



Spotlight on the Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub

How learning catalyses adaptation of a humanitarian response: lessons from a multisectoral collaborative platform

December 2024



Cover and Acknowledgements

This publication documents the Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub's unique model and explores the various lessons learned throughout its implementation from January 2020 to June 2024. Data was collected through a desk review and consultations with internal and external stakeholders. Special thanks to UKaid/United Kingdom Government who were the original funders and designers of the Learning Hub as a part of the U-Learn Consortium, to the Response Innovation Lab who nurtured the Learning Hub's outside-the-box thinking, to Save the Children who accompanied this ambitious journey by hosting U-Learn, and to USAID/Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance who helped grow the reach of the learnings.

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Cover photo caption: Convener on entrepreneurship support in Uganda's refugee response, March 2024

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Table of Highlighted Successes

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Highlighted Success 2: SLAM for a more inclusive and connected response
Highlighted Success 3: Preparation of the Global Refugee Forum through learning services enhancing refugee coordination mechanisms
Highlighted Success 4: Strengthening refugee voices through the promotion of the REF as a unique 2-way communication mechanism

List of Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
BHC	British High Commission (also referred to as FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) or UKaid during the lifetime of the Learning Hub project)
BRAER	Building Resilience and an effective Emergency Refugee response
CWG	Interagency Cash Working Group
FLT	Financial Literacy Training
ICT4D	Information and communications technology for development
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JLIRP	Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practices
LH	Learning Hub
LRSWG	Livelihoods and Resilience Sectoral Working Group
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
REF	Refugee Engagement Forum
SCI	Save the Children International
TELS	Tailored Evidence and Learning Service
U-Learn	Uganda Learning Evidence Accountability and Research Network
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
U-RIL	Response Innovation Lab Uganda
USAID BHA	USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
WorkGrEEN	Energy and Environment Working Group

Executive summary

Since 2020, the Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub (LH) facilitates learning exchanges on critical themes within the refugee response. Collective learning processes and intentional reflections have prompted several response actors to adapt policies and programmes as well as develop new partnerships to better support self-reliance for refugees and host communities.

Uganda currently hosts over 1.7 million refugees, with some having resided in the country for decades. This protracted crisis presents challenges but also opportunities to enhance refugee and host community self-reliance. Response partners have accumulated rich knowledge and evidence on approaches that foster self-reliance. However, accessing, sharing among diverse actors and applying this wealth of knowledge is challenging. The LH is an innovation launched to respond to that challenge and to test how learning can support humanitarian system change. The LH seeks to catalyse evidence-based adaptations of policies and practices, fostering self-reliance and nurturing the humanitarian-development nexus.

The LH's **holistic approach to learning and its evidence-based influencing model** distinguishes it from other existing programmes in the Uganda refugee response and globally. Its methodology revolves around partnerships to identify collective learning needs on a range of multi-sectoral themes and deployment of flagship, demand-driven learning services to make relevant evidence accessible and actionable.

The LH effectively delivers creative and collectively-shaped learning services and outputs. Its services include convening, curating evidence, documentation, synthesis, mapping and visualisation. Services are provided at no cost and underpinned by a commitment to seven principles: impartiality, collaboration, demand-driven, flexibility, inclusivity, high quality, and timeliness.

The LH operates as a public good, accessible to all stakeholders involved in the refugee response. Its commitment to fostering partnerships, promoting inclusivity, and driving adaptations underscores the LH's transformative potential in shaping practices in the refugee response in Uganda and beyond.

Supported by UKaid since 2020 and USAID since 2022, the LH operates under the auspices of the Uganda Response Innovation Lab, hosted by Save the Children International. Over the past four years of operations, **the LH has successfully supported adaptations and connections in the response** on topics ranging from financial literacy training, promoting the Refugee Engagement Forum as a unique participation mechanism, supporting Uganda's contribution to the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, digital mapping of settlement-level actors, and more. To do so, the LH overcame challenges around staffing, high demands for learning support across multiple themes and partnership-building. It also underwent significant conceptual developments and refined its services through experiential learning and user feedback. The LH model can be further strengthened by increasing focus on dissemination and uptake support and by continuing to develop partnerships that align with localisation commitments.

1. What is the Uganda refugee response Learning Hub and why is it needed?

This Spotlight provides an overview of the LH's work in Uganda from 2020 to 2024. It highlights its innovative features and describes its flagship services, strengths and challenges. This report aims to help the LH itself and other partners in Uganda and beyond reflect on why and how a response-wide multi-sectoral learning programme can be established and draw inspiration for similar initiatives.

This exercise is a documentation rather than an evaluation. The information and evidence were compiled through a desk review of internal and external documents, 13 key informant interviews and two group consultations.

1.1. [Why was the Uganda refugee response Learning Hub \(LH\) created?](#)

As of early 2024, almost 1.6 million refugees live in Uganda¹; new refugees continue to arrive, while others have lived there longer than a decade. In this protracted crisis, partners strive to increase self-reliance. The humanitarian response in Uganda is rich in knowledge and evidence about approaches that foster better lives for refugees and host communities. However, unless responders are intentional about learning from this evidence, barriers to using it will persist.

Many valuable insights remain undocumented and tacit, residing only in individuals' minds. Documenting learning is often deprioritized due to short programme cycles, high workloads, and limited expertise and budget for learning activities. Learning is further complicated by evidence being scattered, resources not always being publicly shared, and reports being too numerous, lengthy, or difficult to understand. Furthermore, opportunities for collaborative reflection and learning are limited, not always inclusive and often lack cross-sectoral engagement. Most humanitarian responses around the world face similar challenges.

The Learning Hub (LH) is an innovation launched by UKaid and the Response Innovation Lab in Uganda in response to those challenges. Hosted by Save the Children and started as a part of the U-Learn Consortium, the Learning Hub was launched to test the assumption that learning can be a driver for humanitarian system change.

The growing refugee population was seen to have destabilisation potential in a country where coexistence was mostly peaceful and the conditions for long-term solutions seemed met. UKaid's assumption was that "test[ing] and challenge[ing] delivery can have a wider impact"². UKaid wanted to support the improvement of existing delivery practices with the thought that it would be more effective to invest in learning for many programmes rather than investing in a single aid-delivery programme. U-Learn is an experiment on how to optimise limited humanitarian resources through supporting the "improve[ment of] partner and system level practices"³.

1.2. [What is the Learning Hub?](#)

¹ UNHCR, UGANDA-POPULATION DASHBOARD. Overview of Refugees and Asylum-seekers in Uganda - as of 31-Dec-2023 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/uganda-overview-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-6683>

² 2019, FCDO TOR for U-LEARN as a part of BRAER programme.



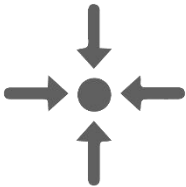


³ 2019, FCDO TOR for U-LEARN as a part of BRAER programme.

The Learning Hub (LH) is a unique multi-sectoral and collaborative learning platform for the refugee response in Uganda aimed at creating adaptations in policies and programmes for refugees and host communities. The audience of the LH is refugee response actors of all types. As such, the LH acts as a knowledge facilitator between the Ugandan government, international non-governmental organisations (INGO), United Nations (UN), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisation (CBOs), refugee-led organisations (RLOs), private sector, innovators, and academia.

The LH is implemented by the Uganda Response Innovation Lab (U-RIL) and hosted by Save the Children International (SCI). A minimum core team of three senior full-time staff with specialized profiles has been needed for implementation, supported by a pool of consultants with expertise in learning, design, and digital tools. The LH is a multi-donor platform, and experience shows that an annual budget of USD300,000-500,000 in-country allows delivering high-quality transformative work on multiple learning topics.⁴

The LH works through close partnerships with humanitarian coordination structures in the Ugandan refugee response. If a collective learning need “contributing to self-reliance and promoting nexus programming in protracted crisis”⁵ is identified, the LH deploys its unique evidence-based influencing model⁶ for learning and uptake. It pulls together the most relevant evidence, makes it accessible and actionable and supports the uptake of emerging recommendations and good practices to improve programmes and policies. Furthermore, it creates spaces for diverse stakeholder groups to reflect on multi-sectoral critical topics. Finally, the LH feeds learning captured from the Uganda refugee response into the global refugee response and into protracted crisis, nexus and resilience policy debates.

Box 1: Flagship learning services

Curate resources	Document	Synthesize and summarize	Convene	Map and visualise
				
<p>These services can be combined into collective learning processes, such as a learning review, and can result in a diverse range of outputs such as conveners, reports (desk reviews, policy briefs), summaries, and infographics.⁷</p>				

The Learning Hub started in 2020 as the learning component of the [Uganda Learning Evidence Accountability and Research Network \(U-Learn\)](#)⁸, a UKaid-funded consortium that promotes

⁴ More details on the hosting model, the team structure and profiles and the budget in sections [5.3 to 5.5](#).

⁵ More on the themes and the selection process in [2.3](#).

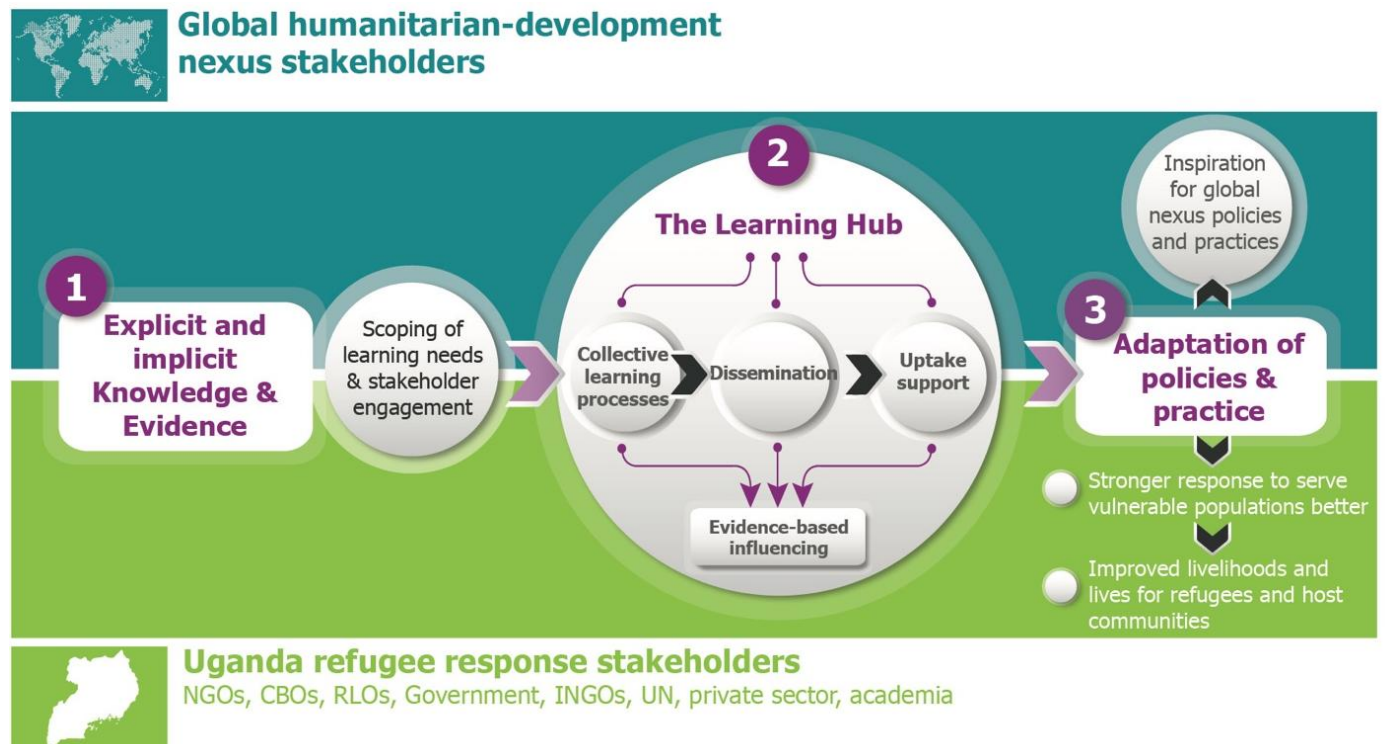
⁶ More on the model in section [4.1](#).

⁷ More in section [2.7](#) on the services and outputs and [5.1](#) on learning reviews.

⁸ <https://ulearn-uganda.org>

improved outcomes for refugees and host communities in Uganda. In collaboration with a wide range of response actors, U-Learn focuses on facilitating learning, conducting research, and amplifying refugee voices and choices in the Uganda refugee response. After four years of implementation, it is broadly recognized as a public good and “an enabler of the refugee response” (donor agency, 2023).

Figure 1: The Learning Hub model



The LH proved to be a highly innovative programme that required significant conceptual work to develop its model, the network of partners and the supporting tools and methodology. The LH was initially funded by UKaid. The LH reached its fully operational status after about 1.5 year of operation (and a redesign exercise to align with worldwide donor budget cuts). The LH secured additional funding from USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) in 2022 through the [Uthabiti Activity](https://ulearn-uganda.org/uthabiti-activity-factsheet/)⁹, a consortium that promotes sustainable livelihood opportunities in primarily off-farm activities while addressing critical gaps in access to skills, energy and financial services in Isingiro and Lamwo districts. As of 2024, the LH is funded by both UKaid and USAID.¹⁰

⁹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/uthabiti-activity-factsheet/>

¹⁰ At the time of publication, the Royal Danish Embassy planned to join BHC and USAID BHA as donor to the LH through the Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative (URRI).

Figure 2: Timeline of LH phases and conceptual development



The (i) belief that learning from others’ experiences can be a lever for better outcomes and (ii) a desire to ensure more equitable access to information and evidence, were two core concepts that led to the creation of the global Response Innovation Lab (RIL) initiative in 2016. Its goal is to strengthen response-level ecosystems. The LH adopted this philosophy and expanded RIL’s original innovation agenda. The LH follows the same design principles as RIL: acting as a public good and removing barriers to participation for a diverse range of actors. It does this by providing no-cost services, being a country-level response-based platform, and fostering human connections and partnerships through network-building. All of the LH’s activities are underpinned by seven driving principles that capture this way of thinking and working.¹¹

Box 2: Response Innovation Lab

The Response Innovation Lab is a global network that supports stakeholders to learn and adapt global and local solutions, innovations, and good practices to more effectively meet the needs of crisis-affected populations and transform how they recover. RIL’s mandate is to leverage innovation and experiences to drive change to serve vulnerable populations better. RIL’s Country Labs and Affiliate Facilities are spread across eight countries globally. In Uganda, RIL is hosted by one of its founding members, Save the Children International, and provides support for the protracted refugee crisis. The Uganda Response Innovation Lab (U-RIL) is an impartial humanitarian platform supporting diverse stakeholders since 2018.¹²

¹¹ Read about the LH principles in section 4.3

¹² More information: <https://www.responseinnovationlab.com/uganda-local-page>

1.3. [Theory of change: learning and uptake for humanitarian system change](#)

Knowledge and evidence are essential for advancing impactful programmes and policies. Yet, this evidence may go unused without learning. Learning is especially vital in humanitarian contexts, where resources are limited and supporting human needs and dignity is paramount. Learning is a key driver for change within the humanitarian system.

The LH's value in the refugee response comes largely from "providing the right information to the right people at the right time" (U-Learn team member, 2023) and in the right format. When those conditions are met, there is impetus to adapt and transform policies and practices. Streamlined, actionable and shared evidence enables diverse actors to cooperate, integrate good practices, decrease duplication, and make better informed decisions. This process positively influences policy and practices, and ultimately improves outcomes for refugees and host communities. By making learning more accessible and easier to use, "the Learning Hub adds value to the refugee response" (donor agency, 2023).

Figure 3: U-RIL's Learning Hub's Theory of Change (ToC)



The following section illustrates this ToC and how the LH's work led to the adoption of the Minimum Standards for Financial Literacy. More examples of outcomes can be found in this report:

- [Highlighted Success 1: Adoption of Minimum Standards for Financial Literacy Training \(FLT\) by the Bank of Uganda](#)
- [Highlighted Success 2: SLAM for a more inclusive and connected response](#)
- [Highlighted Success 3: Preparation of the Global Refugee Forum through learning services enhancing refugee coordination mechanisms](#)
- [Highlighted Success 4: Strengthening refugee voices through the promotion of the REF as a unique 2-way communication mechanism](#)

Highlighted Success 1: Adoption of Minimum Standards for Financial Literacy Training (FLT) by the Bank of Uganda

In collaboration with: the Bank of Uganda and the Interagency Cash Working Group (CWG)

Timeframe: 2021-2023

Summary of activities and results: In 2021, consultations within the CWG led to the launch of the LH's first learning review, on the theme of financial inclusion (see [the TOR here](#)). The learning review began with a [Discussion Paper](#) which reviewed existing evidence and identified key stakeholders. This facilitated the connection with the Bank of Uganda from the onset. The paper served as the basis for a [collective discussion on existing practices](#) and led to a [Learning Brief on FLT](#) that summarised the main findings and recommendations from this collective learning process. It showed the need to harmonise FLT in Uganda, including introducing minimum standards and having a greater uptake of good practices by providers and implementers.

Following the publication of this learning brief and other cash-related evidence, the CWG formed a FLT technical core team to discuss the learning brief and to draft minimum standards with financial literacy actors from refugee settlements. The draft minimum standards were finalised during a national level review and published by the Bank of Uganda. The LH supported the Task Team for the finalisation and validation of the [FLT Minimum Standards](#) (writing and convening support). The FLT Minimum Standards are intended to reduce disparities and address quality gaps in interventions, ensuring that training participants become more financially literate.

This learning process was a success: the chair and the working group members report energised strategic discussions at the CWG, several policy-level outputs were produced and there is ongoing demand from the partners to receive more support of the LH.

Intended impact for refugees and host communities: Going forward, FLT curriculum must adhere to the FLT standards. Some organisations have done this even before adoption by the Bank of Uganda: Uganda Red Cross, AVSI, Lutheran World Foundation and financial service providers such as Opportunity Bank, Centenary Bank and UGAFODE. These updated standards will enhance the reach and quality of financial inclusion interventions and trainings, by increasing the benefits people can derive from these trainings and thus increasing their chances of financial inclusion, which is a core component of self-reliance.



2. What does the LH do? A multi-theme response-wide learning platform in action

2.1. [The LH's unique learning concept](#)¹³

Learning is the act of acquiring knowledge. For the LH, learning is the deliberate, intentional exchange of implicit and explicit knowledge across Ugandan refugee response sectors. The goal of this learning is to support the evidence-based adaptation of policies and practices that support self-reliance and the humanitarian-development nexus.

In the humanitarian sector there are two types of knowledge:

- **Explicit knowledge:** large amounts of data, information and evidence produced and consumed through assessments and evaluations. This knowledge is stored in written documents or other communication formats.
- **Implicit knowledge:** practical experiences accumulated about what works and does not work in the refugee response. This knowledge most often lives only in peoples' minds.

Box 3: Reminder: Research vs Learning

Research is a process that generates explicit evidence and knowledge, while **learning** is the process that ensures this evidence is turned into actionable knowledge that is used to adapt a given (policy, programme, practice, etc.) and increase its effectiveness.

Figure 4: Five levels of learning

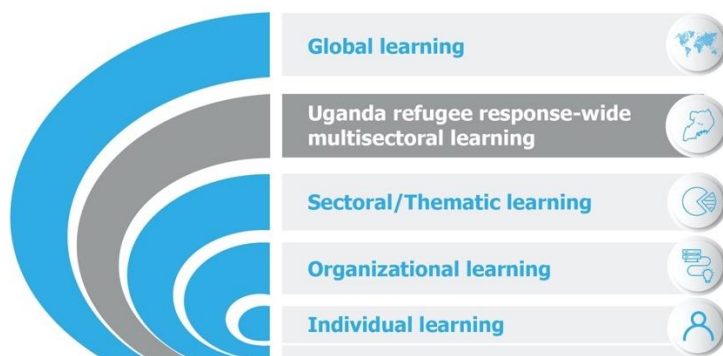
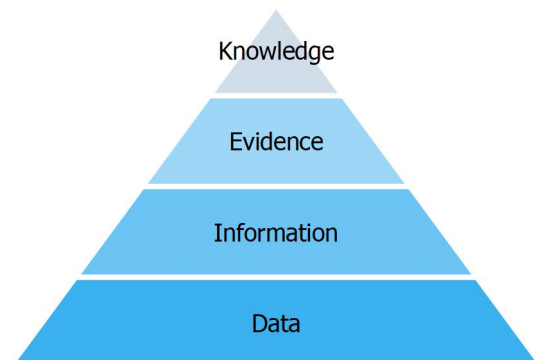


Figure 5: Learning pyramid



Learning can be implemented in various ways, with different methodologies, scopes and audiences. The LH is dedicated to response-level learning and focuses on lateral learning within the refugee response. Response-wide learning is a collective approach that brings together, benefits and/or influences multiple stakeholders (as opposed to individual, organisational or sectoral learning).

The Learning Hub framework considers three types of learning¹⁴ :

¹³ The LH definitions of 'uptake' and 'learning' in this section are adapted from the Oxford dictionary.

¹⁴ Inspiration includes Reddick's (2003) description of learning in a humanitarian/development context.

1. **Lateral Learning** involves mapping the knowledge and learning that already exists within the national refugee response and sharing this knowledge. This has been the main focus of the LH to date. Example: The [Digital Financial literacy training in Uganda's refugee response webinar](#).
2. **Learning In** is focused on gathering learning from other contexts that are considered comparable and includes curating agreed-upon good practices. For example, this report explores [localisation of humanitarian action in Uganda, Kenya, the Philippines and India](#).
3. **Learning Out** is focused on accelerating the lesson-learning cycle of the current response and other responses. It captures good practices and learning in a response and rapidly shares with others globally. For example, the CALP network, published a LH-authored [blog post on the findings from U-Learn's research and learning work on cash and voucher assistance in the Uganda refugee response](#).

Making evidence accessible and actionable is one step of the learning process. Uptake is the **action of making use of learning**, the application of learning to operate a change and support adaptation. While the LH cannot control uptake by response actors, it can support the uptake process and increase its probability through evidence dissemination and evidence-based influencing.

2.2. [The LH's context and audience](#)

The Uganda refugee response includes a wide variety of actors, traditionally identified as humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, as well as innovation, entrepreneurship, and business development actors. Response activities have been ongoing for over ten years.

The Learning Hub functions well because the Ugandan refugee response is a protracted crisis and the focus is on self-reliance rather than early-onset response. When acute humanitarian needs must be met, stakeholders have little time for innovation or learning. The LH experienced this during the 2020 Covid-19 response, when key partners did not have bandwidth to fully engage with U-Learn.

Since it is a response-level learning platform, the LH's audience is all refugee response actors. The LH lends particular attention to overcoming barriers to participation. It aims to capture the variety of perspectives including humanitarian actors (government, UN agencies, INGOs, national NGOs, CBOs and RLOs), as well as private sector actors, donors, and academia.

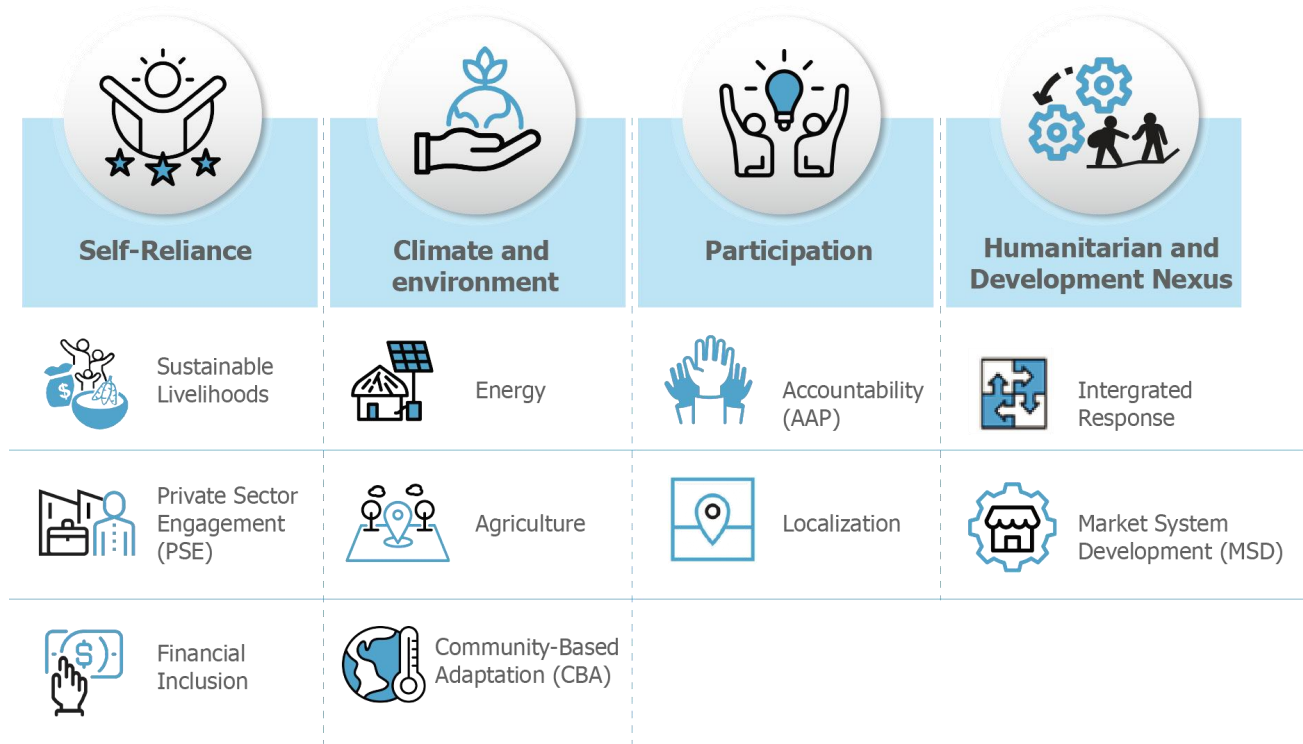
The LH's **target audience to date has been mainly at the senior technical level**, focusing on people with organisational-level decision-making power, "at the interface of policy and practice" (INGO partner, 2023). Typical LH resource users are programme directors in mid-size to large NGOs but the audience increasingly includes other actors like smaller local actors and private sector actors.



2.3. Agreeing on the thematic scope

From the start (2020), extensive consultations ensured that the LH's development be demand-driven, which successfully mitigated duplication risks. The LH selected its thematic scope through a desk review (global and country-level documents) as well as an extensive consultation process with all key stakeholders (bilaterally, in group and in writing), which created rapport. The result was a multi-sectoral thematic scope contributing to self-reliance and nexus programming in protracted crisis with three key themes: self-reliance, participation, and humanitarian and development nexus. Climate and environment was added in 2023 following additional consultations.

Figure 6: Thematic scope in 2024



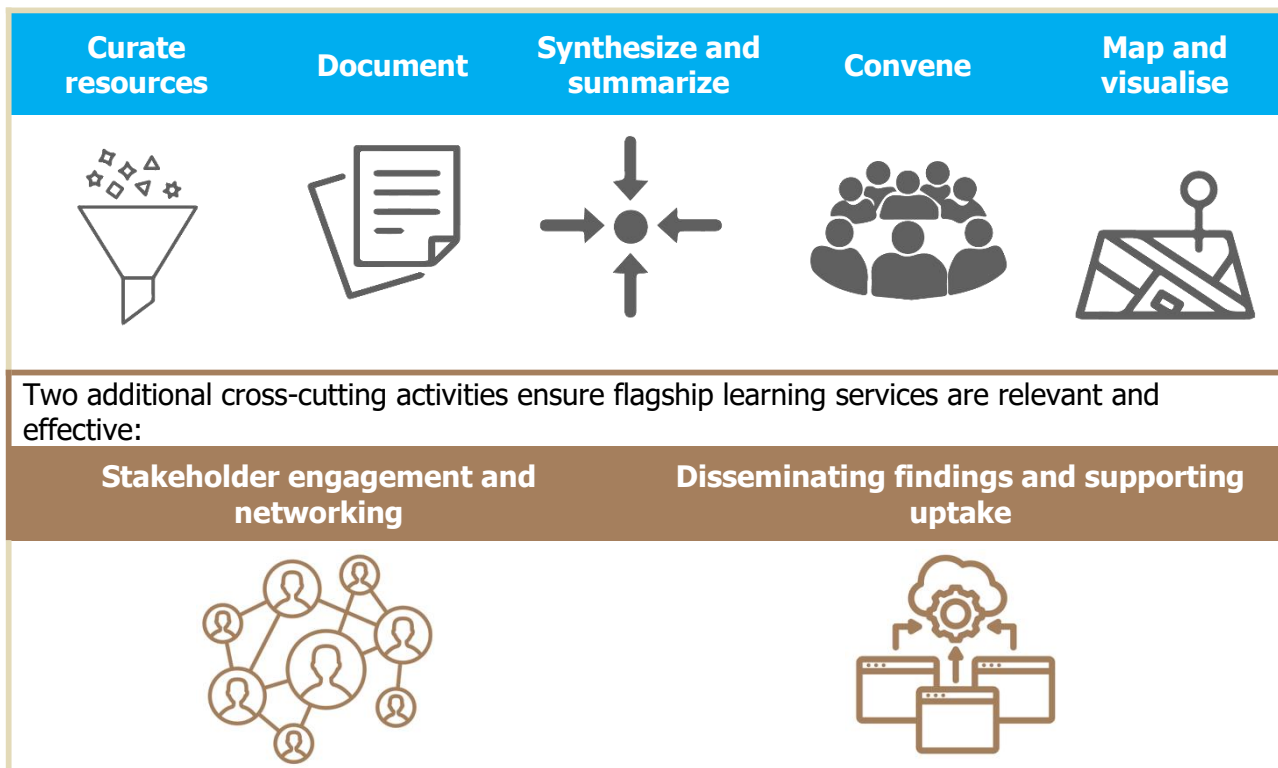
Learning on any of these above-mentioned themes has potential to improve the lives of refugees and host communities. These four themes, their sub-themes and the more specific learning topics within these all respond to the following criteria:

- **Diverse audience:** Being relevant for diverse actor groups in the Uganda refugee response (not serving only one segment of responders).
- **Practical:** Learning needs to have practical applications in refugee response programmes or policies (avoiding theoretical discussions).
- **Broad scope:** Being broad enough to be relevant to key decisions at programmatic or policy levels and to feed into global debates (avoiding over-technical topics).
- **Responsive & unique:** Responding to a learning gap and avoiding duplication.
- **Multi-sectoral approach:** Not sector specific but operating across the different sectors and themes of the refugee response.
- **Connecting:** Connecting to fields or partners that are excluded from humanitarian circles.

2.4. Demand-driven services

To deliver demand-driven learning services on this thematic scope, the LH works through five flagship services. These are described in detail in the following sections and recapped in the figure below.

Figure 7: The LH’s five flagship services and two cross-cutting activities



2.5. Stakeholder engagement and networking



Stakeholder engagement and networking is an underlying activity for the successful implementation and delivery of all learning services. It plays an important role in selecting learning topics that are relevant, identifying partners for collective learning processes, building an audience for dissemination, and supporting uptake. The LH has deliberately developed its network to ensure inclusivity and diversity. This has required deliberate investment of staff time in these activities. As a result, the LH has a strong capacity to convene, direct users to useful resources, and increase connectedness in the response beyond sectoral silos and across different actors. These referrals and connections are an informal service to refugee response actors.

To select a learning topic, i.e. a precise focus area within one of the themes the LH has developed a scoping methodology to map existing learning, gaps and priorities. Interactive consultations find a natural host in coordination working groups (when they exist on the focus theme). They allow the LH to

W *Some of the interactions that we have with U-Learn are more informal. They just seem to know a lot of different people and are always suggesting linkages, which is always really helpful.”*
- INGO partner, MEAL outcome harvesting interview, April 2023.

better understand the specific learning demand, determine what knowledge is readily available and how they can support evidence uptake. This way of working started when defining the LH’s thematic scope (see 2.3) and has been rolled out for learning topics (example: theme: self-reliance; sub-theme: financial inclusion; learning topics: cash, financial literacy training, savings groups. Section 5.2. details how the LH makes sure it stays demand-driven. The LH is constantly networking and connecting with partners (humanitarian and non-humanitarian) to ensure the relevance, quality and diversity of stakeholder contributions.

Figure 8: Learning mapping and gap scoping with WorkGrEEen in 2024

Specifically under Climate Smart Agriculture, what other climate learning topics/needs should be explored?

Effectiveness of Bioprotectors	Practices of soil replenishing.	Explore appropriate responses to weather variations, climate variabilities and climate change adaptation	More information sharing, Promoting soil covering
Is there a possibility of NGOs supporting Refugees with seed supply to buy QDS from the refugee Local seed producing groups	Community based extension services to farmer groups	Bio-fertilizers	1. Parmaculture 2. Adoption of any local knowledge

Once a specific learning topic has been selected, the LH identifies key partners for a collaborative learning process. Partners are selected based on those who showed engagement to date, those who already own existing evidence and those who have the ambition to use upcoming learning findings. Collaboration and inclusivity are driving principles (see section 4.3) and these partners co-lead some of the learning work. For instance, they can provide peer review to ensure quality or co-host and invite guests to conveners to ensure the right audience is reached.

The established relationships play a key role during to disseminate learning findings. Partners have the potential to amplify learning uptake through their networks and through their commitment to the recommendations and good practices (see section 4.2). Collaborating with influential stakeholders on a specific theme helps drive the adaptation of response policies and programmes (see: [Highlighted Success 1: Adoption of Minimum Standards for Financial Literacy Training \(FLT\) by the Bank of Uganda](#)).

2.6. [The five flagship learning services](#)

The five flagship learning services are applied to learning topics that fall within one of the four themes¹⁵ depending on the actors’ needs and the identified learning gaps. All learning services are combined with dissemination and uptake support services which are critical in ensuring that learning outputs are used and that evidence influences decision-making. Each service can therefore result in a wide range of learning outputs; as the LH responds to new learning requests, it regularly creates new output types and new learning formats (see examples in [Figure 9](#), [Figure 10](#), [Figure 11](#), [Figure 12](#) and [Figure 13](#)).

¹⁵ Learning topics are specific areas of focus within the broader four themes.

The learning services can lead to the production of learning outputs that are either an original LH production or that are derived from others' work:

- Original LH productions or LH-led outputs are designed and executed by the LH in collaboration with partners. The LH is responsible for identifying and selecting evidence (which can include collecting implicit knowledge through stakeholder interviews) and for creating the analytical framework. The LH aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic and include diverse perspectives. Examples include the [Learning Briefs](#)¹⁶.
- The LH develops learning resources on behalf of partners.¹⁷ The LH analyses evidence that has already been identified and proposes an adapted way to present and disseminate it. The LH does not aim to provide a comprehensive coverage of the topic at hand and only supports outputs when it sees they align with its thematic scope and existing demand from other organisations.

Figure 9: Curate/collate evidence

	<p>The LH brings together the most relevant knowledge and evidence on a specific topic. The objective is to create a single-entry point to the entire existing body of evidence. This service includes a limited analytical lens and aims to give a comprehensive overview, an entry point into a learning topic, rather than analyse and contrast the evidence and make recommendations, innovations or good practices emerge.</p>
Examples of types of learning outputs	Samples
<p>Annotated bibliographies track resources and provide key information on content and a one-paragraph summary. The focus is usually broad within a thematic area. They can highlight learning and research gaps.</p>	<p>Annotated bibliography: Productive Use of Energy in Uganda's Refugee Response</p>
<p>Compendiums are designed to provide an up-to-date operational picture of a specific type of activity in the response. They exhaustively list relevant activities and provide brief key information on all of them. They can connect to mapping exercises (see last service)</p>	<p>Graduation Compendium: Building a Common understanding of Graduation Programmes in the Uganda Refugee Response</p>
<p>Resource overviews are simple fact sheets or presentations that sign-post to various relevant resources on a specific topic.</p>	<p>Overview of U-Learn Resources on sustainable livelihoods¹⁸, financial inclusion¹⁹, energy²⁰</p>
<p>Glossaries support a common understanding of a thematic area in the response that includes a wide variety of technical approaches and diversity of experiences.</p>	<p>Climate terminology (forthcoming)</p>

¹⁶ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/Resource%20Type/learning-brief/>

¹⁷ For instance, the Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative requested the support of the LH to produce thematic lessons learnt ([factsheets](#)).

¹⁸ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/overview-of-u-learn-sustainable-livelihoods-resources/>

¹⁹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/overview-of-u-learn-energy-resources/>

²⁰ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/overview-of-u-learn-financial-inclusion-resources/>

Figure 10: Document




 <p>The LH provides an overview of experiences and insights (i.e. innovations or good practices) from the Ugandan context or elsewhere that can inspire responders in Uganda. The objective is not an evaluation but an analytical description of existing implicit and explicit knowledge, allowing the identification of experience-based lessons and recommendations.</p>	
Examples of types of learning outputs	Samples
<p>Case Studies, Good Practice Studies, and Spotlight Reports focus on one or several related experiences and use qualitative methodologies combining desk research and interviews to streamline and analyse explicit and implicit knowledge.</p>	<p>Case Study: Mobile TVET Programming in the Uganda Refugee Response</p> <p>Case Study: Localising Humanitarian Action – Case Studies from Uganda, Kenya, the Philippines, and India</p> <p>Good Practice Study: Refugee Engagement Forum</p> <p>Spotlight: Spotlight Mainstreaming Accountability Culture in a Refugee Response Context</p>

Figure 11: Summarise and synthesize

 <p>The LH makes evidence more accessible through high quality summaries that support policy and programme work. With its synthesis function, the LH applies an analytical framework to evidence that is compiled on a specific topic. It summarises and contrasts information to identify trends, gaps, strengths and lessons. The LH facilitates access to evidence in a context of information overload by ensuring that outputs are easy to read and include visuals (format focus).</p>	
Examples of types of learning outputs	Samples
<p>Desk reviews provide an analytical layer compared to the bibliographies. The focus is usually more specific than for bibliographies but still extensive (about 30 reports can be reviewed). They dive into the content rather than give a description of existing reports. They highlight trends and controversial issues. They are technical documents.</p>	<p>Desk review: Productive Use of Energy in Uganda’s Refugee Response</p>
<p>Evidence briefs combine written evidence with implicit knowledge collected through qualitative interviews. They make learning explicit and include recommendations.</p>	<p>Evidence brief: Exploring the Challenges Faced by Formal Refugee-Owned Businesses in Uganda</p>
<p>Learning briefs are similar to evidence briefs but are usually produced at the conclusion of a collective learning</p>	<p>Learning brief: Digital Financial Literacy Training in the Uganda</p>

<p>process which has included a convener during which stakeholders have shared insights (experiences, priorities, lessons and recommendations) which are integrated in the briefs.</p>	<p>Refugee Response</p>
<p>Summaries can take the form of factsheets, 1-2-pagers or short overview reports, depending on the topic.</p>	<p>Summaries: NURI Lessons Learnt, Rwanda Strategy for Sustainable Graduation: An overview</p>

Figure 12: Convene



The LH brings actors together in face-to-face or on-line learning events to facilitate peer-learning called conveners. These provide critical reflection spaces where actors can share lessons and learn from each other and existing evidence. The objective is to create a space of human connection with a diversity of participants. Conveners also play a key role in evidence dissemination and can serve as a platform for learning uptake. The particularity of LH-organised events is the emphasis on making them engaging and interactive and on ensuring they are actionable. Participants particularly appreciate that events are always followed up with additional resources, secondary outputs, and updates (shared by email).

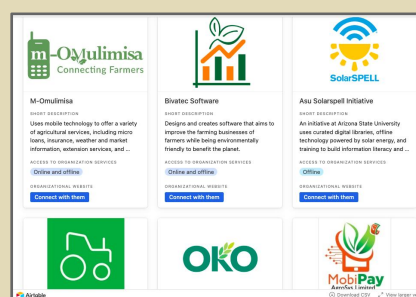
Examples of types of learning outputs	Samples
<p>During the Covid-19 response, the LH developed engaging webinars and later hybrid events. This approach continues to be used now that the pandemic response is over to include actors from different geographical locations (in country and global) to maximise participation.</p> <p>Its expertise on engaging conveners has led the LH to provide support to partners who organise learning consultations (logistics/HR, content and agenda support) and both reflection and strategic workshops.</p> <p>Formats and number of participants vary depending on the convener’s objective. They are held either in Kampala or in field-locations. Conveners also use alternative event formats (compared to traditional workshops), that can include breakfast meetings, coffee or after-work meetings.</p>	<p>Digital Financial literacy training in Uganda’s refugee response Webinar Recording</p> <p>Video highlights from Refugee Entrepreneurship Support Convener</p> <p>GRF preparation roundtable support</p> <p>Mbarara and Arua-based workshops on the development of FLT Minimum Standards with the CWG</p>

Photo 1: Group work during convener, Nakivale convener, 2022.



Figure 13: Map and visualise

Through its mapping methodologies, guided by the principles of accessibility of information to all, the LH increases and facilitates connections between international-level, national-level and grassroots-level stakeholders, between different types of stakeholder groups and to a broad range of resources. The LH strives to present information (on partners, resources, data, etc.) in formats that make is easier to use and that make the information accessible to a range of actors.



Examples of types of learning outputs

Mapping is a form of curation but with a more visual framing.

Examples

Mappings: [Overview of U-Learn Mappings²¹](#), [FinTech](#), [Agritech](#), [Energy products providers](#)

²¹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/overview-u-learn-mappings/>

<p>Infographics pull together data from one or multiple sources and present this information in a concise, visual format.</p>	<p>Infographics: Infographic on Cash and Voucher assistance in the Uganda refugee response</p>
<p>Digital solutions have elements and content with which the user can interact and engage, while mappings are more static visualisations.</p>	<p>Digital solutions: SLAM²², USE²³</p>

2.7. [Disseminating findings and supporting uptake](#)



Dissemination and uptake support services are a critical step of the evidence-based influencing process, otherwise there is a risk that the learning will not be applied. The LH provides dissemination and uptake support for all LH-led outputs and, although this has taken place less frequently to date, also supports other actors to promote their learning outputs and evidence. This happens upon partner request, if the evidence fits the thematic scope and if it has the potential to interest a broad range of response actors.

2.7.1 Dissemination

The first step is dissemination, which means making resources widely available and accessible. It entails producing secondary learning outputs and communications materials using the core findings and recommendations. These secondary outputs are short and visually engaging; they target different actors through a range of channels and direct readers to more in-depth resources.

Figure 14: Types of dissemination outputs and communication materials

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blogs on U-Learn website and guest blogs on global platforms (example of guest blog on the CALP Network) • LH-led webinars and presentations • Guest-presentations of LH findings on external channels • Newsletters • Social media posts • One or two-pagers and infographics • Research Briefs (example Research Brief on The Realities of Self-reliance within the Ugandan Refugee Context) • Podcast (under development) 	
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2.7.2 Uptake support

Resource availability does not automatically lead to uptake by response actors and to adaptations of policies and programmes. Therefore, the LH also provides uptake support, which can take many

²² <https://ulearn-uganda.org/slam/>

²³ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/uganda-skilling-exchange/>

shapes depending on the recommendations and priorities of partners who participated in the learning work.

The LH supports uptake by transforming evidence into concrete tools and policy documents that can be used for policy and practice. It then plays a key role in supporting uptake by disseminating and promoting resources that facilitate the adoption of best practices and recommendations. By collaborating with influential actors who have a broad reach, these resources are able to reach decision-makers, who receive evidence-based insights at the appropriate time and in the right format. This strategic approach is crucial for shaping policies and practices. At this stage of the process, it is common that an actor, who has co-led or actively participated in the learning work, takes the official lead on the recommendations and adoption of learning. The LH works behind the scenes, providing technical support and supplements partners with analysis and synthesis capacity, writing and visualising skills. Below are examples of tools and documents produced to support uptake and influence policy and practice.

Figure 15: Examples of support tools and policy documents for evidence-based influencing of policy and practice

- [Checklist for Moving Savings Group Digital Criteria²⁴](#): Compiled by the LH on behalf of the CWG and LRSWG.
- [FLT Minimum Standards²⁵](#): Compilation and dissemination supported by the LH on behalf of the Bank of Uganda and the CWG.
- [Informing the Uganda Refugee Response Common Cash Approach – a Technical Brief²⁶](#): This policy document is owned by the CWG but its writing was facilitated by the LH. It was accompanied by [Settlement-level CVA Infographics²⁷](#) to support practitioners make decisions relevant to their specific geographic area of operation.
- [Presenter’s Guide for the Refugee Engagement Forum \(REF\)²⁸](#): This guide is used by the REF members themselves with their constituents and was written and formatted by the LH to suit this audience.



2.7.3 Channels for dissemination and uptake support

During dissemination and uptake support, the LH combines multiple channels and coordinates several stakeholders to create a multiplying effect and reach a broad audience. U-Learn’s website <https://ulearn-uganda.org/> is a resource centre that hosts all the learning outputs, secondary outputs and uptake support outputs. In addition, it also serves as a platform to amplify evidence and learning from other actors. For example, the website posts the Uganda Refugee News, a special monthly curation of resources by an independent researcher.

²⁴ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/support-tool-checklist-for-moving-savings-group-digital-criteria/>

²⁵ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/uganda-refugee-response-financial-literacy-training-minimum-standards/>

²⁶ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/informing-the-uganda-refugee-response-common-cash-approach-a-technical-brief/>

²⁷ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/settlement-level-cva-infographics/>

²⁸ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/refugee-engagement-forum-ref-presenters-guide/>

In-person engagements



Conveners are one of the key channels for evidence to be presented, analysed and endorsed by a collective. They can vary in size and be held in Kampala or at the settlement level; they can be in person, online or hybrid events depending on the target audience and content. The audience for those events is carefully curated because having the “right people” (LH team member, 2023) around the table is critical to ensure diversity, advance reflections and eventually lead to uptake. The LH also uses bilateral meetings with key stakeholders to promote the evidence base and give access to decision-makers and influential partners to the resources they may need in strategic and programmatic conversations.

Written and digital products



Print: Printed reports remain a format that is in demand in the response. These are distributed to partners on various occasions and locations, including within settlements where connectivity (and thus access to digital reports) is more challenging.



Blogs: On the U-Learn website or guest blogs on global platforms deliver critical evidence and recommendations in a practical and accessible manner for readers who may not be ready to read longer reports.



Videos: To date, the LH has used video recordings from conveners to disseminate learning content and research findings in an audio-visual format.

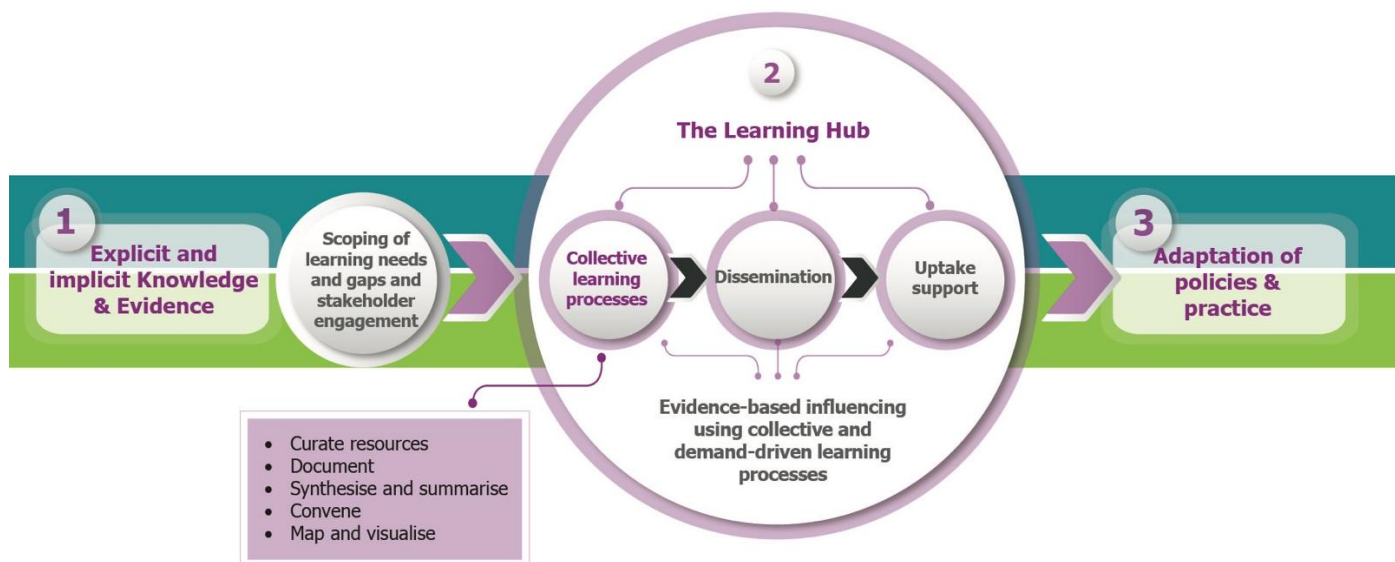


deliver
be

Podcasts: The LH is currently developing a podcast concept which would content in a less formal way and give opportunities for various perspectives to presented in a lively way.

“The [written resources] serve as the best available and most up to date and useful information.”
- INGO, 2023.

Figure 16: Learning Hub services and activities



Global humanitarian-development
nexus stakeholders
Uganda refugee response stakeholders
NGOs, CBOs, RLOs, Government, INGOs, UN, private sector, academia

3. Results: What has the LH achieved?

3.1. [Outputs and key operational metrics](#)

Work accomplished during the first four and a half years counts (up until June 2024):

- 24 large-scale conveners;²⁹
- [Over 90 publications on the U-Learn website³⁰](#) including more than 25 core learning resources (like learning briefs), four U-Learn research pieces (i.e. formatted but not produced by the LH), and secondary products (2-pagers or infographics). The publications facilitate access and dissemination of evidence and learning on [sustainable livelihoods](#), [financial inclusion](#), [localisation](#), [energy](#), [private sector engagement](#) and [more](#);
- [Five mappings/visualisations³¹](#) across three themes: self-reliance, climate/environment, and participation.

From the early stage of the U-Learn programme, response stakeholders provided positive feedback on LH outputs. When surveyed on the written and digital learning products, over 75% of respondents estimate the quality to be high or very high and for several products this proportion even rises over 90% (U-Learn perception surveys 2021, 2022, 2023 - excluding Covid-19 Response). As for the learning events, a systematic 90% or more respondents report them to be of quality (LH feedback surveys).

These high-quality outputs underpin the Learning Hub's success and its capacity to reach outcome-level results. The learning materials and events are the basis to support evidence-based adaptations in the response and new connections between partners.

A practical example of curation and analytical services for collective learning

Instead of reading 30 long research reports and calling 20 organisations on their experience with value chains, a partner can simply read the [Desk Review of Value Chain Assessments in the Uganda Refugee Response³²](#) and the follow-up strategic piece, [Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper³³](#) to determine the ten value chains that are recommended for the refugee response. All the evidence and expert insights were synthesised by the LH and its partners in one single report.

²⁹ With 30-50 participants for in-person events, several hundred during online or hybrid events.

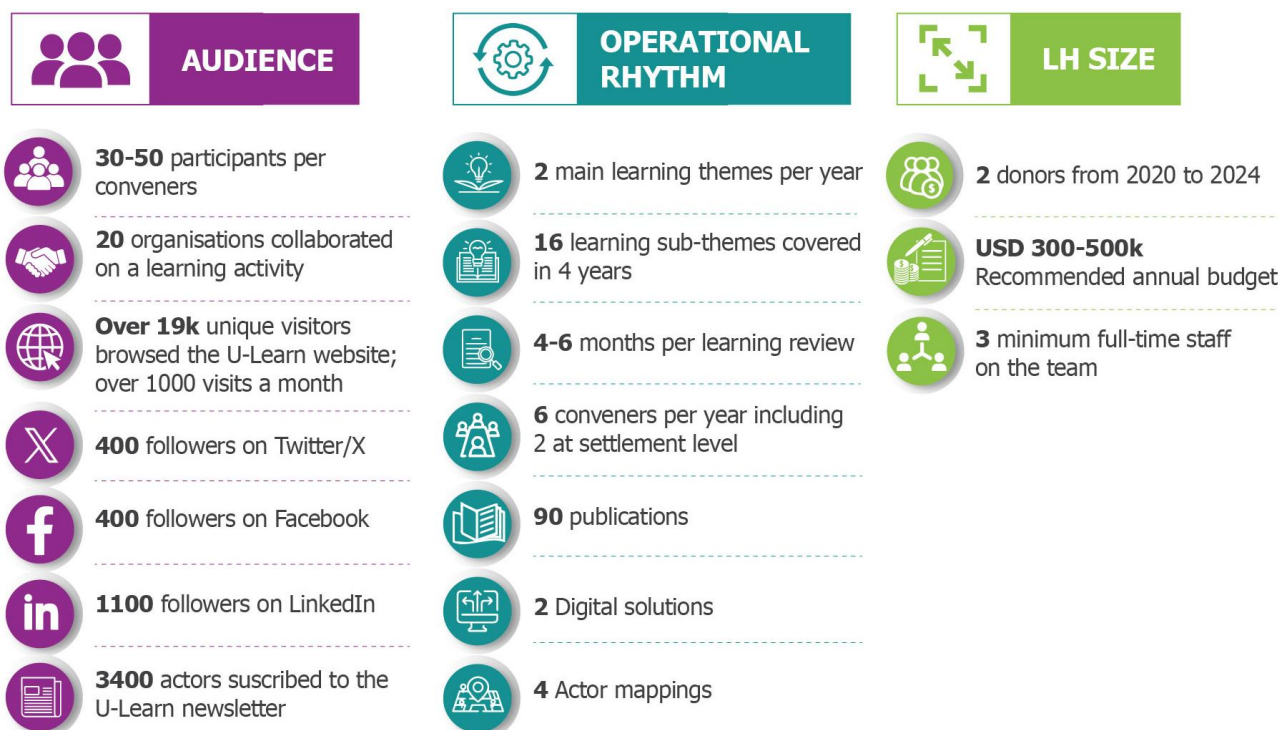
³⁰ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/all-publications/>

³¹ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/Resource%20Type/mappings/>

³² <https://ulearn-uganda.org/value-chain-assessments-in-refugee-hosting-districts-in-uganda-a-desk-review/>

³³ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/agricultural-value-chains-strategic-positioning-paper/>

Figure 17: Learning Hub in key numbers 2020-2024



2020-2024 data

3.2. Outcomes

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) data as well as the results of the LH’s self-evaluation indicate that the LH has been meeting its objectives effectively and has been “adding value to”, and “elevating” the work of the refugee response actors (donor agency and INGO, 2023).

The LH measures success by observing if “response actors actually adapt programmes or policies as a result of a contribution [evidence and insights] from the LH” (outcome indicator 2023). On average, ten such adaptations and connections per year have been recorded by the LH since 2022, meeting its target.

The following section on the development of the Settlement-Level Actor Mapping (SLAM) by the LH illustrates the successful support to increasing connectedness in the refugee response. Other examples of outcome-level results are presented in the Highlighted Successes throughout this publication.

Highlighted Success 2: SLAM for a more inclusive and connected response

In collaboration with: Charter4Change Uganda Working Groups, RELON, Research team of U-Learn.

Timeframe: 2022-2024

Summary of activities and results: To support localisation in the Uganda refugee response and to increase and facilitate connection between national-level and settlement-level stakeholders, the Settlement Level Actor Mapping (SLAM) makes information about local actors and RLOs active in refugee settlements and Kampala publicly available. SLAM addresses the challenge of lack of information of settlement-based actors on opportunities. The SLAM portal - <https://ulearn-uganda.org/slam/> - complements information found on the [Uganda Comprehensive Refugee response portal](#) and the [Government of Uganda Refugee Response Monitoring System](#). As of early 2024, SLAM contains key information on 394 local stakeholders; they include private sector actors, RLOs, CBOs, and local NGOs. The development of SLAM was a challenge in terms of accessing the right ICT4D expertise.³⁴ This experience showcases the time and budget investment needed for the development of an interactive digital tool.

Good practice: To enhance the dataset, a collaboration started with RELON, an umbrella organisation for refugee-led organisations, in the form of internship opportunities for refugees in the LH team.

Alignment with the mandate of Charter4Change (C4C) Uganda was found and the SLAM digital visualisation tool was further improved and integrated in their website (as well as U-Learn's). A collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister Department of Refugees is underway.

SLAM supports a more inclusive response, encouraging connections between diverse partners. A feedback survey of organisations part of SLAM indicated that **67% of organisations that used SLAM have been able to identify partnerships and funding opportunities** (Survey, January 2023). SLAM is now well known and used amongst refugee response actors with over 800 visits since its launch in 2022.

Impact for refugees and host communities: Through [SLAM](#), local actors have increased their visibility and benefited from various new opportunities. SLAM users report that the digital visualisations help identify new partnerships and funding opportunities (such as Education Cannot Wait in 2023). SLAM helps local actors access training opportunities and participate in various information-sharing (for example, 200 local actors participated in a reporting training by UNHCR in 2023). It supports local and refugee-led stakeholders to become implementing partners in, and leaders of, the refugee response because it increases the diversity and representativity of response actors. SLAM supports aid recipients' agency and self-determination.

The screenshot displays the SLAM portal interface at ulearn-uganda.org/local-actors/. The page features a navigation menu with options: HOME, WHAT WE DO, RESOURCE CENTRE, WHO WE ARE, NEWS & STORIES, LOCAL ACTORS, and CONTACT US. Below the navigation, there are four filter buttons: Settlement (purple), Type of Organization (green), Thematic Areas of Work (orange), and Target Demographic (dark blue). A search bar is located below the filters. On the left, a circular legend identifies the filter categories: Settlement (purple), Type of Organization (green), Thematic Areas of Work (orange), and Target Demographic (dark blue). A list of settlements is shown on the left, including Adjumani, Bidibidi, Imvepi, Kampala, Kiryandongo, Kyaka II, Kyangwali, Lobule, Nakivale, Oruchinga, Palabek, and Palorinya. The main content area displays search results for 'A Hand for a Refugee Organisation LTD'. The results show the organization's name, logo, type (Refugee Led Organisation), thematic areas of work (Livelihoods and Resilience, Nutrition, Food Security), settlements where active (Kyangwali), and target demographic (Men, Women, Youth Twelve to Thirty Years). Another result for 'Act Together for the Vulnerable Children and Women' is also visible, showing its type (Community Based Organisation), thematic areas of work (Livelihoods and Resilience, Protection, Education), settlements where active (Nakivale), and target demographic (Children Under Twelve Years, Women). A 'View Filtered Data as Table' link is present at the top right of the results area.

n-house

4. The strategic ingredients for a successful evidence-based influencing model

4.1. [The unique & innovative LH model for evidence-based influencing](#)

The LH developed its own unique model of evidence-based influencing - this is its most innovative feature. The model consists of developing a widely-accepted evidence base through collective analysis and learning processes. This evidence-base influences decision-making and thus supports the adaptation and strengthening of humanitarian programmes and policies.

'Evidence-based influencing' is an increasingly known concept in the humanitarian and development fields but is often associated with 'advocacy' rather than 'learning'. Contrary to most humanitarian advocacy programmes which involve a deliberate process of influencing and pushing for a set of outcomes that are seen as more desirable than the current situation³⁵, the LH does not have a pre-set agenda nor aim to have an influencing agenda³⁶. Thus, when a learning process begins, there are no pre-established views on what the more desirable practice or policy would be.

The LH pulls the evidence together and invites the relevant stakeholders to review and analyse it, learn from it and exchange experiences. As part of this collective learning process, the refugee response actors usually identify good practices, lessons, priorities and recommendations. Next, the LH supports them with the development, dissemination and uptake of resources that help adopt these good practices or recommendations. The deliberate collaboration with influential actors as well as widely disseminating resources ensures that decision-makers have access to the evidence-base that has been collectively endorsed at the right time and in the right format. This is a critical part of influencing policies and practices.

The LH is thus an influencing voice that is evidence-based, demand-driven and reflects the views of the collective. It remains impartial. This maximises the chances of uptake of the learning. The participating stakeholders have a sense of ownership of the emerging recommendations; they do not feel pressured by an external party to adopt them.

This model is successful and results have been observed from the second year of implementation.

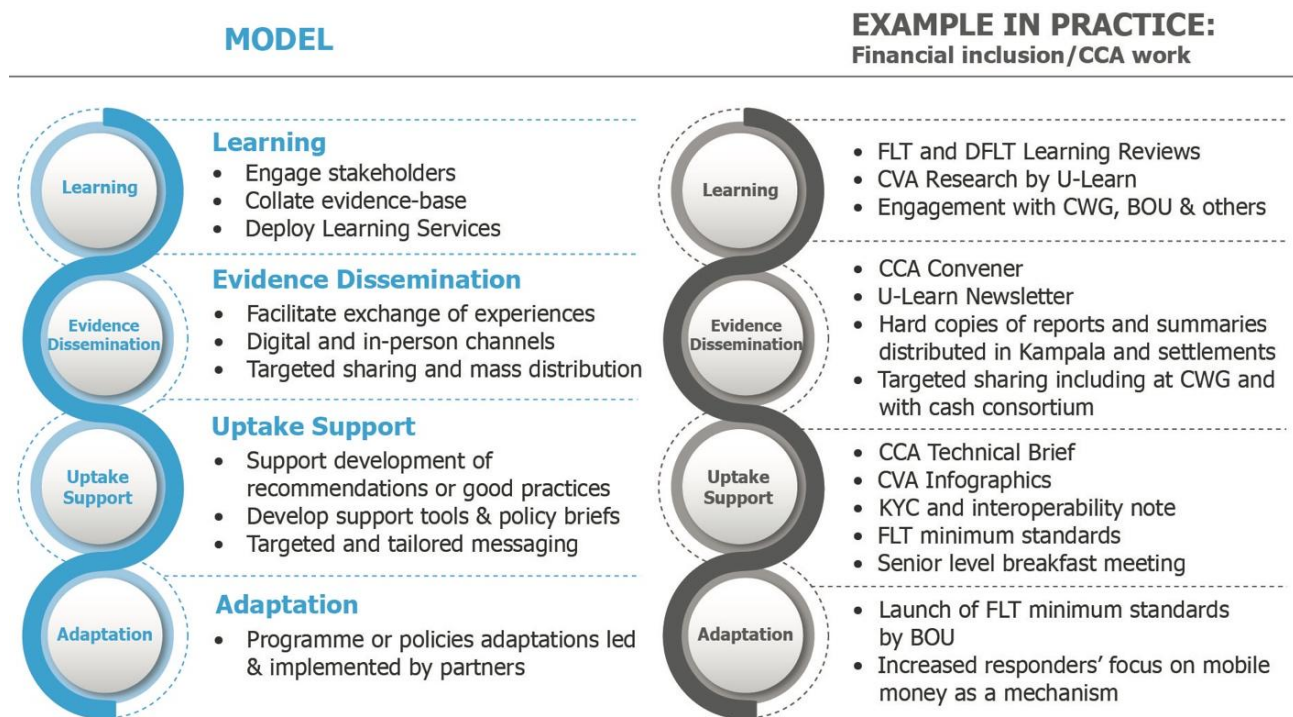
The LH work stands out as different from other work in the Uganda refugee response. No comparable programmes have been identified in other humanitarian responses to date.³⁷

³⁵ Definition of humanitarian advocacy adapted from Kaya, UNICEF, HelpAge.

³⁶ While staying guided by humanitarian principles (see more in section on driving principles).

³⁷ This is a conclusion drawn from the analysis conducted for the documentation of the LH model through key informant interviews and a desk review.

Figure 18: Learning Hub evidence-based influencing model (activities, outputs and outcomes)



Box 4: What makes the LH unique?

- Public good:** The LH provides services to response stakeholders in an inclusive and public way.
- Learning and influencing rather than implementing:** Unlike other humanitarian response actors, the LH does not directly implement any services or goods delivery. Instead, it shapes the way humanitarian and nexus assistance is delivered.
- Impartiality:** The LH has been able to establish its identity as a neutral support that connects with all stakeholders and does not promote one agenda above another. Partners trust that the LH will be the voice of the collective, rely on evidence and not be politicized.
- Institutional audiences:** The main audience (or clients) are institutional stakeholders even though the crisis-affected persons are the ones who may ultimately benefit.
- Value-addition:** The LH does not duplicate interventions. Rather, it identifies gaps in collaboration with partners and proposes learning services to strengthen existing interventions.
- Multi-sectoral focus:** Many projects are sector-specific, in particular learning projects. However, the LH is multi-sectoral. The LH provides space where multisectoral discussions and learning can happen across stakeholder groups.

4.2. Working in partnership: risks and opportunities

The Learning Hub relies heavily on collaboration with partners and achieves its objectives thanks to its successful efforts garnering stakeholder buy-in. Partnerships and stakeholder engagement are foundational and represent both risks and opportunities.

First, obtaining response-stakeholders buy-in is a prerequisite to the LH's work. The LH can only achieve its objectives if stakeholders are interested in the services and ready to engage with the team. Despite early concerns that the LH might duplicate existing information management and coordination functions within the humanitarian coordination system, the LH demonstrated how the learning services would instead supplement them through learning. The buy-in of allies or early-adopters, such as the Interagency Cash Working Group (CWG), helped harness great support for the learning work.

Second, partnerships are a guarantee of quality and relevance. Through its consultative model for the definition of learning topics and selection of services to fill a response-wide gap, the LH ensures its work will be relevant to its audience. Partners co-lead learning activities, acting as peer-reviewers and guarantors of the technical quality of content, which in turn ensures output credibility. The LH's approach was demonstrated with the CWG in 2021 and later expanded to strategic partners like LRSWG, WorkGrEEen, and JLIRP Secretariat.

However, the heavy reliance on stakeholders for the LH's work presents risks of dependence or instrumentalization. An influential actor (UN, government or other actor with recognized expertise on a specific topic) that disagrees with some of the recommendations emerging from the learning process might have the capacity to act as a gatekeeper and stop the learning process, for instance by refusing to sign off a report during a technical peer-review, refusing to participate in a convenor, etc. It is important for the LH to always identify such gatekeepers and their agenda at the onset of a learning process. Finding ways to collaborate on the topic rather than confront partners has in most cases resolved the tensions. Another correlated risk is that some influential partners may push the LH to focus on one topic or highlight a practice because it aligns with their organisational strategy. Mitigating this risk requires ensuring multiple evidence sources and ensuring that learning demands come from a variety of actors.

Finally, a successful engagement strategy has the potential to amplify learning. The LH's strong network is useful in particular for convenors that bring relevant actors to the table and for external reviews of learning outputs. This network contributes to safeguarding the quality of the work, mitigates risks of controversies, and increases stakeholders buy-in prior to publication, ultimately increasing the chances of uptake. An example is the recent publication of the Financial Literacy Minimum Standards by the Bank of Uganda ([Highlighted Success 1](#)). Another example of amplification was an [insightful LinkedIn post by a UNCDF staff member](#) on the Digital Saving Groups learning work which reached a broader audience.

Box 5: Collaborating with regulatory and policy-making bodies

The Uganda government is the most critical partner for influencing the adaptation of policies based on evidence. Policy-making moves at a rhythm different from humanitarian work and depends on a large number of factors. The LH has however been increasingly able to avail its evidence-base to support governmental plans. The LH's growing reputation means that government partners have actively requested its support in a number of instances. An example is the support to the preparation of the 2023 Global Refugee Forum ([Highlighted Success 3](#)).

The LH engages with government entities both on a content-level and process-level. On the **content-level**, active collaborations are in place and can be deepened for further uptake, i.e. working with thematic institutions such as the Bank of Uganda on financial inclusion, the JLIRP secretariat at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development on sustainable livelihoods,

and the OPM Department of Refugees on SLAM ([Highlighted Success 2](#)). **On a process-level**, i.e. how to support learning in the refugee response³⁸, collaborative relationships are in place with the CRRF Secretariat.

To date, the closest relationships have been with INGOs, UN partners (and humanitarian coordination mechanisms), followed by the private sector, refugee-led organisations and the Ugandan government. Despite the prevalence of international UN and INGO partners design and execution of learning activities, the LH has managed to ensure a more diverse participation in learning activities and to achieve balance between international and local partners (figures below).

Figure 19: Participation in LH-conveners by organisation type (2022 to March 2024)

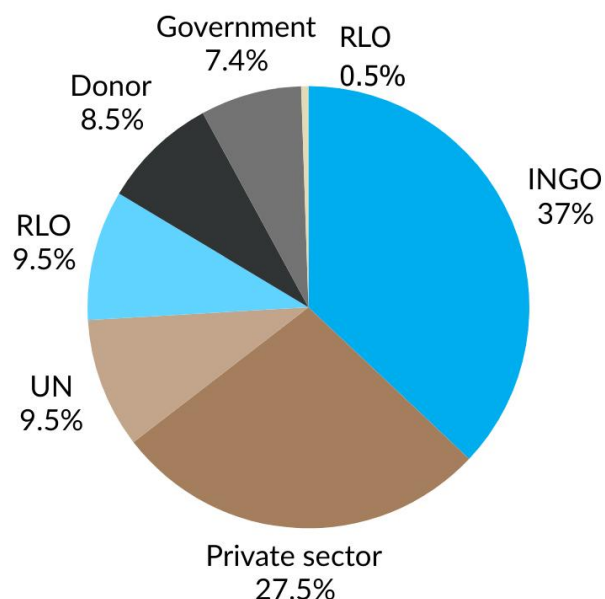
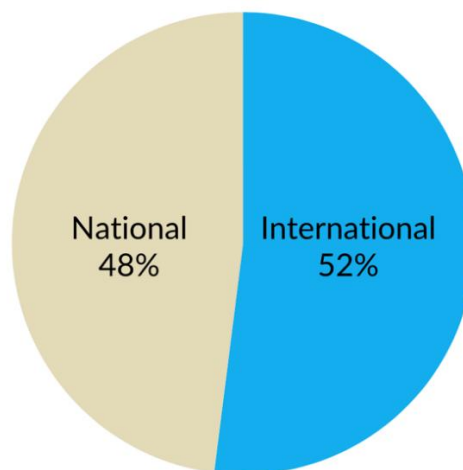


Figure 20: International and national organisations participation in LH-conveners (2022 to March 2024)



4.3. [The driving principles](#)

Seven driving principles underpin the Learning Hub’s work. The Learning Hub is:

1. **Impartial and neutral.** It does not take position and includes all evidence and positions. The “voice of the Learning Hub” (INGO, 2023) amplifies collective recommendations based on technical evidence. This is critical to ensure trust and knowledge sharing within the response.
2. **Collaborative.** Consultations and stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone way of working. Collaborating with key technical experts guarantees content quality, increases the credibility and relevance of the learning work and raises the chances of uptake.

³⁸ The CRRF Secretariat’s Strategic Direction (SD) and National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Uganda refugee response’s Expected Result 1 (Strong national arrangements are in place to coordinate the comprehensive refugee response) focusses on strengthening Knowledge Management, Learning and Communication in Outcome 5.

3. **Demand-driven and acts as a service-provider.** To ensure learning services are relevant and there is potential for uptake, the LH aims to respond to a learning demand shared by a large number of actors Demand is assessed through consultations, bilateral engagements and response to requests proactively submitted by any actor
4. **Flexible and pivots easily.** In the initial stages of a learning process, it is impossible to know what evidence gaps will be the priority of the response stakeholders and in what formats the findings should be presented. The LH constantly adapts to user requests and to evolving learning demands, including through the development of new types of services (such as digital tools added in 2022) and output formats (such as compendium added in 2024).
5. **Inclusive and strives to ensure openness.** Striving to be a public good means that the LH actively removes barriers to access and use of evidence for all stakeholders, adhering to the principle of localisation of humanitarian action. All learning activities are public and at no cost; when needed, the LH even facilitates access (through covering transport costs of participants from small organisations for instance). Specific attention is given to ensure diverse participation and representation of various evidence sources.
6. **A producer of high-quality outputs.** Quality is achieved through robust content that is comprehensive yet concise and through collaboration with technical partners that ensures the final evidence is actionable. Furthermore, several rounds of technical and non-technical reviews alongside an emphasis on the right format guarantee ease of use of the resources.
7. **Timely.** Learning activities need to be timed to ensure the circumstances are favourable for learning uptake. The LH has linked up well to national and global debates. For instance, the livelihoods learning support work that started in 2022 created a body of evidence that fed into Uganda's contribution to the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.³⁹

Figure 21: The seven driving principles of the Uganda Refugee Response LH



W *I don't get the impression that they're biased towards any one specific organisation. They're trying to support all organisations."*
 - National NGO, 2022 and INGO, 2023.

The following section summarises the LH's support in preparation of the Global Refugee Forum. It illustrates how the LH, through its unique model of evidence-based influencing, partnerships and application of its driving principles was able to influence the formulation of a high-level policy framework.

³⁹ More details in section [Highlighted Success 3: Preparation of the Global Refugee Forum through learning services enhancing refugee coordination mechanisms](#)

Highlighted Success 3: Preparation of the Global Refugee Forum through learning services enhancing refugee coordination mechanisms

In collaboration with: the LRSWG, the JLIRP Secretariat, MoGLSD, and the CRRF Secretariat

Timeframe: 2022-2023

Summary of activities and results: The LH support to technical coordination groups has helped energize and move strategic discussions forward. In part thanks to the support from the LH, the LRSWG was very active in 2023 and was able to provide coordination and thought leadership during the preparation of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF). The livelihoods learning support learning process started in 2022 with a mapping of research and learning needs as well as support to the update of the sector's strategic plans. The LH then delivered the following learning outputs, supported by dissemination and stakeholder consultations to support uptake:

- Three desk reviews of [Value Chains Assessments](#), [Labour Market Assessments](#) and [Refugee Entrepreneurship](#) to take stock of a very large number of surveys and experiences that were not capitalised upon,
- A [Mapping of Agricultural Private Sector Actors in the Response](#) to facilitate connections outside of the humanitarian response space,
- A [Research Brief on The Realities Of Self-Reliance Within The Ugandan Refugee Context in depth-assessment](#) (research conducted by the U-Learn Research component),
- An evidence brief [Exploring The Challenges Faced By Formal Refugee-Owned Businesses In Uganda](#) to draw attention to areas that need to be addressed in entrepreneurship support programmes,
- A Case Study on [Mobile TVET Programming](#) to highlight innovative ways of providing skills,
- A learning event to collectively prioritise ten high-potential value chains in the response - this convener later resulted in an [Agricultural Value Chains Strategic Positioning Paper](#)

This body of evidence, underpinned by collective learning processes, led to a collaboration with the [Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda](#) (JLRIP) in 2023. For instance, the LH supported the Government of Uganda in organising a livelihoods roundtable that fed into the country-level contribution to the GRF. The LH also documented the recommendations. All of this support was instrumental in the development of GRF pledges on self-reliance.

The success of this learning process can be seen in the sheer number of learning outputs, which highlights that the sector needed support in curating and analysing the existing evidence as well as the fact that after the initial livelihoods learning activities with the working group were completed, government and UN partners explicitly requested support from the LH advance strategic activities on the JLRIP and GRF. Secondly, this learning work was extremely timely and fed into policy work. It supported evidence-based decisions rather than politically motivated or aspirational commitments at the GRF.

Intended impact for refugees and host communities: The GRF outcome documents fed into the donor and government pledges following the GRF and will be further used in refugee response partners' discussions going forward to align different policies and humanitarian-development practices that will impact the refugee response over the next four years on topics including livelihoods, climate, localisation. See the [final pledges by the Government of Uganda](#).

Another example: the prioritisation of value chains will support investment on interventions with higher potential to improve livelihoods and support self-reliance through income generation and job creation and avoid spreading resources into value chain interventions that have proven less effective.

Photo 2: Livelihoods roundtable to prepare the GRF, 2023.



5. How the LH works: methodology and tools

5.1. [Creating innovative learning services: adapting U-RIL functions](#)

The Learning Hub is an innovation incubated by U-RIL. The RIL was launched to challenge the status quo in humanitarian work and encourage thinking outside the box to better serve vulnerable populations. Its foundational concepts include learning from others and their experiences, connecting diverse actors, and looking for solutions and improvement opportunities within humanitarian responses (not at headquarters level). U-RIL piloted the LH like an innovation, staying flexible and iterative, allowing more creativity than is typically seen in humanitarian projects. This philosophy nurtured the development of the LH's bespoke model for evidence-based influencing and its methodology. The LH's way of working is innovative because of its driving principles, because new learning outputs are designed on-demand, and because each learning process weaves together a unique combination of learning activities.

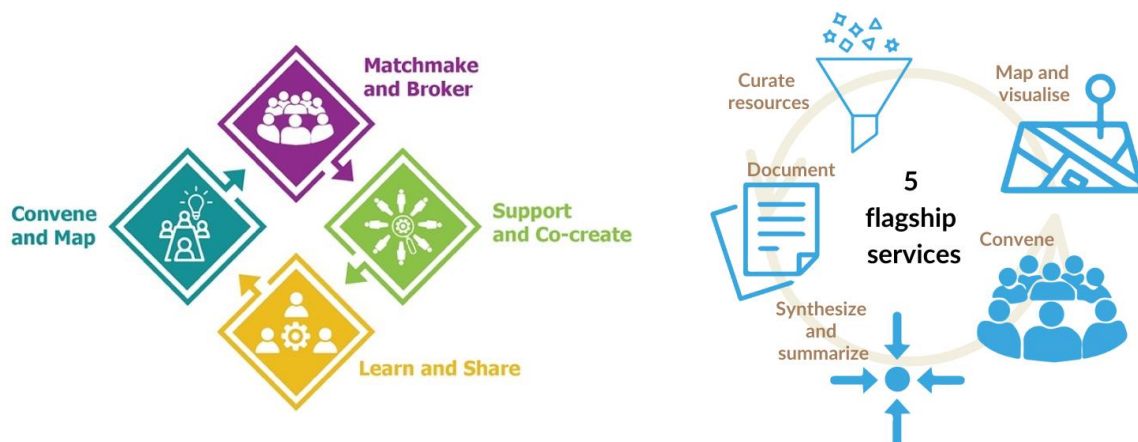
Box 6: Learning reviews - a successful process for collective learning

The flagship learning services are intrinsically connected and often complementary. A learning review on a specific topic combines services and outputs depending on the identified learning need in a 5-step process.

	Learning review steps	Example of Financial Inclusion Learning Review
1.	Engage and consult with stakeholder to narrow down the scope of the learning topic and identify partners.	Topic selected: Digital Savings Groups
2.	Curate existing resources and explicit knowledge to get an understanding of the existing body of evidence and its gaps. This may lead to the publication of an annotated bibliography, a compendium, a mapping, etc.	Internal evidence review
3.	In consultation with partners, the LH will implement other learning services that are needed to conduct an analysis of the evidence base and ensure response actors can share explicit and implicit knowledge on the learning topic. At this stage of a learning review, the LH can organise conveners, produce learning briefs or draft desk reviews.	Digital FLT Learning Brief
4.	Once the findings and recommendations emerge from the collective learning process, the LH enters a phase of dissemination using a range of secondary outputs and channels.	A digital savings group workshop including a FinTech fair (in-person and reflected online in a mapping)
5.	To ensure adaptation of targeted policies or programmes, the LH provides uptake support in the form of targeted engagements and production of practical tools or policy documents.	Checklist for Moving Savings Group Digital Criteria.

The Learning Hub developed its unique offering of tailored learning services as variations of the RIL functions which were designed to support the innovation ecosystem.

Figure 22: Response Innovation Lab functions & the 5 Learning Hub flagship services



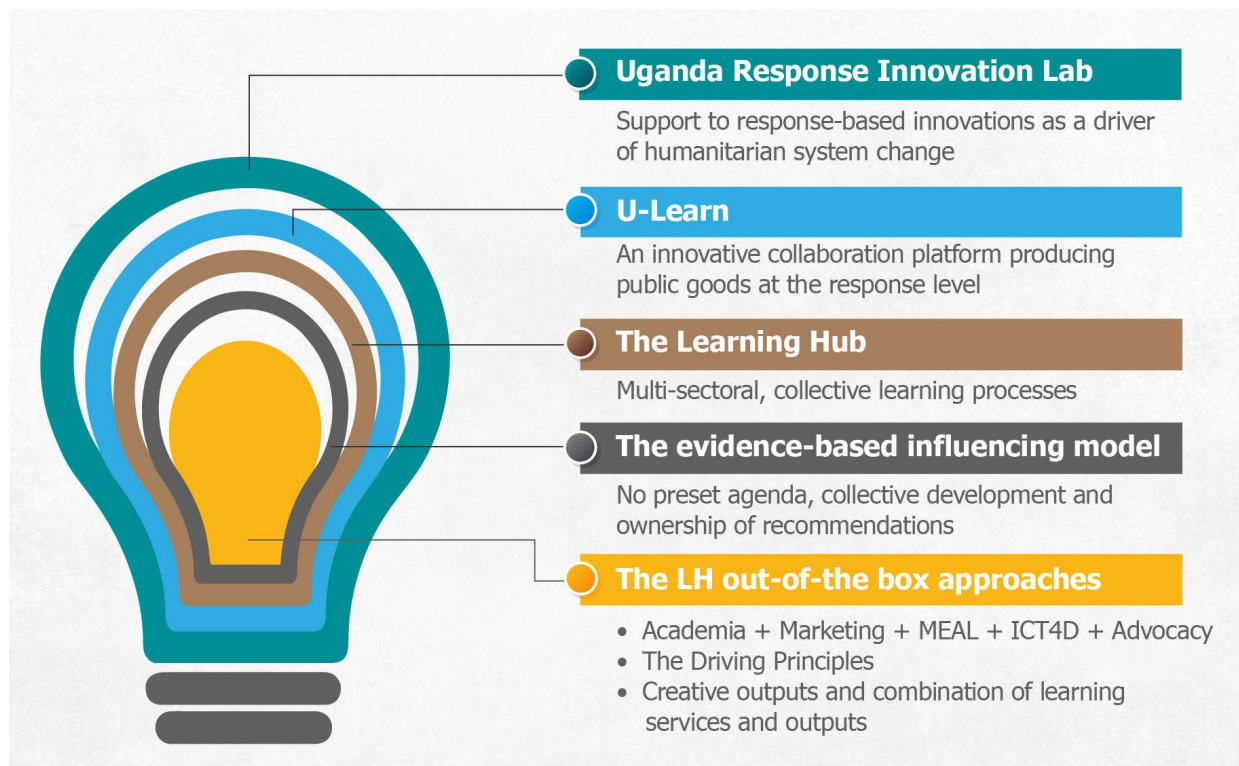
Box 7: Curating, synthesising and disseminating evidence: a simple and effective process innovation for the response

Although summarising and distributing evidence seems like an obvious way to amplify the potential of good practices and learning to contribute to results, in practice, this combination of academic and marketing approaches is rare in the humanitarian sector. Organisations tend to rely on their own research and evaluations, there is a lot of duplication, and a lot of evidence is kept internal or when it is published, it remains under-utilised (format not conducive to uptake, dissemination limited to the funder of the research, etc). The LH offers shorter pieces, bringing all the relevant evidence together and helps people focus on key facts.

Outside of the RIL functions, the LH has drawn inspiration from various fields. Many of the creative approaches used by the LH are not original innovations but are innovative because they are solutions borrowed from other fields and applied to humanitarian-development nexus topics:

1. **Academic practices** of bringing together a large number of sources, analysing them and assessing adequacy of content, producing desk reviews and annotated bibliographies and ensuring all publications are peer-reviewed.
2. **Marketing** with the attention given to format and visuals and the development of highly interactive conveners.
3. **ICT4D** (Information and Communication Technology for Development) with digital tools (mappings and interactive visualisations).
4. **Advocacy** with its evidence-based influencing approach.
5. **MEAL** with the combination of qualitative and quantitative data points as well as implicit and explicit knowledge.

Figure 23: Learning Hub innovations



5.2. [Making sure learning services are demand-driven](#)

The Learning Hub is demand-driven and constantly identifies learning needs and potential activities through two parallel mechanisms:

Pro-active scoping through ongoing conversations with partners and networking. For instance, multiple partners mentioned the need to understand who is implementing graduation programming in Uganda to the LH team, which led to the development of a [Graduation Compendium](#). In some cases, the scoping is more formal: once a general theme of focus has been identified, the LH begins an intentional process to identify learning topics and services through targeted bilateral or group consultations.

Reactive design of a learning activity in response to a request initiated by a partner. Those requests can be received, among others through [a digital portal⁴⁰ for the Tailored Evidence and Learning Service \(TELS\)](#)⁴¹. Any actor in the response can submit a request. The LH endeavours to provide support as long as the time and budgetary resources are available and the request fits into the thematic scope and selection criteria (see [2.3](#) and [TELS' Terms of Reference](#)). Requests vary from support for a convener process (for instance the CRRF district consultations on localisation), visualising or lay-out support (shortening and visualising, i.e. a report on savings groups for CRS), dissemination of programmatic lessons, or an in-depth learning process request (ANCHOR's request to [document mobile TVET approaches](#)). Many requests are received outside of the online

⁴⁰ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/tels-request/>

⁴¹ Inspiration came from the RIL Matchmaker service that matches their humanitarian challenge to innovative solutions: <https://www.responseinnovationlab.com/matchmaker>

application portal through partner conversations. The LH responded to over 20 partner requests for support in 2023-2024.

[5.3. Delivering learning services: a specialised team operating across entities](#)

5.3.1 Unique staffing needs

Running the LH requires investing a higher proportion of the budget in human resources than in many other humanitarian projects and these resources are spent on fewer, more senior profiles. The LH's team structure has fluctuated but experience shows that a small team of three full-time senior-level technical staff combining conceptual and soft skills, and experience in partnerships, influencing or advocacy, learning, and communications is critical. Furthermore, because the LH is multi-sectoral, the core team needs to be able to conceptually engage with a broad range of technical topics.

These skills have proven hard to source nationally and to some extent internationally as the field of 'learning' in the humanitarian-development field is still nascent. The difficulty in identifying the right profiles for the LH has been a challenge and led to turnover and recurrent staffing gaps. A lean core team is complemented with additional capacity through framework agreements with technical consultants through the consultant pool approach.

5.3.2 The consultant pool approach

To operate with a small team and work on several learning themes concurrently, the LH needed a mechanism to quickly access expert capacity. Furthermore, ICT4D expertise in Uganda is limited and the mandate and needs of the LH are conceptual and hard to understand for regular IT companies. The LH spent a lot of time trying to identify the right resources for its digital projects.

The LH established a pool of framework agreements with various profiles: ICT4D advisors, learning specialists, communication specialists, and qualitative researchers who have an understanding of LH's topics. The consultant pool is an effective way to overcome recurring challenges in sourcing the right profiles, which contributes to the richness and quality of the LH's content. Furthermore, the pool approach is a good value-for-money measure that enables the LH to quickly and effectively adapt to fast changing realities, such as needs and budget.

5.3.3 The LH as a hosted entity and a consortium partner

Hosted entity and governance

U-RIL, the implementer of the LH, is hosted by Save the Children International (SCI) in Uganda. The LH operates through SCI's structures, administrative procedures and regulations. SCI is also responsible for all support services of U-RIL (Human Resources, Finances, Supply Chain, etc).

In terms of technical programme design and delivery, U-RIL receives strategic direction from the Central Support Unit of the RIL and from the U-RIL Executive Committee (which currently consists of Save the Children Uganda and the RIL Central Support Unit but has the ambition to expand to include more advisory partners, particularly Uganda-based ones).

U-RIL implements activities that differ from most projects implemented by SCI; it pivots often and quickly to stay demand-driven. U-RIL operations thus sometimes challenge the practices in this

large organisation due to its non-traditional needs and requests (example: procuring digital platforms, conferencing and web-hosting services). Opportunities for learning between the two entities have emerged and have encouraged incremental internal adaptations in ways of working. This could be taken further if these adaptations are purposefully built into future programming.

Consortium partner

To date, all the funding for the LH has come through consortia. The Learning Hub was launched as a part of the U-Learn consortium and later joined another consortium, the Uthabiti Activity, when it secured USAID BHA funding.

The Learning Hub developed a privileged relationship with partners in both consortia. The consortium partners share their learning gaps and needs with the LH. Through further consultations, the LH then assesses if those resonate with broader needs in the response. When it is the case, the LH initiates activities to fill that learning gap. The consortium thus benefits from these services and sees its work being “amplified” (U-Learn team member, 2023 and U-Learn steering group meeting 2023) by the LH. All learning activities remain public. Being a part of consortia benefits the LH since it provides access to technical experts eager to collaborate and to networking opportunities.

One of the challenges of working as a part of a consortium is that partners need to buy into learning services for the overall refugee response. They need to understand the benefits they can derive from having a privileged relationship with the LH while the learning services are provided to the entire response community rather than to the consortium alone.

5.4. [Funding and budgeting learning services](#)

5.4.1 Non-traditional budgeting

The budget lines for the LH generally differ from other humanitarian projects as they do not include costs of direct aid delivery. Instead, the budget is dedicated to human resources (staffing or consultants), events (venues, catering, travel facilitation), communication costs (printing, photography and video), staff travel, and digital service providers (web development and hosting).

Once core staff costs are covered, the level of outputs can vary based on the activity budget. If the activity budget is unsubstantial, the outputs will be limited to what can be fully produced in-house and the overall project will have a lower Value for Money – i.e. the investment will not be sufficient for the LH to fully deliver its potential outcomes. A range of USD300,000-500,000 per year proved effective. Since many learning activities are co-hosted, partners sometimes cover some costs, proving that they see the value in investing resources in the LH’s work.

5.4.2 Multi-donor platform for the public good

The Learning Hub successfully became a multi-donor platform in 2022 when USAID became a donor alongside UKaid.⁴² Being a multi-donor platform is in line with the LH’s mandate of being a public good rather than serving individual institutions’ learning needs. It also strengthened its position as a credible, impartial service-provider.

⁴² The Royal Danish Embassy is planning on starting funding the LH at the end of 2024.

5.5. [Institutional future and continuation of the learning services](#)

Both of the current grants for the LH (UKaid and USAID BHA) are scheduled to end during the first half of 2025. Considering the mandate for humanitarian system change, grant funding is the most suitable source of budget for the learning work and U-RIL is exploring additional and alternative funding streams to continue the LH. However, the LH brand and identity was initially developed under the U-Learn consortium. If the programme ends, senior-level discussions with the donor and consortium partners are needed on brand-ownership and intellectual property rights. Decisions will have repercussions on any continuation or potential iteration of the LH in Uganda and on the potential replication of the LH in other responses as a single-partner or consortium project. The LH's success at being an impartial influencing platform and its convening mandate underscore the advantage of being run by a neutral ecosystem-supporting entity like U-RIL. However, despite many synergies - both conceptually and operationally - U-RIL's innovation and learning portfolios may attract different funders and partners.

5.6. [Localising learning services](#)

The LH, in line with the Grand Bargain commitments on localisation⁴³, is dedicated to accelerating and improving its investment in local humanitarian leadership. Its learning mandate and services can contribute to elevating local leadership and enhancing diversity in the refugee response. From 2024, the LH is working on localisation both as a theme of work and a way of working. This decision to focus on localisation is both driven by stakeholders' demand as well as a necessary rethinking of humanitarian action. The localisation learning process and SLAM have set the grounds to support further localisation efforts. The LH is now playing a supporting role for the localisation processes that are taking place in the Uganda refugee response, connecting the different stakeholder groups and ensuring exchange of information and evidence. See more in section [7.1](#)

5.7. [Measuring learning services results](#)

The overall impact pursued by the LH is to 'serve vulnerable populations better'. The difficulty in establishing an impact indicator for such an objective, the long-time frame through which such an impact could be documented (a minimum of three years is recommended), and the costliness of an evaluation or a knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) study to collect that data, have led to a focus on outcome level results up to now. The LH is using an outcome harvesting methodology documenting examples of adaptation and connections through interviews with key partners of a learning process (twice a year).

For information on the LH's achievements of the LH see [Results: What has the LH achieved?](#) For a concrete example of successful learning work that documented and promoted a unique process innovation for refugee participation, see the next page for a highlight on the [Strengthening refugee voices through the promotion of the REF as a unique 2-way communication mechanism](#) and the other highlighted successes.

⁴³ More details here: <https://glocalisation.ifrc.org>

Highlighted Success 4: Strengthening refugee voices through the promotion of the REF as a unique 2-way communication mechanism

In collaboration with: the REF, U-Learn’s AAP team, UNHCR, CRRF Secretariat

Timeframe: 2020-2021

Summary of activities and results: The first of its kind, the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) has proven to be a successful model to systematically ensure that refugee voices are equitably engaged and represented in/by the CRRF Steering Group, the Uganda’s senior refugee response coordination and decision-making body led by the government. The LH documented this unique participation structure when it became apparent that despite the opportunities that the REF offered for improved accountability to affected populations (AAP), it was not well known or understood in the refugee response.

The [Good Practice Study on the REF](#)⁴⁴ (and the shorter [Brief](#)) promoted this mechanism in Uganda and contributed to showcase the Uganda Refugee Response model globally. The model was picked up as a global good practice and presented on the IASC Accountability and Inclusion Resource Portal through a [blog post](#) and inclusion in their library. It also became apparent that refugees themselves were not well informed about the REF. The LH developed a [Presenter’s Guide on the REF](#)⁴⁵ in various local languages and adapted the content to low-literacy audiences, to support community outreach by the REF members themselves. This guide is one of the first examples of “support tool”⁴⁶ produced by the LH.

The success of this learning process lies in the analysis of a learning and accessibility gap that was hiding in plain sight - the REF, a powerful yet under-utilised AAP mechanism in the response. It is also a good example of learning laterally (within the response) and out (showcasing Uganda experience globally). Finally, it directly supported the adaptation of practices in the response to strengthen refugee voices.

Intended impact for refugees and host communities: First, through the Presenter’s Guide, REF members were supported to engage with communities more effectively and demonstrate their mandate and why it is important for them to share feedback. One REF member reported on how these opinions have influenced high-level decision making as follows: “Refugee voices and opinions from across 13 settlements were part of the final CRRF National Plan of Action 2021-2022. [...] We documented and shared findings with the REF Task Force and CRRF Steering Group and these were reflected in the National Planning Authority” (REF member interview, 2022 - for IASC Blog). Second, partners in the refugee response, such as INGOs and UN partners that did not know the REF or did not fully grasp the opportunities that it represented in terms of two-way engagement, started reaching out to the REF.



REF meeting, 2024.

⁴⁴ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/refugee-engagement-forum-in-uganda-good-practice-study/>

⁴⁵ <https://ulearn-uganda.org/refugee-engagement-forum-ref-presenters-guide/>

⁴⁶ See section [2.7](#) on support services.

6. Conclusions

The Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub has successfully established an evidence-based influencing model to respond to the challenges of learning and effective use of evidence to support humanitarian system change. The LH's work has already led to a number of adaptations in policies and practice in the Uganda refugee response, demonstrating how international and collective learning can drive transformation. The LH team has successfully highlighted the importance of collaborative, multi-sectoral learning, contributing to an increased culture of learning and sharing among stakeholders.

Strategically positioned in the humanitarian-development nexus, the LH implements evidence-based influencing by focusing on relevant multi-sectoral thematic areas in a timely manner, engaging stakeholders through consultative and collaborative processes, and adopting an impartial approach to encourage change. A success factor of the learning work is the quality of outputs and how they are creatively combined. Another factor is the service approach that is embodied by the team: staying demand-driven, ready to innovate and aligned with the LH driving principles. This cohesive approach is the LH's "secret sauce" (LH team member, 2023).

These strengths result from extensive iteration and refinement efforts of the LH conceptual framework and services from 2020 to 2024. The next section recommends incremental changes to improve the Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub in the immediate future and reflects on how a LH 2.0 could adapt the current model to tackle the challenge of becoming a locally-led learning platform.

7. Recommendations to strengthen the Learning Hub

While experimenting with new approaches is valuable, in the immediate future the LH needs to maintain and consolidate existing successful services, deepen collaborations, and focus on uptake support and refugee insights. Conceptually, this means the Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub will maintain its demand-driven, impartial ways of working, including the evidence-based influencing model, focus on lateral learning, driving principles and thematic scope.

Operationally, considering a recurring risk of overstressing the team due to the high learning demands, the LH needs to avoid dispersion across too many learning processes and activities. Furthermore, having now built a strong body of evidence across multiple themes, the focus needs to be on deepening and broadening the reach of the learnings, i.e. increase dissemination, uptake support and influencing, rather than develop new learning content.

7.1. [The next challenge to tackle: localisation](#)

Localisation is a priority for both improving the current LH and the reflection a future iteration (LH 2.0). The LH's objective in 2024 was to better leverage local actors' knowledge and invest in processes in which they can lead learning processes. The current efforts ongoing as a part of the LH localisation approach include:

- Supporting learning on localisation in the response (theme of work); and

- Enhancing access to, visibility and utilisation of, humanitarian knowledge and quality evidence from and for community-based organisations, refugee-led organisations, local/national NGOs and local entrepreneurs.⁴⁷

Operationalizing localization commitments through partnerships with national research, learning, or training institutions may include strengthening capacities on the evidence-based influencing model and will need to include budgetary resources. As of 2024, the resources are not available and U-RIL will continue to advocate for flexibility and support from donors to support these commitments.

Ambition: a locally-led LH 2.0

The LH has been successful at providing a solution for the challenge of increasing learning and applying it for evidence-based driven adaptation of programmes and policy in the Uganda refugee response. Over the course of implementation, a new challenge was identified as a result of discussing learning gaps and opportunities with partners: the over-centralisation of knowledge and evidence. Knowledge and knowledge-sharing mechanisms tend to be organised amongst a key group of actors, effectively excluding some actors and some types of knowledge. Since its inception, the LH has emphasised the diversity of evidence sources and partners in all activities with some success and is increasing its efforts to overcome this challenge.

Nonetheless, localisation of evidence, research and thinking remains a challenge that requires further investment to be solved. The LH needs to evolve to respond to this challenge, based on the existing expertise and the experiences and lessons described in this report. A LH 2.0 co-designed, co-led, co-implemented by local partners has significant transformative potential for the Uganda refugee response and would be a real innovation. The ways of working of a LH 2.0 have to combine local actors' needs and priorities with the evidence-based influencing model.

As a first step, the LH is planning a learning assessment to ensure that local voices are the ones framing needs and priorities on strengthening and building local knowledge management, evidence, and research, rather than starting a reflection process based on assumptions.

7.2. Programmatic recommendations for the LH implementation team and the U-RIL team

Focus on uptake and influencing

The LH model is based on the assumption that response actors take up learning findings. If they do not, the work invested in the collective learning processes will not result in adaptations and transformation in programmes and policies. Therefore, it is particularly critical to invest in uptake and influencing, which requires dedicated capacity and resources.

A few practical recommendations to support this work include:

- Deepening influence through partnerships because partnerships are crucial in enhancing influence. Identifying potential supporters and promoters for future initiatives, revisiting engagement strategies, particularly focusing on local actors and government partners will increase both localisation and uptake potential;
- Diversifying the audience with increased efforts to reach in particular senior management and decision-makers and field practitioners;

⁴⁷ Because the LH's main audience is institutional, direct community-level work is not included.

- Enhancing the dissemination strategy by exploring new formats and channels suitable to target audiences and expanding the timeframe for dissemination.

7.2.1 Better integrate refugee and host community voices

Although the LH's current audience is institutional, community involvement in learning processes and outputs is possible. The LH can play a role in ensuring refugee insights reach a broader audience and are integrated more systematically in learning outputs. With sufficient resources available, and to avoid tokenistic attempts at integration or increasing interview fatigue, community perspectives could be integrated in the selection of learning topics.

7.2.2 Measure longer-term impact with a focus on people

The LH identifies achievements mainly through outcome harvesting and partner feedback. After four years, system changes and policy adaptations are noted, mainly in how institutional stakeholders use and apply the evidence promoted by the LH. LH results may seem technical, but they directly impact crisis-affected populations. Moving forward there is an opportunity to link these observed adaptations to self-reliance outcomes for communities. Storytelling can connect technical adaptations with human change stories for refugees and hosts. This can support uptake through accessible information and contribute to demonstrating results.

7.3. [Strategic and operational recommendations for senior management overseeing the LH's work \(U-RIL, RIL globally and SCI Uganda\)](#)

- Continue promoting the LH as a platform that response actors and donors can buy into so that the mandate of delivering public goods can be preserved.
- Strengthen the funding base to avoid risk of instrumentalization and broaden the reach of the learning work in the response.
- Expand U-RIL's Executive Committee to provide more diverse perspectives in the strategic direction of both learning and innovation work.
- Conduct a reflection on the most conducive setup for the iteration of a relevant LH 2.0 and scale of the learning work.

7.4. [Recommendations to current or prospective Learning Hub donors](#)

- Embrace the LH's mandate of generating public goods for the entire refugee response and accept sharing outcome results with multiple donors. This positioning is crucial for actors to be willing to collaborate (share and take up learning).
- Anticipate at least 1 to 2 years of building the body of evidence and learnings at an output level before seeing outcome and impact-level results on any given theme.
- Provide multi-year, predictable funding with built-in flexibility to allow iteration on themes, learning activities and diverse partnerships.
- Encourage and support the LH's impartial identity, and demand-driven processes and avoid over-definition of thematic scope areas.

8. Recommendations to partners interested in scaling up the Learning Hub model to other responses

This Spotlight tells the story of the U-RIL Learning Hub, its successes and challenges in the specific context of a protracted refugee response in Uganda. In the last four years, the model has demonstrated its value. Other protracted humanitarian responses can benefit from a similar learning platform. These are recommendations and suggestions to take into account when attempting to launch a response-wide learning hub.

Figure 24: Critical, important and nice to have recommendations to launch a response-wide learning hub

Critical	Important	Nice to have
<p>Conceptualise the whole programme around public goods. This positioning is crucial for actors to be willing to collaborate (share and take up learning).</p> <p>Start the journey with a stakeholder mapping to identify gatekeepers, enablers/allies, and amplifiers. Be mindful of power dynamics and centralisation of knowledge circles in most responses.</p> <p>Adopt a multi-theme approach to facilitate interlinkages between learning processes and differentiate from other learning or coordination mechanisms in the response.</p> <p>Define the thematic scope and limit it to a specific set of areas to avoid spreading resources too thin.</p> <p>Stay flexible and innovative to respond to new learning demands in the response.</p>	<p>Provide multi-year, predictable, fixed funding to facilitate strategic and operational planning.</p> <p>A minimum 3-year timeframe is recommended to achieve impact. 1-2 years of building the body of evidence, the learnings (at an output level) are needed before seeing outcome and impact-level results (uptake of learning and evidence-based influencing).</p> <p>Invest in progressive network development with different partner types.</p> <p>For each learning process, identify core actors to co-own or co-host it.</p>	<p>Make-sure the Learning Hub has an impartial identity and is hosted in a credible, neutral platform, one that is already known and trusted in the response.</p> <p>Consider adopting or adapting the driving principles from the Uganda Refugee Response Learning Hub.</p>

Do reach out - collaboration and experience-sharing is always welcomed by the U-RIL team: info@ulearn-uganda.org or uganda@responseinnovationlab.com