

# **“Intervention: Resilience and Emergency Response (BRIDGE)”**

## **Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

**LRWG – September 2021**

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# Introduction

# Objectives of the today session

- ❖ Learning from the experience of the BRIDGE intervention
  - ✓ The objectives and process of the U-Learn review
  - ✓ Understanding the BRIDGE intervention
  - ✓ Share findings from the BRIDGE intervention review
  - ✓ Share lessons and recommendations for future similar interventions





# The U-Learn review

# U-Learn review of BRIDGE: objectives

## General objectives:

- To assess the achievements of the BRIDGE intervention
- To learn and inform similar livelihoods programmes in the West Nile region

## Specific objectives:

- To evaluate the achievement of intended **impact** of “*increasing income for refugee and host-community in the West-Nile*”
- To evaluate the **effective** achievement of intended **outcomes**
- To evaluate the **sustainability** of these achievements beyond the intervention
- To evaluate how **Gender** was effectively mainstreamed in the intervention’s activities
- To identify lessons learned and suggest recommendations for similar livelihoods programmes

**U-Learn** took over the review of the BRIDGE intervention at the end of March 2021

# U-Learn review of BRIDGE: process

## 1. Secondary desk review

- Baseline / end-line survey summary report
- Qualitative interviews with BRIDGE staff and IPs
- Quarterly reports
- Final Narrative Report
- Re-Hope final evaluation
- ...

## 2. Primary qualitative data collection

- IDIs / FGDs with beneficiaries and KIIs with implementers

## 3. Analysis of primary data collected

## 4. Synthesis of findings from the first phase of the review (old consultant) and second phase (U-Learn)

## 5. Identification of lessons learned and recommendations





# The BRIDGE Intervention



# Goals of the BRIDGE intervention

Main goal: “**increase income and resilience for refugees and host communities in West Nile**”

Three main objectives:

1. Refugees and host communities gain access to jobs and start micro/small enterprises;
2. Innovation Centres are recognized as hubs for learning, creativity and employment linkages;
3. Refugees and host farmers increase yield and sales of selected agricultural commodities.

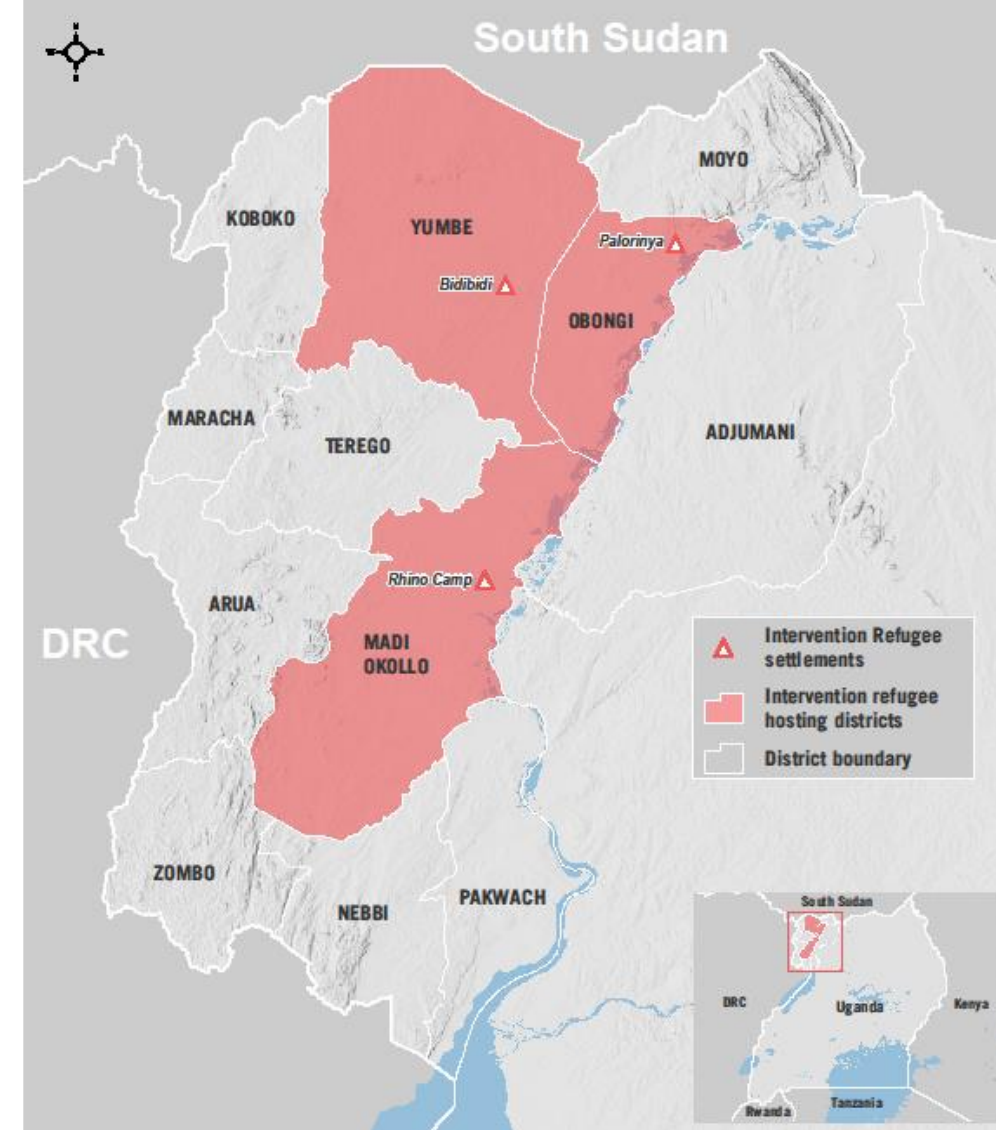
# 4W of the intervention

**WHAT:** Second phase of the ReHope pilot\*. Livelihoods intervention with focus on the strengthening of the Innovation Centre experience and the implementation of a Market System Development (MSD) approach, targeting both refugee and host communities.

**WHO:** Mercy Corps in partnership with 7 organizations: 2 private sector organizations GADC and FUZU, and 5 NGOs CTEN, ICRAF, Village Enterprise, Innovation Village and HYT.

**WHERE:** Moyo (Palorinya) Arua (Rhino Camp) and Yumbe (Bidibidi).

**WHEN:** December 2018 to June 2020.



\*Part of a series of initiatives from aid actors for implementing durable solutions to the refugee crisis in Uganda, specifically exploring a MSD approach to strengthen the ability of refugee and host-community groups to engage with and benefit from the labour markets.

# **BRIDGE Intervention: 2 work-streams**



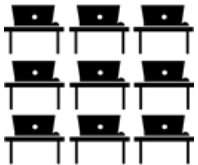
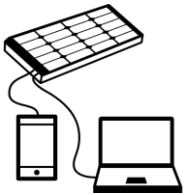
**Innovation Centres**

**Market System Development**



# Innovation Centres

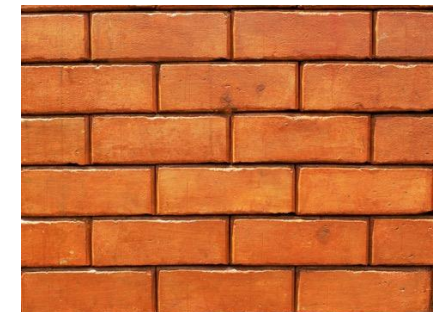
## Services



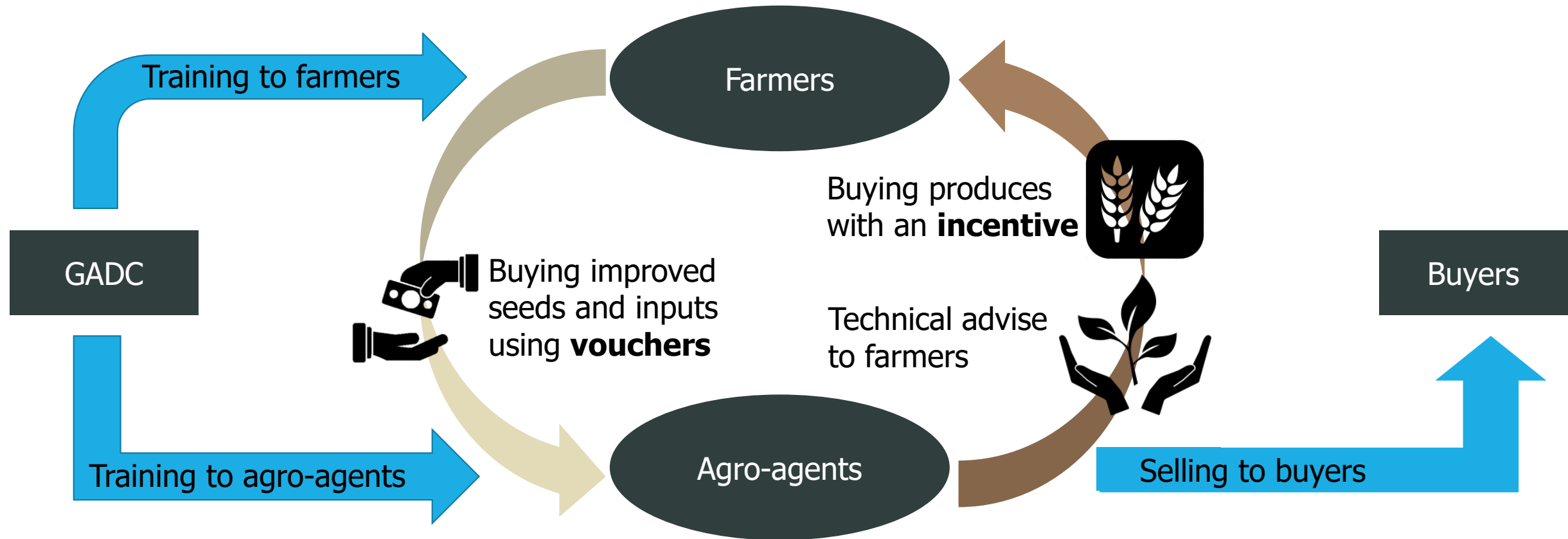
## Training

Partner	Activity
CTEN	Computer literacy and ITC training
FUZU	CV creation and linkage with on-line job offers
HYT	Training on ISSB technology
Innovation Village	Craft/briquette making training - Platform Kumi-Kumi (for selling craft products)
ICRAF (only Rhino Camp IC)	Combining environmental sustainability and business development

## Structure



# Market system development approach



# 1. Innovation Centres (ICs) approach





# **ICs: key findings**

# Innovation Centers - Impact

To what extent have the ICs contributed to improving **the level of employment and entrepreneurship** among refugee and host populations?

Interviews with beneficiaries of the ICs indicated that the activities of the IC have:

- 1) supported **entrepreneurialism** / **business start-up**;
- 2) had positive effects on both **employment level** and **quality**;

“The Agri-business skills and entrepreneurship training I got from Mercy Corps has helped me to properly plan for my business. We were trained to grow cash crops and the entrepreneurship training helped me to keep my business records clear... I also joined a village saving group (VSLA) where I save money weekly”

(host female IC visitor Zone 4, Bidibidi)

“I was able to get job. Because of the BRIDGE project and CV training from Fuzu, I was able to get a job with War Child Holland as a facilitator with a contract of two years”

(refugee male Fuzu graduate, Zone 4, Bidibidi)

# Innovation Centers - Effectiveness

To what extent were the training delivered at the ICs effective in increasing access to job and foment entrepreneurialism?



Review training by training



# Findings indicate that computer literacy training developed skills that match job market needs; female participants did not feel targeted by these types of training

**CTEN**  
(Community Technology  
Empowerment Network )

**IT training** (computer literacy, graphics and design, computer repair, data collection/analysis, film making)

Bidibidi, zone 4

366 individuals graduated

540 certificates issued



IT courses effective in providing participants with relevant skills to find a job



Skills developed matched labor demand



Complementarity with Fuzu



Some participants mentioned lack of equipment to practice acquired skills



Female participants did not feel sufficiently targeted by those trainings

“I personally got a job here [at the IC] after being a trainee. Another beneficiary created content that captured the attention of UNHCR and he participated in a world-wide contest from which he emerged as the winner”  
(IC facilitator KI Zone 4, Bidibidi)

# Some participants reported finding a job thanks to Fuzu platform; however, majority felt the vacancies not tailored for the settlement context

Fuzu

Jobs posting website Support in CV preparation
Bidibidi, zone 4
2,929 users registered
1,155 CV created



Participants learned how to prepare their CV



Some participants found a job thanks to Fuzu platform








The type of vacancies advertised in the platform were frequently not suitable for the standard refugee profile

“Fuzu opened emails for us and every Thursday, we could receive job alerts on our phones so we could apply online. Personally I applied and got a job with Action Against Hunger which helped me and my family a lot, though it was a short time contract”

(host male Fuzu graduate, Zone 4 Bidibidi)



# Findings indicates that HYT supported trainee in getting a job. However, some reported that materials used for ISSB were not adapted to the context or not available.

HYT Haileybury Youth Trust	<b>ISSB* training</b> (training to construct the bricks and practical experience in building the ICs' rooms)	 Participants generally satisfied with the training received
	Bidibidi, zone 3-4	 Participants able to spend skills in the job market
	 26 individuals trained	 Some participants mentioned lack of material/tools or material different from the one generally used
	 14 graduate trainees hired	<p>"My brother was trained here on how to make the bricks (ISSB), then he went back to South Sudan and he is working there. He is even constructing a hotel in Juba and he is sending me some money. If there is a training, I will be willing to go for it"</p> <p>Refugee male IC Zone 3 visitor, Bidibidi</p> <p>"The training I got was really good, only that I have not got any opportunity to work and lack the tools to execute the knowledge I have acquired"</p> <p>Host male HYT graduate, IC Zone 3, Bidibidi</p>





\* Interlocking Stabilised Soil Block



# Findings indicate that training of briquettes and craft-making supported some participants in generating income

Innovation Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Craft/briquette making training</b></li><li>- <b>Platform Kumi-Kumi</b> (for selling craft products)</li></ul>	 Trainings helped participants to generate income by selling briquettes or craft products
	Bidibidi, zone 4	 Some participants mentioned lack of equipment to practice acquired skills
	<div><div>60</div><div>Vendors registered in Kumi Kumi</div></div> <div><div>171</div><div>Participants trained on tailoring for business</div></div> <div><div>36</div><div>Participants trained on briquettes making</div></div>	<p>“The only positive change I have experienced in my life is the knowledge I got from making bags because, before, it was really hard for me to get my own money but now I can make bags and sell them”</p> <p>Refugee female Innovation Village graduate, Bidibidi</p> <p>“Yes I am now financially stable compared to my friends because now I am able to support my family through briquette selling”</p> <p>Host female Innovation Village graduate,</p>

# Qualitative findings indicate ICs trainings efficiently supported skills’ development, entrepreneurialism and employment level.

ICRAF	Combining environmental sustainability and business development	 Participants generally satisfied with the training and activities received
		 Some participants were able to generate income selling wood
		 Participants are more sensitive to environmental sustainability
	Rhino Camp	 Refugees has lower access to land and therefore harder to involve them in commercial tree planting
	170k Tree seedlings produced	
	2304 Participants reached with awareness activities	
	404 participants trained on tree-based enterprises	
		<p>“I planted trees, used them for building and sold some hence getting some income for taking care of my family”</p> <p>Refugee female ICRAF graduate, Rhino Camp</p>
		<p>“In transforming the community to become green, community members now know the importance of planting trees and can access energy/fuel for households in our community”</p> <p>Refugee female ICRAF graduate, Rhino Camp</p>

# ICs allowed communities to access Internet, connect with family & friends in home-countries and access on-line opportunities

24% of refugees in Bidibidi accessing internet

83% of refugees lacked knowledge on how to access internet

73% of refugees reporting cost of internet-enable handset

50% of refugees accessing source of energy

GSMA, "The digital lives of refugees", 2019

I find it very easy to type my work at the IC because of easy access to computers and there is reliable electricity for charging phones, hence making communication very easy for us"

(refugee male IC visitor Zone 4, Bidibidi)

"What I see good is the internet. It helped me find my people back in South Sudan. We did not know where our people were.

Now we can use Facebook to get in contact with our family and friends back home. I created my account here and looked for them...we did not know if they were alive"

(refugee female IC visitor Zone 4, Bidibidi)

"Learning, before I didn't know how to use the internet completely but when Mercy Corps came here with this project and started providing free internet services, I forced myself to learn how to browse the internet on my own and now, I can tell you I am good at surfing"

(host male IC visitor Zone 3, Bidibidi)

# Innovation Centers - Sustainability

- Despite showing positive effects in the community, the ICs were **not found able to sustain themselves** with endogenous resources.
- ICs are still functioning with other **external funds** (other donors recognized their potential).
- More planning is needed for making the business model self-sustainable.



# **GENDER:** Women reportedly faced gender specific barriers in frequenting the ICs and participating in the trainings



Women reported feeling intimidated by multitude of men at the ICs



Women reportedly bare the domestic and caring workload, undermining their capacity to regularly attend training



Women and girls reported perceiving that the IT/technology training were “men-oriented”



Participants reported that the toilet can be improved with gender division and with facilities for people with disabilities

**KIs** (BRIDGE staff and IC’s facilitators) and **beneficiaries** agreed on the barriers identified

# **ICs: Learning and recommendations**

# Innovation Centers –

## What can we learn from the BRIDGE experience?

1. Longer time is needed for identifying strategies for the **ICs model to become self-sustained**.
2. When promoting the use of online job platform for labor supply and demand match, include job postings tailored to the **average refugee profile**.
3. Conduct more **rigorous tests of training market value and employability**, and offer more support connecting trainees to internships and apprenticeships.
4. Design **skills training modules that appeal to a wider category of persons**, appropriate for the settlement ecosystem.
5. The **failure rate of businesses** in the context of the intervention should be considered and taken into account when looking at the impact and sustainability of such projects.
6. **Becoming an entrepreneur is challenging**, especially in the settlement context. **Address challenges from the early stages**.
7. **Infrastructure**: favor the use of material resistant to the heat (ISSB) instead of container, plan the spaces under the shade and focus on gender-inclusive toilets. Take into account the **specific barriers of women** and plan for breastfeeding space, provisions for childcare, early afternoon training sessions etc.

## 2. Market Systems Development (MSD) approach



# **MSD approach: key findings**

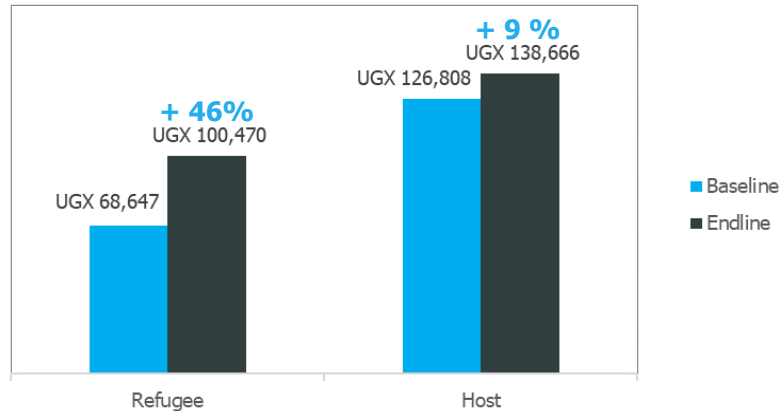


# MSD approach- Impact

To what extent have the MSD approach activities contributed to “Increase income and resilience for refugees and host communities in West Nile” by improving **the level of income** among refugee and host populations farmers and agro-agents?

Interviews with farmers and agro-agents indicated a **positive change of income level**

n baseline: 650, n endline: 517



"We have now shifted from subsistence farming to commercial or modern way of farming, as a result our scale of production has increased hence we no longer grow for home consumption only but majorly for sale"

Host farmer, Yumbe

"Thanks to the income and yields acquired as a result of the project, my family can now change diet, I can pay for school requirements of my children, I can also cater for the basic needs of my household"

Refugee agro-agent, Bidibidi

# MSD approach- Effectiveness

To what extent have the MSD approach activities being effective to achieve the outcome “Refugees/host community farmers increase yield and sales of selected agricultural commodities”

Interviews with farmers and agro-agents indicated that there was an **increase in yields and sales**

## Driving factors



Agricultural extensions



Improved seeds

## Limiting factor








Access to land

"We have now shifted from subsistence farming to commercial or modern way of farming, as a result our scale of production has increase hence we no longer grow for home consumption only but majorly to be sold"

*Host community farmers Bidibidi*

# The **training** delivered to the lead farmers reportedly improved agriculture yields

-  Content and delivery of the training satisfying
-  Positively changed the way farmers practice agriculture  
(*line planting, planning of planting season, crops protection, post-harvest handling*)
-  Request for training's handout notes
-  The quality of the training depended on the lead farmers – required follow-up to ensure standard quality
-  Costly technology generally not adopted after the project (ox-plough tilling)

"I have been able to practice good postharvest handling practices. We were putting all the crops together in the granary while now we separate them. I also got financial literacy training on how to best use the money from the crop sold. I can also train others to get high yield"

Refugee male farmer in Palorinya

"All these technological innovations are interesting but it's very expensive to acquire them, so I choose to maintain some of the cheap traditional methods"

Refugee male farmer in Bidibidi

# Most of the **improved seeds** reportedly gave farmers higher yields and were more resistant to pests/weather changes



Voucher system allowed affordable access to improved seeds



Most of the improved seeds recognized as superior



Voucher system limited the choices of farmers



Distribution of seeds not always aligned with planting season

"My discontent was that the seeds were not brought in time and groundnuts seeds that were given to us was rotten or spoilt, we tried raising the issue up but nothing was done about it"

Refugee farmer in Palorinya

"We suggest that Mercy Corps gives cash instead of vouchers to farmers so that we can get these agricultural inputs like seeds from agro dealers of our own choice who can sell the inputs at reasonable price"

Refugee male farmer in Bidibidi

# Scarcity of **land** was reported by refugee farmers as key barrier to shift from subsistence to commercial farming

"Community members have adopted crop cultivation seriously, as we speak now, everyone is **struggling to acquire land** as early as possible before the rainy season. Big companies have taken interest in our produce and they come up to the settlement to buy from us "

Refugee farmer in Bidibidi



# MSD approach – Sustainability

Most of the changes were still in place, however **when changes implied a cost** (new technology) or **when the changes were triggered by external factors**, they were found **less likely to be sustained** beyond the project

	Elements	Status	Comments
1	Use of improved seeds	Yes	Farmers recognized the advantage of the improved seeds. They save part of the harvest and re-use them in the next season
2	Use of new technologies	Partially	Farmers generally adopted the new way of farming ( <i>line planting, soil preparation, protection of the crop, post-harvest handling</i> ) but the new technologies that have a cost were hardly sustained
3	Relationship between farmers - agro agents	Partially	Relationships were regulated by factors such incentive for off-taking (to the agro-agents) and vouchers (to the farmers). When removed, relationships were regulated by market dynamics

# **GENDER:** Lower access to income appears to be women's main limitation in benefiting from the MSD activities



Lower income limited the chance to buy the improved seeds



Lower participation of female farmers in the training (heavy domestic workload, high-illiteracy of women, lack of information) – GRA 2019 – Mercy Corps

“The women in these communities are not so much engaged in production like the men and they did not really participate in buying the improved seeds and also becoming lead farmers and agro-dealers in Ofua [Rhino Camp] and Palorinya. The challenge for the women is that most of them do not have access to income and in most cases cannot buy the seeds for planting”

KI from GADC

# **MSD approach: learning and recommendations**

# MSD approach –

## What can we learn from the BRIDGE experience?

1. The issue of **access to land** shall be taken into account when planning agriculture activities for refugees.
2. The introduction of **new agricultural technologies** (especially when costly) shall take into account beneficiaries' economic capacities and preferences
3. **Voucher and incentives** are a good starting point to facilitate **relationships between market actors**. However, relationships survive only if there is a gain in the relationship.
4. Encouraging **farmer-to-farmer relationships** could increase farmers' negotiation powers when interacting with wholesalers or big buyers.
5. To ensure **women meaningful participation** as lead farmers and agro agents, their **specific challenges** (limited income to purchase seeds, own land, and time to attend extension training sessions) shall be addressed (engage women where they are at, gardens, and farms, cost-sharing or additional discounts on subsidized seeds for female farmers).
6. **Training**: when relying on **ToT**, it is important to monitor closely the replication of the training to ensure consistency in the quality of the training delivered. Distribute **training handouts** supports self-study for sustainability.

**Any questions, comments?**



# Thanks for your attention!

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