

# GRADUATION COMPENDIUM

Building a Common understanding of  
Graduation Programmes in the Uganda  
Refugee Response

# Acknowledgements

## About the USAID Uthabiti Activity

The USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)-funded Uthabiti Activity is implemented by Save the Children, in partnership with Uganda Response Innovation Lab (U-RIL), Swisscontact, and Grameen Foundation. It is facilitating diverse resilient and sustainable livelihood strategies for refugees and host communities in Isingiro and Lamwo districts. Uthabiti focuses on promoting livelihood opportunities in primarily off-farm activities while also addressing critical gaps in the selected value chains that limit economic activity, including access to skills, energy and financial services.

## About U-Learn

The FCDO-funded U-Learn consortium is led by U-RIL, in partnership with IRC and IMPACT Initiatives. Its objective is to generate and encourage uptake of evidence and insights for the Uganda refugee response. U-Learn is a public good designed to promote improved outcomes for refugees and host communities in Uganda. In collaboration with the government and a wide range of stakeholders, U-Learn focuses on facilitating learning, conducting assessments, and amplifying refugee voices and priorities. U-Learn specializes in Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Research and Learning.

**This publication was done in collaboration with various refugee response actors. Special thanks to the organizations, experts, and individuals whose valuable contributions made this compendium possible - your expertise and collaboration have greatly enhanced the quality of this work.**

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© U-Learn. Refugee's shop in Palabek Refugee settlement, West Nile. 2024

# 1. Why this paper ?

This practical compendium is designed to inform the dialogue of humanitarian and development actors around the graduation concept applied in the refugee response in Uganda.

Policy documents and implemented interventions vary in how they define graduation, self-reliance, and resilience which hinders a shared understanding of the concepts.

The ongoing work led by Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Ministry of Gender Labour & Social Development (MGLSD), Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Livelihoods and Self Reliance Working Group to standardise measurement and interventions for self-reliance in the refugee response is a critical exercise and opportunity for partners to learn from one another.

More specifically, there are plans to establish a minimum livelihoods investment package to support households achieve self-reliance and a harmonised measurement framework, both of which will be critical guidance for graduation programmes.

How we choose to talk about these concepts matters: it shapes the expectations, objectives, and approaches of all stakeholders in the refugee response system, including practitioners, policymakers, researchers, funders, governments, and refugees themselves. The aim of this paper is to encourage reflection and build a common understanding of the graduation approaches in Uganda as well as present an exhaustive list of graduation interventions implemented in the country.

Furthermore, to support this reflection, U-Learn produced an Overview of the 2022 National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation in Rwanda<sup>1</sup>. U-Learn, in collaboration with the LRSWG, also produced resources on sustainable livelihoods<sup>2</sup> and financial inclusion<sup>3</sup>.



© Avsi. Angelique in her couture workshop. 2024



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please contact [info@ulearn-uganda.org](mailto:info@ulearn-uganda.org) or visit the [website](#)

1 Brief available here: <https://ulearn-uganda.org/rwanda-strategy-for-sustainable-graduation-an-overview> and full Rwanda National Graduation Strategy accessible here: <https://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=57400&token=ebdc-71608f1687253826e20e38990beebefe5c85>

2 An overview of those resources can be found here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MILLGWcoQPmXvxksm0VpIqhib4AWRceB/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MILLGWcoQPmXvxksm0VpIqhib4AWRceB/view?usp=drive_link)

3 An overview of those resources can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aUCPW3262r3bHtyhHNsfP12J-TpcnLUR/view>

## 2. Background

### Context and Rationale

Uganda hosts almost 1.6 million refugees across both urban areas and 13 rural settlements<sup>4</sup> testing the country's response, resources, and openness. Despite the progressive policies and numerous programmes geared towards supporting refugees and host communities, many households struggle to become self-reliant. Considering the persisting vulnerabilities and reductions in the humanitarian funding, support designed to strengthen refugees' economic capacities becomes more instrumental. A Graduation Approach is increasingly viewed as an effective approach to overcoming the challenges of economic and social inclusion for refugees.

In the 2023 pledges made by the Government of Uganda at the Global Refugee Forum, graduation was highlighted as an approach that can contribute to the objective of creating "a minimum of 300,000 viable economic opportunities for refugees and host communities by 2027"<sup>5</sup>.

Due to the protracted nature of displacement for most refugees in Uganda, refugee response actors increasingly focus on self-reliance, resilience, and nexus livelihoods programming that aims to link the humanitarian response to longer term development activities. These livelihood opportunities are intended to allow refugees to produce food and generate sufficient income for their families' daily needs, to face moderate shocks without needing social protection, and to invest in their future.

**A Graduation Approach can be defined as a model, 'the how' (provision of the pathway to self-reliance), while self-reliance describes the expected outcome, 'the what'.**



© Avsi. A couple feeds their birds. 2020.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Uganda, 2023.

# 3. Definitions

## Graduation

BRAC pioneered the Ultra-Poor Graduation approach in Bangladesh in 2002<sup>6</sup>. A Graduation Approach can be defined as a series of sequenced, multi-sectoral and time-bound interventions that aim to help people living in poverty build resilience and engage in sustainable livelihoods. Typically, a Graduation Approach (GA) is a multi-year, integrated development approach designed to address the underlying causes of poverty and support participants to build sustainable livelihoods to “graduate” out of poverty<sup>7</sup>. A Graduation Approach can be defined as a model, ‘the how’ (provision of the pathway to self-reliance), while self-reliance describes the expected outcome, ‘the what’.

**Graduation is the status of a primary participant and her/his household who has been assessed to have met the necessary conditions of self-reliance**

## Self-reliance

Self-reliance can be defined as “the ability of individuals, households, or communities to meet their essential needs in a sustainable manner and to live with dignity<sup>8</sup>”. Self-reliance is increasingly understood as being multi-dimensional, taking in all factors relevant for refugees’ well-being rather than a dichotomy between being financially self-sufficient or being dependent on external assistance. By solely focusing on economic factors and income generation, only part of the picture is covered, and therefore self-reliance will not be fully reached.

## Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability of communities and households to endure stresses and shocks<sup>9</sup>. Both self-reliance and resilience build upon the resources and capacities of individuals, communities and states, with the objective of ensuring safe and productive futures for all those impacted by a crisis. Self-reliance and resilience are interconnected and fuel each other: self-reliance can lead to resilience, while resilience is necessary to ensure progress towards self-reliance.

When households’ self-reliance is not eroded in the face of sudden-onset shocks and longer-term trends, such as climate change, they are truly resilient. Graduation is one of the approaches which can be used to achieve self-reliance and resilience. Example: 66% of participants in a Graduation Approach programme in Uganda report being able to “bounce back” from shocks and thus being resilient<sup>10</sup>.

**Graduation is a not a one size fit all and therefore not a single formula for graduation can be applied to all potential graduates. It is necessary to understand the specific context and make context-specific plans with graduation participants.**

6 BRAC, 2019.

7 Or extreme poverty - see box page 9.

8 UNHCR, 2017. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/58ca4f827.pdf>

9 OCHA, definition adapted from UNISDR, 2011.

10 AVSI Graduation to Resilience Programme data.

# 4. Key principles of a graduation approach

A Graduation Approach is a sequenced set of interventions delivered over a time bound period, usually 18-36 months. Interventions must be adapted to the local context, but they are usually based on **four foundational pillars**:



## Graduation approaches:

- Target people living in (extreme) poverty and provide basic consumption support for a period that usually ranges from 6 to 12 months, in most cases, while participants work toward gaining a stable income.
- Focus on developing viable and sustainable livelihoods, whether through self-employment, group livelihoods, or wage employment.
- Build participants' capacity to operate their livelihoods, manage their savings, build financial and digital literacy skills, and improve the wellbeing of their households.
- Include regular coaching visits and mentoring, either with individual participants (and their households) or in groups.

**Graduation is not an input-output model** in which services are provided and people graduate. Due to the complexity of poverty and the unpredictability of the external environment, adaptability and flexible interventions are required to maximise the impact.

**Sequenced intervention:** All components of a Graduation Approach are needed to ensure participants become self-reliant and have the skills, knowledge, resources, and safety nets.

## Coaching vs mentoring

In a coaching relationship, the coach supports and motivates the participant to use the acquired skills and knowledge to make decisions and achieve their goals. Mentorship involves a relationship with a more knowledgeable or experienced person to guide and nurture the growth of the participant.

Coaching could be said to be more technical and focused on skills while mentoring provides inspiration for personal growth. While both terms are often used interchangeably, there are differential benefits of each towards building the capacity of participants and households to meaningfully operate their livelihoods and foster social cohesion. Graduation programmes thus often include both.



**Prior to the beginning of a graduation programme, the following activities are conducted:**

- Assessments: A core component of graduation approach programs is the use of evidence at design and throughout implementation. Certain core assessments are often conducted to inform the contextualization of the delivery before participant engagements.
- Definition of participants profiles: participants are assessed at entry on core parameters to determine their baseline and graduation criteria parameters. The profile may include information on food security and nutrition, livelihood source and diversification, savings, WASH, basic needs, self efficacy and social networks (more in section on Measuring Graduation).
- The use of participatory targeting to ensure the poorest households are selected.

**The contextual assessments and determination of participant profile can be done through:**

- Value chain and labour market assessments
- Food security and nutrition knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) surveys
- Mapping of critical service points and market actors
- Gender and youth knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) surveys
- Climate and environmental risk assessment

Support is then provided to the selected households through a range of activities. During the planning of graduation for the selected households, it is determined which member of the household is the primary participant and secondary participants can be encouraged to join some of the activities (spouses joining coaching, skilling; youth joining skilling). Some programmes put an emphasis on sensitization of the whole household about the programme before it begins to maximise participation and understanding of the approach.

**Most graduation programmes count 5-7 modules of support which align with the four foundational pillars.**

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Possible Modules<sup>11</sup></b>
<b>Social protection</b>	Consumption support to meet the consumption gap while participants stabilise their livelihoods.
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	Core technical skills training (on and off farm agronomic and live-stock training, financial literacy, digital literacy and enterprise selection, planning and management). Asset transfers - in-kind good (such as livestock) and/or cash grant to help jump-start a sustainable economic activity (on farm, off-farm or/and non-farm <sup>12</sup> ).
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	Savings to build assets. Access to financial services.
<b>Social empowerment</b>	Coaching to ensure that participants build agency and ensure economic activities and savings thrive and grow. Mentoring. Referral and linkages.

<sup>11</sup> At the time of this review, there was no fully harmonised definition of which component the various modules fall under.

<sup>12</sup> See next box on livelihoods support page 8

# 5. How graduation approaches can achieve self-reliance

A graduation approach that considers a variety of both social and economic inclusion components is considered more effective than single-sector interventions to support most refugees self-reliance. As mentioned in the Rwanda Graduation Strategy<sup>13</sup> (see brief<sup>14</sup>), self-reliance does not look the same in any two contexts or for any two people. As a result, there is no one-size-fits-all graduation approach to achieve self-reliance.

Beyond individual and household-level interventions, a graduation approach is also related to identifying structural barriers impacting participants and designing system-level interventions that contribute to the broader development of their region, such as refugee-hosting areas. The Graduation Approach has a multiplier effect. Participants who go through graduation projects become change agents within communities and create additional safety nets. From an institutional point of view, GA offers a model to coordinate support to refugees across partners and stakeholders<sup>15</sup>.

## ON-FARM, OFF-FARM AND NON-FARM LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT

**On-farm activities consist of farming and agricultural production, including casual and seasonal labor.**

Over 90% of the refugees in Uganda live in rural areas. As such, agriculture is a vital livelihood activity in any Graduation Approach. In a [strategic positioning paper](#)<sup>16</sup>, the Livelihoods and Resilience Sector Working Group (LRWSG) makes recommendations on agricultural value chains that should be prioritised in refugee response areas to include value chains that have a greater potential to generate incomes for households. However, most refugees lack access to the knowledge, know-how, tools, and technologies needed to move beyond subsistence production and generate income. However, graduation programmes are not limited to on-farm livelihoods support and can include off-farm or non-farm activities.

**Off-farm income encompasses all agriculture-related activities that occur beyond the farm.** Viewed through a value chain lens, off-farm income includes the “middle” and “end” of the process, as agricultural goods leave the farm to ultimately reach the consumer such as extension services, processing, packaging, storage, transportation distribution, and retail sale.

**Non-farm sectors include construction, health care, hospitality, education, mining, and tourism.**

## Measuring graduation

Graduation is achieved when a participant and her/his household are assessed to have met the necessary conditions of self-reliance. They are considered self-reliant if they have a sustainable livelihood in terms of ensuring food security and nutrition, catering for basic needs and savings; and if they have an economic activity and some social capital. This can be assessed by [external parties](#)<sup>17</sup> on a regular basis. Concrete examples are provided in the project summaries (see in focus).

13 Rwanda National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation. <https://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=57400&to-ken=ebdc71608f1687253826e20e38990beebe5c85>

14 U-Learn produced an Overview of the 2022 National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation in Rwanda <https://ulearn-uganda.org/rwanda-strategy-for-sustainable-graduation-an-overview>

15 Three types of livelihoods are referenced in line with USAID conceptual framework presented among others in Noronha, 2019.

16 <https://shorturl.at/NpO78>

17 Rwanda National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation (link above)



© Avsi. Village Savings and Loans group. 2019.

Different stakeholders have conducted self-reliance programming for many years, and systematic efforts to rigorously measure the impact of these interventions are increasing, including through the use of randomised control trials (RCTs). Evidence on graduation programmes and more broadly on economic inclusion programmes highlights impact on key indicators for participants such as food security, income, assets<sup>18</sup>.

There are also some promising attempts to standardise further the measurement of results notably through the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI)<sup>19</sup> which launched the Self-Reliance Index (SRI) – a global tool<sup>20</sup> that aims to assess and measure how refugee households move towards self-reliance.

Two separate but related aspects of self-reliance are typically assessed: (1) the level of self-reliance of an individual or a household, and (2) conditions that enable or impede the achievement of self-reliance within a specific location. The first aspect relates to evaluating the effectiveness of a self-reliance intervention or programme and the latter relates to assessing how conducive the conditions within a specific location are for self-reliance.

## RSRI

In May 2020, the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative launched the Self-Reliance Index (SRI), the first global tool to measure the progress of refugee families on their paths to self-reliance (Refugee Self Reliance Initiative, 2023). By December 2022, the tool had been adopted by 40 agencies in 26 countries and has been used to assess the self-reliance status of over 20,000 households. The Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative defines 12 different aspects of self-reliance: housing, food, education, health care, health status, safety, employment, financial resources, assistance, debt, savings, and social capital. The SRI is helping practitioners gain a more comprehensive understanding of the self-reliance status of their participants, and the tool informs the design and adaptation of programming in line with client needs and capacities.

In Uganda, Trickle Up began the application of the SRI in Graduation Approach programming in Uganda; SRI testing was done in Uganda by the Danish Red Cross (Imvepi, West Nile) and AVSI (Ramwanja, Southwest). The ongoing self-reliance measurement harmonisation process led by OPM/MGLSD/CRRF/WFP is using some SRI parameters as well as some of the criteria used by other implementers in Uganda including AVSI and BRAC to develop a national self-reliance Measurement Framework, in line with the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance the upcoming World Bank, The State of Economic Inclusion Report 2024. Moving to Scale in Uncertain Times. Coming June 2024, for a review of evidence.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Self-Reliance Index (SRI). <https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/self-reliance-index>

The profiling of participants at the beginning of a programme and their assessment of graduation includes a wealth of information usually including food security and nutrition as well as the sustainability of their livelihoods using various criteria. From July 2024 onwards, the (currently draft) harmonised self-reliance indicators will standardise how participant profiles are assessed for all Uganda-based graduation programmes and other self-reliance programmes. **The indicators are based on seven essential needs: Food Security and Nutrition, Education, Health, WASH, Shelter, Economic Capacity and Social Cohesion.**

## Financing Graduation

Traditional humanitarian funding streams are not well-suited for graduation approaches. Crisis financing is misaligned with the multi-year, multi-sector, integrated approaches to self-reliance programming. There is a consensus that self-reliance supports dignity and agency of refugees and can diminish reliance on humanitarian/external assistance and associated costs. A recent paper by the World Bank highlighted that the fact that some refugees are well-integrated socially and earning an income in Uganda leads to savings in humanitarian aid budgets of USD 225 million per year<sup>21</sup>.

The World Bank further highlights that investing those savings in the development of refugees' productive capacity (for instance through graduation programmes) would be a wise choice. However, a higher investment is needed to even just bridge the poverty gap for more than half of the refugees as current aid budgets do not allow basic needs to be met.

Graduation approaches are relatively expensive because of the intense level of support they offer. It is critical to stress that more resources rather than fewer are needed to create self-reliance. The World Bank argues that "the costs come before the benefits"<sup>22</sup>. Self-reliance can be regarded as an investment with long term goals to create the anticipated drop in demand for external aid. Other studies highlight "large positive returns on investment" in Uganda as well (although highlighting variations depending on the components of the graduation programme<sup>23</sup>). Indicative calculations from WFP suggest that investing in graduating a household to self-reliance will start realising return on investments four years after enrollment, when compared to the cost of maintaining the same household on humanitarian General Food Assistance.



© Avsi. A youth apprentice works on a motorbike. 2023.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Innovations for Poverty Action, 2023.

# 6. Good practices and challenges for graduation

The following section is a non-exhaustive compilation of some emerging experiences on graduation programmes.

## GOOD PRACTICES

- Overall, a participatory targeting process is recommended to define context-specific poverty characteristics collectively, enabling filtering of households in the area. Targeting is time and resource-intensive, but is necessary to ensure transparency in participant selection, gain community buy-in, and ensure projects target motivated participants. A holistic targeting approach including the different members of the household brings positive results.
- Designing livelihoods support modules based on assessments of market supply and demand and not only in relation to the participants' aspirations.
- Increasing digital literacy and access to digital technology strengthens programmes and contributes to improved outcomes for households. Digital tools like cell phones help increase access to support and resources, gain market information, manage household incomes, and reinforce key messages.
- Ensuring appropriate market linkages and engagement of private sector partners as part of graduation so refugee/host community business owners can gain better access to markets and suppliers in and outside of the settlements. Going one step further, combining elements of Market-System-Development programming with Graduation programming may reap additional benefits.
- Mixing refugee and host communities give multiple benefits to both communities including affordable access to land for refugees.
- Training participants on climate-smart agricultural practices including livestock as a specific value chain enterprise, facilitated household nutrition gardens for self-sustained food security, and raised household awareness on environmental issues should be mainstreamed.
- Structured group coaching approaches tend to not only reinforce technical training but also build self efficacy.
- Incorporating mindset change support in programmes.

## CHALLENGES

Despite broad agreement on the importance of self-reliance in refugee operations, several challenges to progress exist, including:

- Poor linkages between research, data, policy, and practice.
- Limited collaboration outside of the humanitarian space and amongst existing livelihoods programmes.
- Diverse approaches including in implementing and measuring self-reliance - the roll out of the national self-reliance measurement tool (using the SRI) should help lessen this challenge. The development of the 'minimum investment package for livelihood interventions in Uganda' planned under the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan will also respond to this challenge.
- Limited multi-year funding and earmarking limiting a holistic Graduation Approach.
- Access to land is often a structural challenge. Business opportunities and value chains requiring limited land can be explored.

# 7. In focus

The following overview is provided as of Quarter 1 of 2024 – If you are aware of graduation programmes that are not presented below - including past or upcoming graduation programmes, contact [info@ulearn-uganda.org](mailto:info@ulearn-uganda.org)

## Seven ongoing Graduation programmes in the Uganda Refugee Response

- 

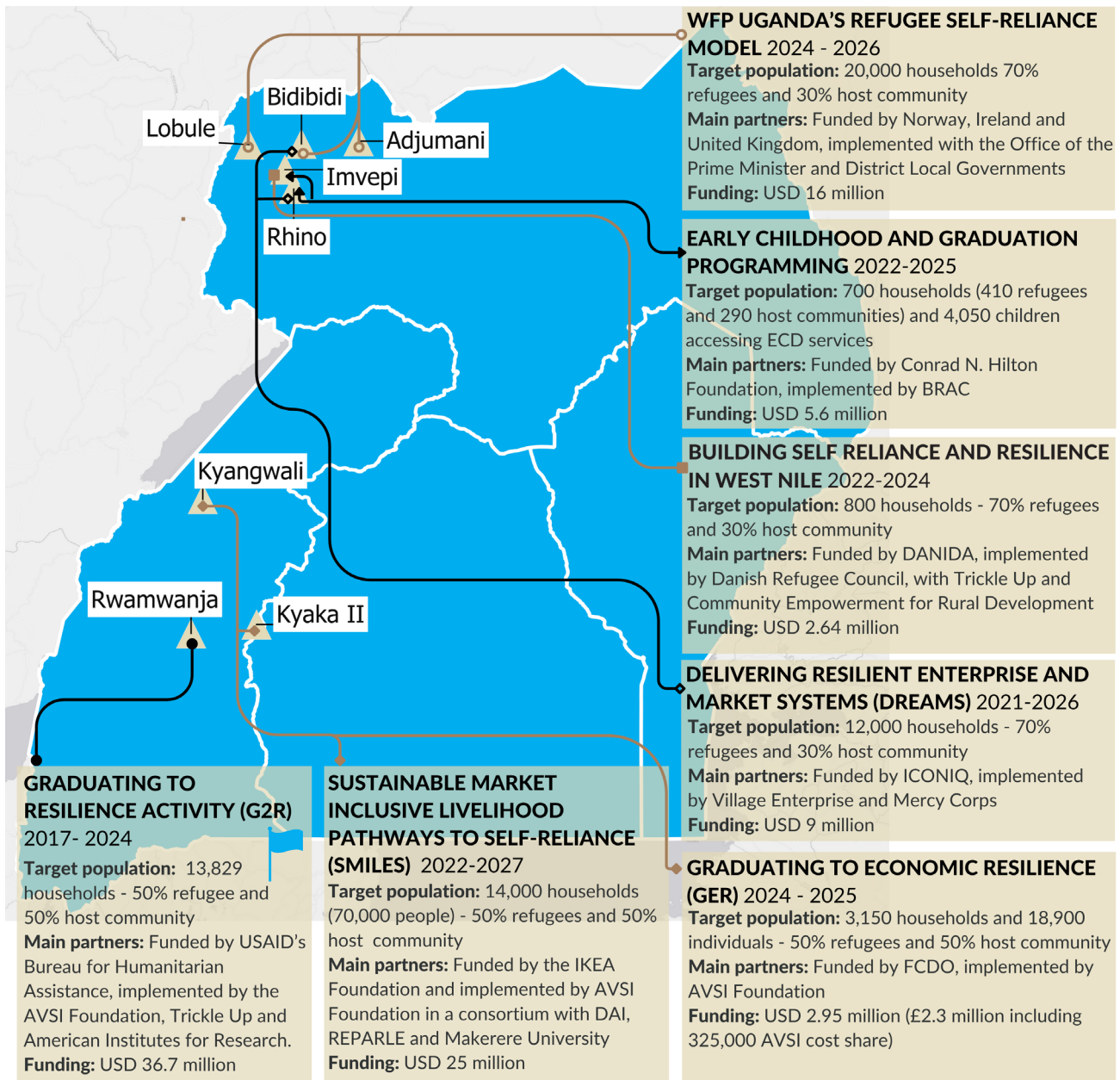
4 in West Nile (in 5 settlements) & 3 in South-West in 3 settlements
- 

First programme was G2R, started in 2017
- 

Increase in programmes since 2021
- 

800 to 20,000 households per programme
- 

1.5 to 7 years








Most programmes cover all 4 pillars below but with specificities or emphasis on economic or social aspects.





© Avsi. A refugee couple drying their maize. 2021

## Project Summary 1<sup>24</sup>

	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Graduating to Resilience Activity (G2R)</b>
	<b>Timeline</b>	2017-2024 Oct 1, 2017 - Sept 30, 2024 (7 years)
	<b>Geographic Area</b>	Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement and surrounding Host community, Kamwenge District, South-West
	<b>Target population</b>	13,829 households - 50% refugee and 50% host
	<b>Main partners</b>	Funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, implemented by the AVSI Foundation, along with Trickle Up and American Institutes for Research (AIR).
	<b>Funding available</b>	USD 36.7 million

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	<b>Consumption Support:</b> All participating households received a monthly cash transfer during their first year of participation to facilitate meeting food and nutritional needs. Refugee households received USD 5 each per member per month and Ugandan households received USD 4 each per member per month. With an average size of 5 members the consumption support was about USD 25 per month, or USD 300/ household for 12 months.
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	<p><b>Core technical skills training:</b> Participants were trained on various core technical skills including farmer field business skills for agronomic and livestock skills, financial literacy, digital literacy, and enterprise selection planning and management which resulted into the development of a business plan.</p> <p><b>Asset Transfer:</b> When participants completed their business plan, they were provided a cash lump sum asset transfer equivalent to USD 300 per household. The asset transfer resulted into participants taking one of two pathways; wage (taking a job after apprenticeship) or business (new or expansion).</p> <p><b>Business coaching:</b> Following provision of the asset, participants were coached and mentored both individually at their business points and in groups for the remaining period using a structured business coaching module.</p>
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	<b>VSLA:</b> G2R supported the formation of 554 new village savings and loan association (VSLA) groups comprising an average of 25 members each. Groups were trained and supported to meet, save, and borrow weekly. 100 pilot groups were supported to digitise their records on an online platform. 83 groups were linked to formal banks for credit and loan products.
<b>Social empowerment</b>	<p><b>Social Capital and Networking, Core capacity building and Savings.</b></p> <p>Coaching: A graduation coach regularly engaged with households to work on a set of contextualised messages related to nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices, gender, preventative health, energy, savings, parenting and life skills. Coaching was offered using a structured curriculum and was delivered through groups combined with a quarterly home visit.</p> <p>Besides coaching, participants are linked and referred to various service points within Government, NGO and private sector to access other services including health care, WASH, protection as well as market based services and opportunities.</p>

<sup>24</sup> The order of the project summary list is random.



## Key Results

**As of January 2024: 86% households graduated (86% host and 83% refugee), 13% were progressing towards graduation.** The G2R Consortium worked with Innovations for Poverty Action to conduct a randomised evaluation<sup>25</sup> to better understand the effectiveness of a Graduation Approach.

- Overall, the programme had significant positive impacts on key outcomes, including food security, nutrition, and self-reliance indicating positive returns on investment. Productive asset values increased by between 40% (no asset group) to 88% (asset group) on average relative to the comparison mean group. Total household income increased by between 32% and 45% compared to the control group, consumption per capita increased by 18% and 25%.
- In addition, participants' subjective well-being increased substantially with households reporting better mental health and higher life satisfaction. Overall program results include 100% Self-efficacy, 99% social capital, 99% children in school, 99% can access health care services when needed.
- 98% live in an improved living structure, 93% have savings of more than 2 months, 98% with more than 2 sources of income/diversified their livelihood enterprises, 99.2% of activity participants reported earning cash in the past 12 months, 83.7% reported earning profits, 86% HHs with acceptable Food Consumption Score, 92% - good handwashing practices (facility with soap and water at the hand washing station).

Further information: See other qualitative changes on gender based violence here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9-Z3QAdVhU>

and overall life here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AyCJrAFHK8>



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© AVSI. Jannette showing off her cabbages. 2019.

<sup>25</sup> IPA. <https://poverty-action.org/study/impact-graduation-program-livelihoods-refugee-and-host-communities-uganda>

## Project Summary 2

**Project title**      **Early Childhood and Graduation Programming**



**Timeline**      2022-2025 (3 years)



**Geographic Area**      Imvepi Refugee Settlement, Odupi Sub-county, Terego District, West Nile



**Target population**      700 households (410 refugees & 290 host communities) and 4,050 children accessing ECD services



**Main partners**      Funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and implemented by BRAC



**Funding available**      USD 5.6 million

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	<p>BRAC provides preventive, protective, and promotive mechanisms to support <b>basic needs</b>. For six months, project participants received a monthly cash stipend of \$10.</p> <p>The project enhanced the holistic development of refugees and host community children through BRAC's Humanitarian Play Labs. The construction and operation of 34 temporary and permanent Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres accommodating 83 classrooms in Imvepi and Rhino refugee settlements, and in the host districts of Madi-Okollo and Terego. A total of 4,257 learners aged 3-6 are enrolled in these ECD centers where they learn through play. ECD teachers, many of which are refugee women, noted improvements in children's physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language, and communication milestones have been observed through continuous learning assessments.</p> <p>BRAC established the Village Poverty Reduction Committees (VPRCs), which helped to address conflicts and Gender Based Violence (GBV) within the project areas.</p>
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	<p>BRAC transferred both primary and secondary assets to participating households in Rhino and Imvepi refugee settlements, and in the host districts of Terego and Madi-Okollo. A total of 6,826 livestock and petty trade materials were transferred. BRAC's guidance and training fostered positive outcomes in sanitation and hygiene practices, proper asset management, and children's learning, care, and nutrition.</p>
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	<p>BRAC conducted training sessions on Life Skills, Asset Management, Financial Literacy, and VSLAs. These VSLAs empower vulnerable households to access financial resources, enabling them to diversify their Income Generating Activities and address health emergencies, education needs for their children, and other household priorities.</p>
<b>Social empowerment</b>	<p>BRAC targeted 4,257 vulnerable and marginalised children who do not have access to ECD services for enrolment into the Humanitarian Play Labs using. BRAC provided social empowerment to project participants, including refugees, through regular check-ins and life-skills support delivered by staff trained and experienced in coaching and mentorship. This intervention helped build confidence and resilience among participants and promoted social inclusion and positive behavioural change relevant to self-sustainability, security, and well-being.</p>

## Key Results

### **BRAC implements or provides technical assistance to Graduation programmes in 16 countries around the world. Graduation screening is planned for November 2024.**

- BRAC collaborated with Innovations for Poverty Action and developed a learning agenda of combining the Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) and Humanitarian Play Lab programs and identifying the potential value of this integration.
- BRAC convened a pivotal gathering of 58 stakeholders, including Members of Parliament, senior government officials, INGOs, NGOs, and media representatives, advocating for the Two-Generation model. Insights from BRAC's Two-Generation project in West Nile were shared, emphasising its potential to generate positive outcomes for both children and caregivers. MPs committed to advocating for legislative amendments to incorporate caregiver support into existing policies.
- Capacity Building and Training: A comprehensive training program targeted 457 non-BRAC ECD caregivers and professionals associated with 40 refugee-led Community-Based Organizations and private ECD operators. These sessions, focusing on play-based learning, mental health, and psychosocial support, were conducted in collaboration with key partners, including the Office of the Prime Minister, UNHCR, and District Local Governments of Terego and Madi-Okollo. 75% of participants successfully integrated acquired knowledge and skills into their respective ECD centres.
- 42 VSLAs have been established and legally registered with the Local Government in Terego and Madi-Okollo districts. The VSLA saving ledger books indicate savings ranging from zero to \$15,606 within one year, with loans disbursed to members amounting to \$11,798.
- Establishment and operationalisation of 83 Humanitarian Play Labs.
- 170 Play Leaders recruited, trained to lead quality play-based learning.
- 42 VSLAs were established and registered with the sub county in Terego and Mad-Okollo districts.
- 10 international, regional, national and district advocacy events on two-generation programming conducted.
- 34 Village Poverty Reduction Committees
- 43 Village Health Champions identified, trained and empowered to provide timely support to households with livestock treatment.








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© U-Learn. Members of a VSLA group in Palabek refugee settlement, 2023. Financial inclusion is a pillar of Graduation approaches

## Project Summary 3

	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Building Self Reliance and Resilience in West Nile</b>
	<b>Timeline</b>	January 2022- April 2024 (2 years and 4 months)
	<b>Geographic Area</b>	Imvepi Refugee Settlement, Odupi Sub-county, Terego District, West Nile
	<b>Target population</b>	800 households - 70% refugees and 30% host community members
	<b>Main partners</b>	Funded by DANIDA, implemented by Danish Refugee Council (DRC),with Trickle Up (TU), and Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD)
	<b>Funding available</b>	USD 2.64 million (DKK 18 Million)

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	<b>Coaching, Referrals and Linkages and Consumption Support.</b> Help ensure that participants have access to social protection and basic rights during and after graduation. Coaches help participants gain the skills and self-confidence to develop and follow a personalized pathway from extreme poverty to self-sufficiency.
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	<b>Technical skills training, Asset Transfer and Job Support</b> ensures that participants build sustainable and diverse income streams for households to support consumption needs, asset accumulation, and economic empowerment.
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	<b>VSLA Savings and Financial literacy.</b> The project will improve income and risk management, financial empowerment and facilitate connections to social networks to promote both financial and social inclusion.
<b>Social empowerment</b>	<b>Social Capital and Networking, Core capacity building and Savings.</b> Provide protective and promotive mechanisms to support basic income security for consumption needs, supporting households to develop confidence through positive behavioural change as well as promoting community inclusion.

### Key Results

**As of January 2024: 778 out of 800 households have moved towards graduation, including 546 refugee households.** These will fully graduate by the end of the project

- Retention rate of 97% in the graduation programme.
- 763 (535 Refugees; 228 Host) participants representing 95.4% have established viable enterprises that are generating stable income for households who are now able to meet their basic needs.
- 32 Savings groups established, trained and equipped. They saved USD 40,500 in 22 refugee groups and USD 33,000 in 10 host community groups.

- The VSLA group's savings increased by 41.6% from 54.5% (baseline) to 96.1% (midline). Further, Project participants reported utilising their savings and borrowing loans to support education of their children which saw children enrolment and retention increased from 24.04% to 62.79% in the host community and 26.7% to 56.4% in the refugee settlement.
- The major factors that affected consistency in savings were attributed to increased household needs following the prioritisation of the WFP assistance. However, 59.4% of the households reported their ability to meet their daily food consumption and medical needs.
- 4 community based training centres and business hubs established to continuously mentor and provide post training support to the participants beyond the project lifecycle.
- The VSLA groups also enhanced the self-esteem and confidence of the participants through creating referral and linkages in their VSLA social groups, hence building social capital which is important for economic inclusion.



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© U-Learn. Portait of a refugee in Palabek refugee settlement, 2024.

## Project Summary 4

	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Sustainable Market Inclusive Livelihood pathways to Self-Reliance (SMILES)</b>
	<b>Timeline</b>	2022-2027 (5 years)
	<b>Geographic Area</b>	Kyaka II and Kyangwali Settlements, Kyegegwa and Kikuube Districts
	<b>Target population</b>	14,000 households (70,000 people) - 50% refugees and 50% host community members - South West
	<b>Main partners</b>	Funded by the IKEA Foundation and implemented by AVSI Foundation in a consortium with DAI, REPARLE and Makerere University
	<b>Funding available</b>	USD 25 million

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	Cash grants for consumption smoothing
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	<p><b>Technical/livelihood skilling:</b> agronomy using Farmer Field Business School methodology; Enterprise Selection, Planning and Management, Financial Literacy, Digital Literacy, and Saving using the VSLA methodology.</p> <p>Asset-building through <b>one-off asset cash grant</b> to households and block grant (pilot) to VSLA groups.</p> <p>The project <b>partners with national agri-input suppliers and buyers</b> to expand the commercial potential of refugee and host community farmers in value chains such as maize, beans, and horticulture and incentivises fintech providers to use digital platforms to partner with local refugee-led Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs).</p> <p>Lastly, <b>last-mile distribution networks of clean energy products</b> are promoted to expand solar pay-as-you-go business models to support household lighting, solar-powered irrigation, and affordable power to run a fridge in microenterprises.</p>
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	Group savings using the <b>VSLA methodology, VSLA digitization and digital linkage to formal banks</b>
<b>Social empowerment</b>	<b>Group coaching, fostering linkages and referrals</b> to critical services to support the population to afford basic needs

## Key Results

**As of January 2024, participating households have not yet reached the planned graduation date.**

- Enrolled 7,042 Households (Refugees 3,456 and Hosts 3,586)
- Group Coaching – all 297 groups with a total of 6,864 (97.5%) active households (Refugee 3,373 and Host 3,491)
- Established and supported 297 VSLA groups (148 Kyangwali and 149 Kyaka II): cumulative savings (October 2023 – March 2024) stand at USD 194,000 (Refugee US USD 81,000 and Host USD 113,000)
- Established 297 (Refugee: 149, and Host: 148) Farmer Field Business School groups
- Consumption support cash transfers for eight months (August - March) to a total of 7,018 households (36,493 individuals reached) with a cumulative total of USD 1 million transferred.
- Other core livelihood skills training (SPM, Financial Literacy) delivered to all 297 groups
- Transferred asset cash (household business fund) to a total of 6,707 households (Refugees 3,313 and Hosts 3,394) with a cumulative total of USD 822,000.
- Referral to critical services – 390 cases (82% case completion)








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© U-Learn. A refugee attending a community meeting in Palabek refugee settlement,

## Project Summary 5

	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Delivering Resilient Enterprise and Market Systems (DREAMS)</b>
	<b>Timeline</b>	2021-2026 (6 years)
	<b>Geographic Area</b>	Rhino & Bidi Bidi Settlements ; Terego and Madi-Okollo Districts - West Nile (also in Tanzania and Ethiopia)
	<b>Target population</b>	12,000 households - 70% refugees and 30% host community members
	<b>Main partners</b>	Funded by ICONIQ, implemented by Village Enterprise and Mercy Corps
	<b>Funding available</b>	USD 9 million

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	No activities implemented directly by DREAMS under this pillar but implementation revealed the importance of linking to existing INGO and Government safety nets initiatives.
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	<b>Business skills and financial literacy training.</b> <b>Seed capital grants</b> to kickstart micro enterprises. Grants of USD 200 are provided to a group of 3 entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are also connected to local markets and services necessary for thriving business, including input suppliers and buyers, and access to land. Focus on pro-poor value chains (poultry, cereal, apiary).
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	<b>Savings groups and connection to formal financial services</b>
<b>Social empowerment</b>	<b>Coaching and mentoring</b> , saving gallas, family support, linkages to markets and private sector actors, and social services

### Key Results

#### As of January 2024: 3,512 households have graduated, including 2,444 refugee households.

The specificity of the DREAMS programme is to link graduation and market-system-development programming in an integrated manner. DREAMS' impact will be studied in an independent randomised controlled trial (RCT) conducted by IDinsight, providing valuable research that can be used across the international development and humanitarian aid sectors to better serve refugees in the future.






- Through dedicated efforts, 2,000 microbusinesses have been established, accompanied by the formation of 200 Business Savings Groups.
- +22% average annual consumption and expenditures of the graduated households.
- +58% in assets
- More than +600% in savings.
- 86% have access to sales avenue for business production.



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## Project Summary 6

	<b>Project title</b>	<b>WFP Uganda's Self-Reliance Model</b>
	<b>Timeline</b>	2024-2026 (3 years)
	<b>Geographic Area</b>	Bidibidi, Lobule, Rhino - West Nile; and Nakivale, Oruchinga - South-West
	<b>Target population</b>	20,000 households 70% refugees and 30% host community members
	<b>Main partners</b>	Funded by Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom and implemented in close collaboration with NGO partners, the Office of the Prime Minister and District Local Governments.
	<b>Funding available</b>	USD 16 million

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	Social Protection assistance will be provided to enable participants to meet their needs until they are able to generate their own income. The assistance is provided in a way that responds to the differentiated needs of refugees across the life-cycle. This includes the provision of cash assistance to all refugees enrolled in the programme, with a nutrition-sensitive cash transfer for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under 2 to enable them to meet their nutrition needs during the first 1,000 days, and a social pension to refugees aged 80 or above.
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	Through trainings, inputs and start-up support, WFP promotes market-based income generation within three broad livelihoods categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On-farm. On-farm income is generated from climate-smart agricultural production.</li> <li>● Off-farm. Off-farm income is generated from engagement in agricultural market-based activities in the "middle" and "end" of the value chain such as processing or retail sale.</li> <li>● Non-farm. Non-farm income is generated from engagement in market systems outside agriculture.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	Through financial literacy trainings, participants will develop their skills in various topics including loan management, investment, savings, finance management, insurance, and use of (digital) financial services and products. VSLAs will be strengthened and digitised, and linked with formal financial service providers to enhance participants' access to financial services and products.
<b>Social empowerment</b>	Social Empowerment and positive mindset development will be promoted through coaching, mentoring and social behaviour change communication. This includes a focus on strengthening important life skills, promoting positive health and nutrition practices, challenging harmful gender and social norms, and mobilising and empowering local community structures for collective action.

### Key Results

The project was formally launched in February 2024. Participants have been profiled and registered, and activities across the four components are scheduled to begin in March 2024.



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## Project Summary 7

**Project title** **Graduating to Economic Resilience (GER)**



**Timeline** 1 year and 6 months - starting in 2024



**Geographic Area** Kyaka and Kyangwali Settlements (Kyegegwa and Kikuube Districts) - South-West



**Target population** 3,150 households and 18,900 individuals - 50% refugees and 50% host community members



**Main partners** Funded by FCDO, implemented by AVSI Foundation



**Funding available** USD 2.95 million (£2.3 million including 325,000 AVSI cost share)

Pillar	Possible Modules
<b>Social protection</b>	<b>Consumption Support:</b> All participating households will receive a monthly consumption support cash transfer (USD 5 each per member per month) during their first year of participation for households to meet their food and nutrition needs.
<b>Livelihoods promotion</b>	<b>Technical/livelihood skilling</b> - agronomy using Farmer Field Business School methodology; Enterprise Selection, and Planning and Management (SPM). <b>Asset capitalisation</b> for business through one-off asset cash grant costing at GBP 200 (USD 255) to households based on their business plans. The project partners with <b>national agri-input suppliers and buyers</b> to expand the commercial potential of refugee and host community farmers in different value chains and incentivises fintech providers to use digital platforms to partner with local refugee-led Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations. (SACCOs). Lastly, <b>last-mile distribution networks with clean energy enterprises</b> are promoted to expand solar pay-as-you-go business models for household lighting, and solar-powered irrigation. <b>Business coaching:</b> Following provision of the asset, participants are coached and mentored both individually at their business points and in groups.
<b>Financial inclusion</b>	<b>Participants are enrolled in VSLA</b> groups comprising an average of 25 members each. Groups are trained and supported to meet, save, and borrow weekly. Groups are then supported to digitise their records on an online platform and link with banks. Overall a total of 88 groups will be formed (44 in Kyaka and 44 in Kyangwali).
<b>Social empowerment</b>	<b>Structured group coaching:</b> A graduation coach will regularly engage with households to work on a set of contextualised messages related to nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices, gender, preventative health, energy, savings, parenting and life skills. Besides coaching, participants are <b>linked and referred to various service points</b> to access other services including health care, WASH, protection as well as market based services and opportunities.

### Key Results

The project is currently in its start up phase and conducting targeting in the two locations. The graduation target is set at 75%.



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## Appendix 1 - List of ongoing Graduation Projects in Uganda (as of May 2024)

Name of the project	Implementers	Donors	Duration	Funding available	Target population	Location	Key contacts
<b>Building Self Reliance and Resilience in West Nile</b>	Danish Refugee Council (DRC), with Trickle Up (TU), and Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD)	DANIDA	2022-2024  (2 years, 4 months)	USD 2.64 million (DKK 18 million)	800 households - 70% refugee and 30% host	Imvepi Refugee Settlement, Terego District - West Nile	Jimmy James Kokedieny <a href="mailto:jimmy.kokedieny@drc.ngo">jimmy.kokedieny@drc.ngo</a> Frances Elizabeth Wallace <a href="mailto:frances.wallace@drc.ngo">frances.wallace@drc.ngo</a>
<b>Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems</b>	Village Enterprise and Mercy Corps	ICONIQ	2021-2026	USD 9 million	12,000 households - 70% refugee and 30% host	Rhino & Bidi Bidi Settlements ; Terego and Madi-Okollo Districts - West Nile	John Ilima <a href="mailto:johni@villageenterprise.org">johni@villageenterprise.org</a> Zita Akwero <a href="mailto:zitaa@villageenterprise.org">zitaa@villageenterprise.org</a> Emmanuel Ogwok at <a href="mailto:eogwok@mercycorps.org">eogwok@mercycorps.org</a>
<b>Early Childhood and Graduation Programming</b>	BRAC	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	2022-2025	USD 5.6 million	700 households and 4,050 children accessing ECD services	Imvepi and Rhino refugee settlements Terego and Madi-Okollo Districts - West Nile	Joseph Kabanda <a href="mailto:joseph.kabanda@brac.net">joseph.kabanda@brac.net</a>
<b>Graduating to Resilience Activity (G2R)</b>	AVSI Foundation, in partnership with Trickle Up (TU) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR)	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)	2017-2024	USD 36.7 million	13,829 households (50% refugee and 50% host).	Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement Kamwenge District - South West	Rita Larok <a href="mailto:rita.larok@avsi.org">rita.larok@avsi.org</a>
<b>The Refugee Self-Reliance Model</b>	World Food Programme	Norway, Ireland,	2024-2026	USD 16 million	20,000 households 70% refugee and 30% host	Bidibidi, Lobule, Adjumani, Nakivale, Oruchinga - West Nile and South West	Genevieve Chicoine <a href="mailto:genevieve.chicoine@wfp.org">genevieve.chicoine@wfp.org</a>
<b>Sustainable Market Inclusive Livelihood Pathways to Self-Reliance (SMILES)</b>	AVSI Foundation in a consortium with DAI, REPARLE and Makerere University	IKEA Foundation	2022-2027	USD 25 million	14,000 households (70,000 people) - 50% refugee and 50% host	Kyaka and Kyangwali Settlements (Kyegegwa and Kikuube Districts) - South West	Jordan Can <a href="mailto:jordan.can@avsi.org">jordan.can@avsi.org</a> Magdalene Ndagire <a href="mailto:magdalene.ndagire@avsi.org">magdalene.ndagire@avsi.org</a>
<b>Graduating to Economic Resilience (GER)</b>	AVSI Foundation	FCDO	2024-2025	USD 2.95 million	3,150 households and 18,900 individuals - 50% refugees and 50%	Kyaka and Kyangwali Settlements (Kyegegwa and Kikuube Districts)	Innocent Cwinyai <a href="mailto:innocent.cwinyai@avsi.org">innocent.cwinyai@avsi.org</a> Rita Larok <a href="mailto:rita.larok@avsi.org">rita.larok@avsi.org</a>

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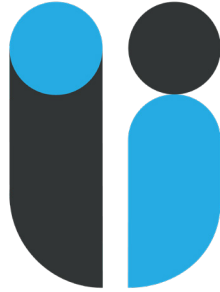
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Also reviewed: various reports from Uganda Graduation programmes.





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