic development interventions, as well as learning from the evidence generated by development interventions to date. This could include testing and comparative monitoring of outcomes from new and innovative interventions that empower refugees and host communities, improving access to and quality of both economic and social service delivery, building institutions and engaging the private sector.
- Need to include learning partners and academic institutions in order to share relevant information and lessons on effective resilience building.
- Civil society partners should be recognized as more than mere service delivery partners, and their valuable expertise and networks should increasingly be utilized.

Group 3: How can actors and the private sector support investments that address the needs of refugees and host communities and jump-start local economies?

Localize the formal process that supports small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through reducing as many blockages as possible in business registration, licensing and certification. For example, the one-stop service offered by the Huduma Centre in Kenya can inspire such market-facilitation.

Have ‘biodiversity in the why’—enhance partnerships with actors of varying interests like the private sector that not only has an economic goal but also of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Look at the context and needs (groundtruthing) before starting projects so as to identify the appropriate financial products for people within their varied cultural, religious, gender, skill-based and ecological settings

There is a need for actors to share best practices e.g. innovation in programming such as private

sector engagement with Equity Bank by AAHI in Kenya, and other innovations

Humanitarian, development and business communities must work together to catalyze change that positively impacts both refugees and host communities

A comprehensive approach recognizing and leveraging the unique insights and contributions of all actors is necessary and private sector solutions are an essential component. It means investing time and resources in creating jobs, promoting enterprise development and building the skills of both refugees and the communities in which they live

Group 4: What are the opportunities within the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)/IGAD Nairobi Plan of Action on Durable Solutions for Somali refugees to ensure a whole society approach and new ways of working? How can we capitalize on these and what are the key challenges to overcome?

- Use CRRF Secretariats in the different countries as a starting point for the coordination and implementation of these frameworks.
- The process should be inclusive and adopt a ‘displacement affected communities’ approach—inclusive of refugees, returnees and host communities—and to place collective accountability to displaced populations at the centre of the action
- Create links with other coordination structures to have a coherent approach
- Donors and actors should give multi-year funding commitments as these are long-term projects
- Information should be documented, especially for the affected communities
- Data should be reliable to map existing and planned activities.
- Capitalize on the current positive energy and commitment to these plans. Coordination at the national level should not only focus on refugee actors but all other relevant actors and

authorities to make it a comprehensive and sustainable process.

Group 5: How can actors more meaningfully include displacement affected communities in their self-reliance and resilience programming? How can we be more directly accountable to communities?

- Adopt a Community Engagement Scale as a way of assessing where staff and communities are in terms of programme involvement and progress. This would require that communities are informed, consulted and their input taken into account—communities co-design and co-manage projects
- Encourage communities to take leading roles in the project process in staffing, learning, implementation, monitoring and feedback to ensure that their interests are represented.
- Donors should find new ways to work with displacement affected communities in the programme cycle
- Best practice should be shared in a harmonized way, by focusing on inclusion and tapping into existing structures, to avoid duplication of project committees.
- Document and learn with the community to make information available to them too.

- Shift mindsets within organizations, on humanitarian programming and community engagement, as vital information is rarely passed onto to the staff in the field.
- Have meaningful engagements by transferring power to the communities, specifically financial power. How is the community guiding the project design, project implementation and budget? This could be through piloting community-led contracting.

Conclusion

New approaches are needed for effective humanitarian–development coordination to find solutions to protracted displacement and give the millions of displaced a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance. We have a collective responsibility to challenge our structures and systems to do more and better together in the search for durable solutions for displacement affected communities in the region. This is why the CRRF process and the various ongoing solutions policy and programming initiatives in the region are critical to ensure that we address displacement and solutions differently. This change requires political resolve, long-term investments and a multi-sectorial rights and needs based programming approach to work towards prevention and solutions to reduce displacement levels.



Credits

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The Rift Valley Institute works in eastern and central Africa to bring local knowledge to bear on social, political and economic development.

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