

URRI YEAR 1 LEARNING & REFLECTION BRIEF

What works in refugee resilience programming



EMBASSY OF DENMARK
Danida

KEY LEARNINGS FROM YEAR 1

These lessons are drawn from implementation of URRI's three outcomes.

They reflect what the evidence from year 1 shows and where we still need to learn more.



Established Lessons (strong evidence)



Emerging Lessons (more evidence needed)



OUTCOME 1: CLIMATE-RESILIENT & INCLUSIVE LIVELIHOODS



Integrated interventions drive stronger adoption and resilience—not standalone trainings

Farmers adopted Regenerative Climate Smart Agriculture (RCSA) practices more successfully when technical training was combined with GALS, VSLA integration, and land access facilitations. This integrated support enabled households to jointly plan, save, invest in productive farming practices and sustain activities beyond the stand-alone trainings conducted.



Social dynamics like household decision-making influence economic outcomes

Improved joint decision-making through GALS translated into greater investment in farming and uptake of practices, especially among women. In households practicing joint planning, couples agreed to reinvest income into seeds and tools, increasing productivity compared to households where decisions remained individual. This can be translated beyond just decision making around planning but also aspects of resource ownership, land access and further income and asset investment.



Demonstration and peer learning are more effective than classroom-based training

Centres of Excellence and model farmer visits and practical demonstrations accelerate learning and replication of practices of good practices more effective than traditional classroom-based training. Some farmers were more likely to adopt mulching, intercropping and improved agronomic practices after seeing results directly from fellow farmers and demonstration sites. Data collection on actual farmer/household level adoption numbers at this lower level is needed potentially through teams developing household level adoption trackers and numbers in the follow on visits.



Financial inclusion strengthens livelihoods when groups mature progressively.

VSLAs improved savings cultures and investment capacity among households. However, groups require gradual progression pathway before transitioning into advanced steps (e.g. digitalisation or formal finance). For example, newly formed VSLAs focused on basic savings and loans, while more mature groups began linking to SACCOs and formal financial services. Due to different groups being at different levels - the approach and model adopted of a 24-month cohort cycle plans to get them there eventually. For new groups the cohort journey will take 24 months to be able to hit the maturity level.



Land access is a structural constraint that must be actively facilitated.

Limited and insecure land access, especially for refugees, restricts long-term investment and productivity gains. Refugee farmers using borrowed or short-term rented land avoided investing in soil fertility improvements due to uncertainty. This goes beyond just CSA practices and also covers long term crop investment as well as the investment in high value crops and investment in FNNM. - This also grossly affects adoption at individual farm or household level



Climate information only adds value when last-mile users have the knowledge and skills to interpret and use it in their decision-making.

While dissemination reached many, actual understanding and use of early warning information remained uneven. Farmers received seasonal forecasts but did not adjust planting calendars until extension workers explained how to interpret them.

KRRC is developing a mobile application that enables farmers to access information even in areas with limited or no network coverage, provided they are literate. Innovations like this have the potential to be game changers.



Localised evidence improves targeting and relevance.

Tools like CVCA and vulnerability assessments improved programme relevance by guiding interventions toward locally identified climate risks, production challenges, and market opportunities. For example, in areas identified as drought-prone, programming shifted toward drought-resistant crops and water management practices.



Market and Private sector extension linkages are critical for sustainability

Linking farmer groups to input suppliers, financial institutions, and buyers strengthened continuity beyond project support. Farmers connected to agro-dealers continued accessing inputs independently after initial project facilitation. This is dependent on the maturity and stability of the groups to have the systems and capability to produce quality crop and the discipline to save and reinvest. Monitoring of high performers may be needed to understand how they have been able to do this and if it can be replicated at individual level.



OUTCOME 2: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



Community-led governance structures are essential for sustained environmental outcomes.

ENRM committees improved community coordination, enforcement, and local ownership, mobilisation around restoration and conservation activities but required strengthening. Functional committees coordinated tree planting and mobilised communities to reduce bush burning.



Enforcement gaps undermine environmental gains.

Weak enforcement of by-laws led to continued deforestation, wetland encroachment, and degradation. Despite awareness campaigns, charcoal burning persisted in areas where enforcement mechanisms were weak. Tracking locations where enforcement measures have been implemented will help generate lessons that can be applied in other contexts, while also strengthening engagement with local authorities responsible for ENRM enforcement.



Linking environmental restoration to livelihoods increases community uptake.

Communities were more willing to adopt environmental conservation practices when restoration activities also generated income opportunities. Activities such as apiculture, agroforestry and youth-led green enterprises improved engagement in environmental practices. Farmers were more willing to plant trees when they could also generate income from fruit or honey.



Infrastructure investments (e.g. water systems) have multiplier effects.

Dams, bioswales, and irrigation improved productivity, restoration, and resilience simultaneously. A water retention structure can support crop irrigation while also reducing soil erosion and flooding.



Indigenous knowledge strengthens climate adaptation.

Farmer reflection processes combining local knowledge with scientific forecasts improved relevance and uptake. Farmers used traditional indicators alongside forecasts to better decide planting periods.

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OUTCOME 3: GENDER EQUALITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION



Gender role transformation requires multi-level engagement.

Sustained change occurred when interventions targeted household, community, and institutional levels simultaneously. Combining household dialogues, community training, and engagement with leaders led to stronger shifts in gender roles.



Engaging men and community leaders is critical for shifting norms.

Work with men, religious leaders, and community influencers led to more positive shifts in attitudes and behaviours. Male champions promoted shared decision-making, increasing acceptance of women's leadership.



Access to productive resources is central to women's empowerment.

Support to land access significantly improved women's participation in livelihoods and decision-making. Women who accessed land were more active in production and participated more in group decisions.



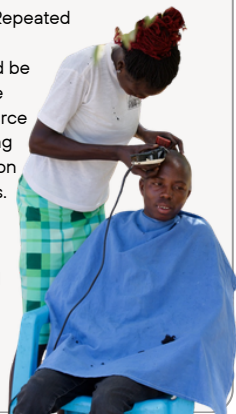
Social norms change requires sustained engagement, not one-off training.

Early shifts were observed, but progress was incremental and required continuous dialogue and reinforcement. Repeated community sessions gradually shifted attitudes on women owning assets and leading groups. It would be valuable to further interrogate social norms change beyond participation in decision-making and resource management, with a view to identifying and tracking the norms that are most likely to move the needle on gender equality, inclusion, and resilience outcomes.



Service access barriers (SRHR/GBV) remain structural.

Distance, stigma, and weak referral systems limited access despite awareness efforts. Communities knew about GBV services but could not access them due to long distances or lack of supplies.



CROSS-CUTTING & SYSTEMS-LEVEL LESSONS



Adaptive management improves delivery in fragile and changing contexts.

Flexible planning and adaptive implementation approaches enabled continuity during disruptions such as election-related tensions and changing field realities. Field activities were rescheduled and adapted to avoid political tensions while maintaining engagement.



Harmonised learning and MEAL systems improve programme effectiveness.

Joint learning agendas, shared indicators, and harmonised MEAL systems improve coherence and reduce duplication. When partners used common tools for data collection, it enabled easier aggregation and comparison of results.



Consortium coordination strengthens outcomes.

Joint reflection, learning, and coordination mechanisms improved alignment, coherence, and impact. Joint monitoring visits helped partners align approaches and address implementation gaps collectively.



Integrated solutions. Local leadership. Lasting resilience.



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