



CASE STUDY

ASSESSING APPROACHES TO SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH THE LENS OF THREE KEY EUTF PROJECTS

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EUTF Monitoring and Learning System (MLS)

The EU Trust Fund (EUTF) Horn of Africa (HoA) Monitoring and Learning System (MLS) was initiated in July 2017 and is being implemented by Altai Consulting. The overall objective of the MLS is to strengthen the EUTF interventions in the HoA through the creation of a monitoring and learning system, which should provide an evidence-based approach for programming and implementing interventions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AVSI	<i>Association of Volunteers in International Service</i>
DRC	<i>Danish Red Cross</i>
	<i>Danish Refugee Council</i>
ESRS	<i>Ethiopian Somali Regional State</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
EUTF	<i>European Union Trust Fund for Africa</i>
FGD	<i>Focus group discussion</i>
FORESITE	<i>Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments project</i>
HSP	<i>Humanitarian Service Point</i>
ICLA	<i>Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance</i>
IOM	<i>International Organization for Migration</i>
IRC	<i>International Rescue Committee</i>
KII	<i>Key informant interview</i>
NDICI	<i>Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument</i>
NRC	<i>Norwegian Refugee Council</i>
OWDA	<i>Organisation for Welfare and Development in Action</i>
PROTECT DRC	<i>Protection of Persons of Concern and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan project implemented by the Danish Red Cross (DRC) and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS)</i>
PTSA	<i>Parent teacher student association</i>
RDPP	<i>Regional Development and Protection Programme</i>
RDPP ET SC	<i>Regional Development and Protection Programme project in the Jigjiga area of Fafan Zone, Somali Regional State, Ethiopia</i>
RCC	<i>Refugee Coordination Committee</i>
S4T	<i>Savings for Transformation</i>
SC	<i>Save the Children International</i>
SORUDEV	<i>South Sudan Rural Development programme</i>
SRCS	<i>Sudanese Red Crescent Society</i>
TVET	<i>Technical Vocational Education and Training</i>
WASH	<i>Water, sanitation and hygiene</i>
WV	<i>World Vision South Sudan</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social cohesion refers to the quality of relationships between individuals and groups within society and between institutions and the people they serve. Social cohesion interventions are often a complementary component of conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes (direct social cohesion programming) but can also be a smaller complementary component of programmes focused on topics such as strengthening livelihoods, food security or basic service delivery (indirect social cohesion programming). The latter can be sorted into three categories: 1) interventions that require direct contact between different groups, 2) interventions whereby groups do not have to come into contact with one another and 3) advocacy interventions.

Over the past two decades, the primary objective of European Union (EU) development policy has been poverty eradication, with 'social cohesion' playing a relatively minor role in this agenda. In the 2017 European Consensus on Development, social cohesion is highlighted in the context of migration, sustainable development and stability. This is also in line with the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa's (EUTF for Africa, hereafter referred to as the EUTF) intervention logic on social cohesion. The EUTF has responded to challenges related to social cohesion by funding a wide range of projects that mostly fall under 'direct' social cohesion programming and under 'Category 1' of 'indirect' social cohesion programming.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims to assess the contribution of three EUTF-funded projects to strengthening social cohesion between and within communities by investigating the likely impacts of these projects and the activities that effectively contributed to them. It also examines challenges faced by the three projects and the sustainability of their results. Finally, the study offers a set of recommendations that could be taken into consideration when designing social cohesion programming that builds on lessons learned from the three EUTF projects. The three projects included in this study are:

- 1) the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) project in the Jigjiga area of Fafan Zone, Somali Regional State, Ethiopia, implemented by a consortium led by Save the Children (hereafter referred to as **RDPP ET SC**),
- 2) the Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments project (hereafter referred to as **FORESITE**) in South Sudan, which was implemented by a consortium led by World Vision International, and
- 3) the Protection of Persons of Concern and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan project implemented by the Danish Red Cross and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (hereafter referred to as **PROTECT DRC**).

All three projects fall under Category 1 of indirect social cohesion programming. In addition, **RDPP ET SC** includes activities related to Category 2, while **PROTECT DRC** implements activities that also align with Category 3.

The study draws on a desk review of project documents and secondary sources, as well as an analysis of primary data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a wide range of stakeholders. These interviews and discussions were conducted remotely and during field visits to Jur River and Gogrial East Counties in South Sudan and Fafan Zone in Ethiopia.

BEST PRACTICES FROM EUTF SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAMMING

Adapting project design to local context and social cohesion dynamics: A robust understanding of the local context and social cohesion conditions is key to effective and efficient programming. Both the **RDPP ET SC** and **PROTECT DRC** projects focused on social cohesion between host communities and refugees and/or migrants through integrated service delivery benefitting both communities, which

was found to be an effective way of bringing different communities together and improving perceptions of unequal access to services. Key differences in the project's approaches are largely explained by differences in context. While **RDPP ET SC** focused primarily on integrated service delivery to ensure that both communities receive (and, importantly, perceive that they receive) the same services, in the case of **PROTECT DRC** additional recreational activities were needed for the target communities to get to know each other and create mutual respect given the relative absence of cultural, linguistic and other commonalities. These activities aimed to increase the intended positive effect of the project's integrated health services (and other services-related activities) on social cohesion.

Unlike the **RDPP ET SC** and **PROTECT DRC** projects, which aimed to improve relations between local and non-local communities, the **FORESITE** project targeted social cohesion between and within local communities. Trust levels were low among the different communities in the implementation area before the project started, which had created a context of minimal interaction or cooperation outside direct family networks. Through a group approach to increase savings and improve food security among target beneficiaries, **FORESITE** brought people together who got to know each other and experienced the benefits of positive external relationships.

Using integrated service delivery and livelihood support to address resource-based tensions:

The **RDPP ET SC** project sought to improve social cohesion in its implementation area by addressing the underlying driver of tension between refugees and host communities: competition over services and resources. The project improved access to education, energy, WASH, legal assistance and livelihoods. During the endline survey of the project, 93% of the respondents surveyed reported an improvement during the last three years in the interaction between host and refugee communities, against a target of 40%.

Supporting mutually beneficial groups to increase inter- and intra-community trust: The **FORESITE** project used a group-based methodology to achieve its resilience and social cohesion objectives by setting up new groups and supporting existing ones with multiple functions and purposes, such as farming, Savings for Transformation (S4T),¹ mother gardens, seed multiplication, demonstration gardens and marketing, peace development committees and youth led peace clubs. At endline, 80% of the surveyed households reported good social cohesion, compared to 60% at the beginning of the project.

Combining approaches: integrated health services, recreational activities and advocacy efforts:

The **PROTECT DRC** project set up Humanitarian Service Points (or HSPs) along the northern migratory route, which are effectively run by (and for) members of host, migrant and displaced communities. The HSPs offer integrated health and protection services to migrants, displaced populations and members of the host communities and organise recreational activities for all communities. Further, the project advocates for increased access to basic services for all communities. According to the project's mid-term evaluation, the HSPs enhanced social inclusion of migrants among host communities, and implementing partner staff stated that the advocacy efforts led to the inclusion of IDP children in schools. Moreover, the organised recreational activities contributed to increased interaction between all communities.

Engaging key stakeholders: The **RDPP ET SC** project collaborated closely with community-level structures and local authorities, which enhanced the sustainability of its activities. For example, the project facilitated joint planning sessions with local authorities at the beginning of the project, set up multi-stakeholder platforms with local authorities, representatives of refugee camps and other NGOs to avoid duplication of activities and support the best use of resources, and handed over the management and maintenance of constructed WASH and educational structures to refugee and host community organisations and government agencies after completion of the project. The close collaboration of the **FORESITE** project with government stakeholders played an important role in the project's success, from local authority officials who provided support during the selection of beneficiaries to extension

¹ Savings for Transformation (S4T) is the name World Vision gives to groups that save money together in small amounts and lend to each other when needed.

workers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry who provided the farmer groups with technical trainings and monitored their activities. However, significant financial and human resources constraints faced by the government challenge the sustainability of these monitoring activities, which were supposed to continue after completion of the project.

UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS IN SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAMMING: LESSONS LEARNED

Prioritising conflict prevention vs. social cohesion programming: Cohesive societies enjoy higher levels of collaboration, interdependence and trust. This fosters relationships across different groups and constructive interaction toward common goals, which can prevent fragility and violent conflict. Conversely, when conflicts are not adequately managed, they are more prone to escalation and violence. When this happens, collective fear can increase rapidly and undermine social cohesion. If this fear is not addressed, it can create the foundation for more conflict. As one of the counties in **FORESITE**'s implementation area faced significantly higher rates of inter- and intra-communal cattle raiding and revenge killings than the other counties before implementation, the project decided to pay more attention to conflict prevention and resolution activities in these areas. Aside from peace-related activities implemented across all counties, the project also collaborated with authorities to hold a county-wide peace conference. This approach led to a significant reduction in reported conflicts in the county.

Engaging women: Community initiatives that aim to enhance social cohesion are often more successful when women are actively involved. However, some of the projects faced challenges in this regard. The endline of the **RDPP ET SC** project concluded that girls were much less likely to attend the sports events organised by recreational centres supported by the project on account of gender-related inequalities and cultural factors. Further, the midline evaluation of the **FORESITE** project stated that there were no changes in gender attitudes in the implementation area, even though the project deliberately targeted female members for its activities and trained local authorities on gender issues. **FORESITE** responded effectively and undertook direct action to address these attitudes and make the community safer for women. One example is that the project introduced gender male champions, who raised awareness on topics such as the consequences of early marriage and gender-based violence and the importance of women being able to earn money. This made it possible for women to engage in the project's networking and experience sharing activities, and contribute to positive social cohesion outcomes.

Addressing the risk of spillover conflict from non-supported communities by conducting conflict analyses: Three of the four counties in which **FORESITE** implemented activities saw increases in reported conflicts at endline. These increases are attributable to conflicts between targeted communities and neighbouring communities not supported by the project, according to the project implementing partners. During focus group discussions, beneficiaries expressed that communities that were not supported by the project had not gained the same understanding of peaceful coexistence. They also felt excluded and overlooked by the government, as the project had collaborated with local authorities. To address this, it is recommended to conduct a comprehensive conflict analysis and include activities that foster cross-community engagement.

Targeting primary drivers of service-related tensions with effective interventions and clear communication: Many of **RDPP ET SC**'s service delivery interventions (specifically those pertaining to education and WASH) are still in place four years after completion of the project. However, focus group discussions with refugees in one of the camps revealed that the collection of firewood by refugees in the host community area is still contributing to intercommunal conflict, despite the project's efforts to address this issue through the provision of energy-saving cookstoves. As such, one of the most critical contributors to tensions between the two communities appears to have been inadequately addressed by the project. Further, the refugees stated that the host community received more water than they did, while this is almost certainly incorrect, according to the implementing partner. Research shows that

competition over aid or resources is often driven more by perception than reality, and it is therefore recommended to invest in a strong communication and visibility strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Clearly define social cohesion and measure related outcomes: Social cohesion can be defined in different ways. Projects should therefore define social cohesion clearly at the beginning of the project. To facilitate more effective and actionable analysis of the impact of interventions, projects should adequately factor 'creating social cohesion' into their intervention logic.

Recommendation 2. Develop and maintain a clear and updated understanding of the context and take into account the relationship between conflict and social cohesion: Make sure that the causes of tensions are well analysed, that effective solutions are offered, and that the evolving context is monitored during implementation. For example, conduct a thorough mapping exercise and hold regular meetings during implementation to maintain an up-to-date understanding of community dynamics. Moreover, since social cohesion and conflict resolution are mutually reinforcing, make sure social cohesion projects are conflict sensitive and include conflict resolution activities when relevant.

Recommendation 3. Accentuate inclusivity given its importance for social cohesion: Ensure inclusive representation in project activities by engaging all segments of the community – including vulnerable groups – and addressing the specific needs and interests of both men and women.

Recommendation 4. Document, share and promote successful approaches: Systematically gather and document information on approaches that have previously strengthened social cohesion in the project implementation area or in surrounding communities. Building on this evidence base, continue implementing proven interventions, such as integrated service delivery for refugees (or migrants) and host communities, social and sports events for different communities and the application of a group-based methodology when working on topics such as enhancing food security, increasing livelihood opportunities or strengthening peace. Lastly, project evaluations should thoroughly assess social cohesion efforts, including measuring what change occurred, assessing how the project contributed to it, and identifying best practices and lessons learned to enhance social cohesion in future programmes.

Recommendation 5. Enhance visibility and communication of development initiatives to avoid misconceptions that can be detrimental to social cohesion: As perceptions of inequality often drive tensions more actual disparities in support, projects should make sure that development interventions are both visible and effectively communicated. Moreover, local authorities should be encouraged to share and disseminate knowledge on (low-cost) activities with communities that were not directly supported by the project to give them the opportunity to replicate these activities. In addition, projects should include activities that focus on preventing and solving tensions with neighbouring communities, as these tensions can enhance fear and undermine social cohesion in the implementation area. Lastly, incorporate a feedback mechanism that allows communities to voice concerns and submit complaints.

Recommendation 6. Enhance coordination with government and other donors to promote a more equitable distribution of development support: Aim for a more even geographical distribution of projects together with other donors, governments and local authorities. Uneven access to support can undermine the effectiveness of interventions and lead to tensions between communities when they feel treated unfairly.

Recommendation 7. Minimise dependency and include elements that enhance the sustainability of social cohesion activities and results: Engage both target communities and local authorities throughout project implementation and ensure that activities are handed over to local structures when the project ends. Dependency on external assistance should be minimised by enhancing knowledge of target communities, applying cost-sharing approaches, creating ownership by involving communities as much as possible and engaging project participants in different project activities to ensure that they benefit in multiple ways.

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion refers to the quality of relationships between individuals and groups within society (horizontal dimension) and between institutions and the people that they serve (vertical dimension).² Research suggests that strong social cohesion, including high levels of trust, a shared vision for the future, and legitimate and responsive institutions, can contribute to better income equality, improved individual health outcomes, more comprehensive protection systems and increased social support.³

Interventions that aim to improve social cohesion within or between different groups of people are often integrated into other types of programming with broader objectives. For example, social cohesion interventions are commonly implemented as a complementary component of conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes. Most of these interventions fall under what is referred to as ‘direct’ social cohesion programming, which explicitly considers social cohesion to be a direct outcome of implementation, and includes dialogue projects, capacity building of local peacebuilders and support for institutions that aim to prevent conflict. On the other hand, social cohesion can also be a smaller complementary component of programmes focused on topics such as strengthening livelihoods, food security or basic service delivery. These interventions are considered ‘indirect’ social cohesion programming, as they strengthen community ties or economic or governance interdependencies by building on other areas of development-oriented work.⁴

‘Indirect’ social cohesion interventions vary widely but can generally be sorted into three categories.

- Category 1: Interventions that aim to improve social cohesion by creating opportunities for **direct contact** between different groups – for example, through projects that require different communities to share basic services or by organising activities in which different groups participate.
- Category 2: Interventions that aim to improve social cohesion whereby **groups do not have to come into contact** with one another – for example, through activities that increase knowledge of other groups or that improve conditions that led to tensions in the past.
- Category 3: **Advocacy** interventions – for example, advocating for legislative reform that would create more hospitable conditions or activities that aim to influence public opinion of refugees via the media.⁵

1.2 EU DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

The primary focus of European Union (EU) development policy is poverty eradication, with ‘social cohesion’ playing a relatively minor role in this agenda over the past two decades. In the **2005 European Consensus on Development**, social cohesion is described under the goal of preventing social exclusion and countering discrimination against all groups. It also mentions employment, in the sense of creating jobs and support for human resource development, as an important contributor to social cohesion.⁶ In 2017, the EU adopted a **new European Consensus on Development** in response to emerging global challenges, including the 2015 migration crisis. The new consensus also aligned with new EU and international frameworks, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the EU’s 2016 global strategy for foreign and security policy.⁷ While

² UNDP, Social cohesion brief, 12 July 2020; Cox, F.D., Fiedler, C. & Mross, K. (2023). Strengthening Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected Societies: Potential, Patterns and Pitfalls. *IDOS policy brief*, 3, 2023.

³ UNDP, ‘Strengthening social cohesion: Conceptual framing and programming implications’, 2020.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Humanitarian Policy Group, ‘Social cohesion in displacement. The state of play.’, October 2022.

⁶ European Commission, ‘The European Consensus on Development’, 2006.

⁷ European Commission, ‘European Consensus on Development’. Retrieved 28 October 2024 via https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/european-development-policy/european-consensus-development_en

the primary objective of EU development policy under the new consensus remains poverty eradication, this time, social cohesion is highlighted in the context of migration, sustainable development and stability. Specifically, as part of its efforts to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, the EU aims to promote social inclusion and cohesion among other key priorities.⁸ This is reflected in the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa's (EUTF for Africa, hereafter referred to as the EUTF) intervention logic on social cohesion. Social cohesion is usually a complementary component of EUTF projects that primarily focus on other themes, with the ultimate goal of delivering an integrated and coordinated response to the diverse causes of instability, irregular migration and forced displacement.

More recently, the geographic pillar under the thematic programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention of the EU's **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (2021-2027)** includes long-term support for addressing root causes of insecurity, such as a lack of social cohesion.⁹

1.3 THE EUTF AND SOCIAL COHESION

The EUTF has responded to challenges related to social cohesion by funding a wide range of projects that largely fall under 'direct' social cohesion programming¹⁰ or under 'Category 1' of 'indirect' social cohesion programming, which aims to improve social cohesion through activities that entail direct contact between targeted groups.¹¹ In the HoA window, at least 14 projects have social cohesion-related outcome indicators, with the largest number (4) implemented in Ethiopia,¹² followed by 3 regional projects.^{13,14} Most of these projects are primarily focused on other themes (such as conflict prevention, food security and resilience, basic service delivery and livelihoods), with a complementary social cohesion component that builds on the expected social cohesion outcomes of the core intervention. In fact, **none of the projects in the HoA portfolio that measure social cohesion-related outcome indicators explicitly include the concept of 'social cohesion' in their overall objective.** Instead, social cohesion is either part of one of the specific objectives or mentioned (sometimes very briefly) in the description of one of the specific objectives of the project. There are also projects that work on social cohesion but do not have a related outcome indicator (such as the PROTECT DRC project included in this case study), as well as projects for which enhanced social cohesion was a positive but unintended effect.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SELECTED PROJECTS

This study aims to investigate the contribution of three EUTF-funded projects to strengthening social cohesion between and within communities by assessing the likely impacts of these projects and the activities that effectively contributed to them. It also examines challenges faced by the three projects and the sustainability of their results. Finally, the study offers a set of recommendations that could be taken into consideration when designing social cohesion programming that builds on lessons learned from the three projects.

The three projects selected for this study are the following:

- **The Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) project** in the Jigjiga area of Fafan Zone, Somali Regional State, **Ethiopia** (hereafter referred to as **RDPP ET SC**), implemented by Save the Children International (SC) in consortium with the International

⁸ COM (2016) 740; Joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, 'The New European Consensus on Development: Our world, our dignity, our future', 2017.

⁹ European Commission, 'Multi-annual indicative programme. NDICI- Global Europe – Thematic programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention 2021 – 2027', 14 December 2021.

¹⁰ Examples are Cross-Border PACT RASMI and Cross-Border PACT SEEK that both aim to prevent and mitigate conflicts in cross-border areas.

¹¹ Examples are included in this case study.

¹² RDPP ET NRC, RDPP ET DCA, RDPP ET SC and RDPP ET IRC.

¹³ Cross-Border PACT RASMI, Cross-Border PACT SEEK and CRRF Urban Development IRC.

¹⁴ The remaining projects are implemented in Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya and Uganda.

Rescue Committee (IRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Organisation for Welfare and Development in Action (OWDA, an Ethiopian civil society organisation). The project sought to enhance social cohesion and create a sense of connectedness between refugees and host communities **by supporting access to shared basic services (such as energy, water and education) and implementing activities such as providing trainings and organising sports events that facilitated interaction between members of each community.**

- **The Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments project** (hereafter referred to as **FORESITE**), which was implemented by a consortium led by World Vision International (WV) in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI) in four counties of Lakes, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States in **South Sudan**. The project aimed to enhance social cohesion within and between communities **through membership to project groups, such as farmer groups, mother gardens and Savings for Transformation (S4T)¹⁵ groups, as well as by supporting the work of peace committees.**
- **The Protection of Persons of Concern and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan project** implemented by the Danish Red Cross (DRC) and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), hereafter referred to as **PROTECT DRC**. The project sought to promote social cohesion through **humanitarian service points where host communities, IDPs, refugees and migrants can receive assistance and participate in cultural and social activities and events, as well as by advocating for increased access to basic services for all communities.**

The above three projects were selected based on inputs from EU project managers, the date of project completion, the availability of project documents and social cohesion-related outcome indicators, the responsiveness of implementing partners, the possibility of conducting fieldwork in the implementation area, and the nature of the different projects' approaches to improving social cohesion. **All three projects pertain to Category 1** (meaning interventions that aim to improve social cohesion by creating opportunities for direct contact between different groups) **of indirect social cohesion programming** (meaning social cohesion is smaller complementary component of programmes focused on topics such as strengthening livelihoods, food security or basic service delivery), **with RDPP ET SC also implementing activities that pertain to Category 2** (meaning interventions that aim to improve social cohesion whereby groups do not have to come into contact with one another) **and PROTECT DRC to Category 3** (meaning advocacy interventions) **of indirect social cohesion programming. All three sought to strengthen relationships between and within communities – that is, along the horizontal dimension of social cohesion.**

¹⁵ Savings for Transformation (S4T) is the name World Vision gives to groups that save money together in small amounts and lend to each other when needed.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this study are two-fold:

1. To examine the impact of the EUTF on enhanced social cohesion within and between communities through the lens of three EUTF-funded projects.
2. To examine the long-term effects of the activities undertaken on beneficiaries and stakeholders.

A full list of research questions investigated in this study can be found in the annexes to this report.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

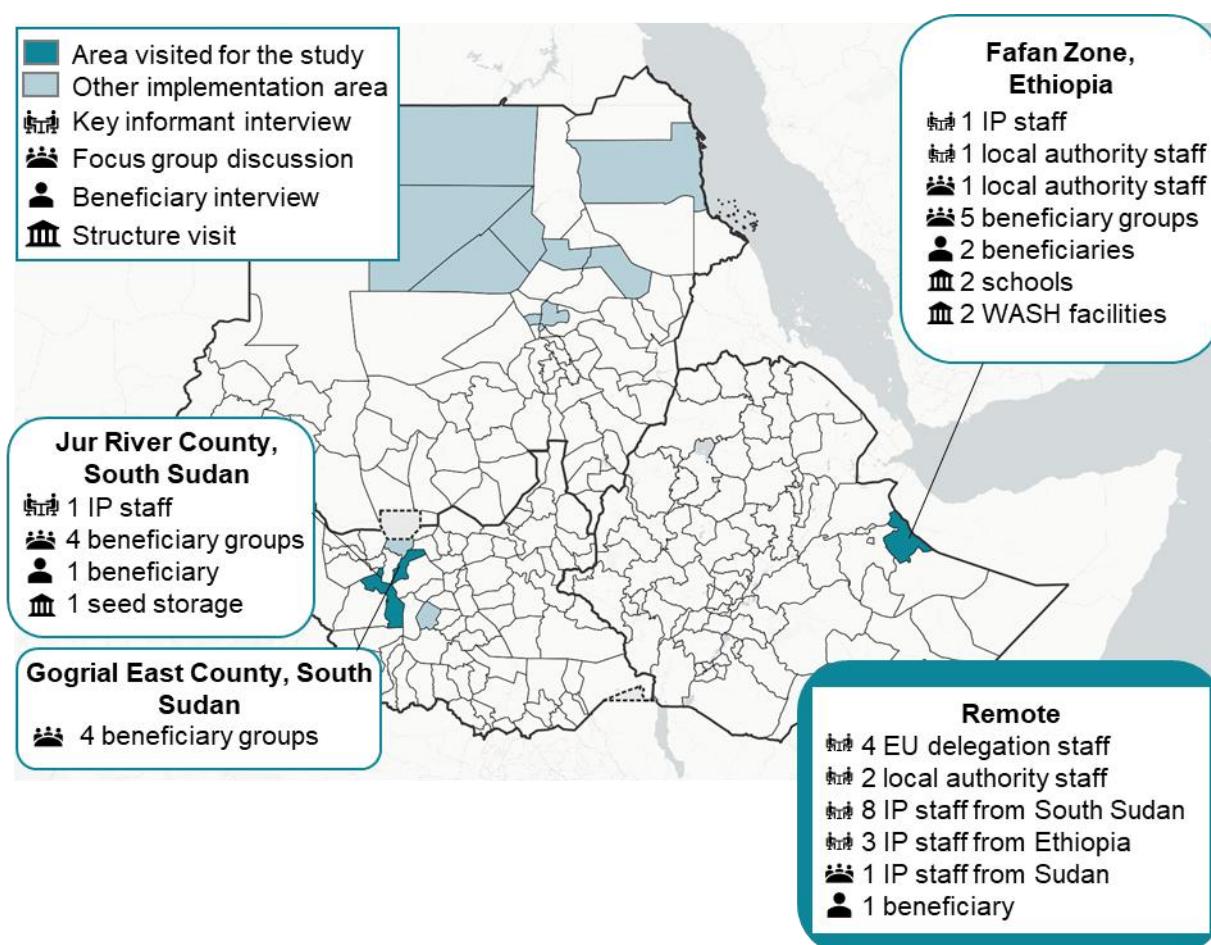
The methodology for this study included the following tools and data sources:

- **Secondary research** was used to explore the concept of social cohesion and gather background information on the situation pre-EUTF in the implementation areas of the projects.
- A **desk review** of project documents helped to refine the research questions and methodology, identify key stakeholders and beneficiaries of interest, supported by initial discussions and interviews with the implementing partners to inform the study.
- Available **outcome data** was analysed to gather an understanding of the contribution of the different projects to social cohesion. The research team had access to an impact evaluation for **RDPP ET SC**, endline evaluations for **FORESITE** and **RDPP ET SC**, midterm evaluations for **FORESITE**, **RDPP ET SC** and **PROTECT DRC**, baseline surveys for **FORESITE** and **RDPP ET SC**, and a needs assessment for **PROTECT DRC**.¹⁶ Outcome indicators were available for **FORESITE** and **RDPP ET SC** but not for **PROTECT DRC**.
- **Key informant interviews (KIs)** were conducted to collect perspectives on the research objectives, to gain information on the situation in the implementation area pre-EUTF, the impact of the projects on social cohesion, successful activities and approaches, challenges the projects faced and the sustainability of their results. Respondents included European Union Delegations (EUDs) from Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia, staff from the implementing partners of the three projects and local authority officials.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with beneficiaries were undertaken together with a national consultant (and interpreter when relevant) to triangulate findings from the desk review and KIs on the impact of the projects on social cohesion and the sustainability of the results. In South Sudan, FGDs were conducted with chiefs, gender male champions (well-known male figures selected to act as positive gender role models in their community), members from peace committees and members from S4T, farmer, seed multiplication and mother garden groups. In Ethiopia, FGDs were conducted with local authority officials, supported youth and members from parent teacher student associations (PTSAs), refugee coordination committees (RCCs) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) committees. Further, one FGD was conducted in Kenya with staff from the implementing partners of the Sudanese **PROTECT DRC** project, who were in Kenya for a workshop. Due to connectivity issues in Sudan, online interviews were not feasible during the research phase of the study. One online interview was conducted with a **PROTECT DRC** project beneficiary, but had to be terminated early due to poor network.
- **Field visits** to South Sudan and Ethiopia were undertaken to conduct KIs and FGDs and to visit structures constructed by the projects.

¹⁶ The endline evaluation of the **PROTECT DRC** project and the impact evaluation of the **FORESITE** project were conducted while this case study was drafted.

The research and analysis for this case study took place between April and July 2024 and field visits were conducted in May and June 2024. A total of 113 people were interviewed via nineteen KIIs, fifteen FGDs and four beneficiary interviews.

Figure 1: KII, FGD and site visit locations



2.3 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The following limitations should be taken into account when considering the findings in this study.

‘Indirect’ nature of selected projects:

- As all three projects are examples of indirect social cohesion programming, which is the most common type of social cohesion programming supported by the EUTF, social cohesion is not included in the overall objective of any of the three projects. Instead, social cohesion is often a **desired ‘side effect’** of core interventions such as providing integrated service delivery, strengthening food security or improving access to protection. This appears to be the most likely explanation for which social cohesion is examined at best in a very limited manner across the projects, and in the case of **PROTECT DRC** has not been measured at all. As a result, only very limited secondary data on each project’s social cohesion strategy, approaches and outcomes were available to the research team for analysis.

Geographical scope and field visits:

- RDPP ET SC, Ethiopia:** As the project ended four years ago, many people that were involved in the project were no longer working in the implementation area at the time of conducting this study. This was especially the case for people involved in the project in Kebribeyah *woreda* (district), where the research team was unable to access constructed infrastructure and

beneficiaries. The team therefore opted to focus on Aw-Barre *woreda* and visited refugee camps and host communities in Aw-Barre and Sheder. Furthermore, it was not possible to construct a complete overview of projects that have built on the **RDPP ET SC** project after completion due to a lack of response to requests for interviews from several organisations implementing in the area.

- **FORESITE, South Sudan:** Due to time constraints and security concerns, it was not feasible to visit all counties of implementation. The research team therefore chose to focus on two of the four counties: Jur River and Gogrial East. This means that beneficiaries from Twic and Cueibet Counties are not represented in the analysis for this study, thereby excluding all beneficiaries supported by AVSI.¹⁷
- **PROTECT DRC, Sudan:** Due to the current conflict and related security concerns, it was not feasible to conduct fieldwork in Sudan. As a result, the research team spoke to only one beneficiary on the phone. It was not possible to speak to local authorities and other relevant stakeholders, despite multiple attempts to contact them by phone. The available primary data for the **PROTECT DRC** project is therefore very limited.

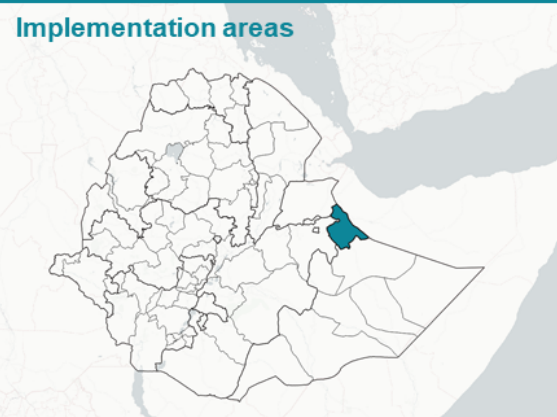




Reliability of primary data:

- **RDPP ET SC:** The implementing partner was present during several FGDs, and a local authority official was present during an FGD with members of a PTSA for a school supported by the project. This may have influenced the answers provided during FGDs. (However, the research team observed that the transcripts were in line with the results described in the evaluations of the project and that critical views were shared most of the time.) Further, due to unresponsiveness, it was not possible to speak to other organisations in the implementation area to obtain an external perspective on the contribution of the **RDPP ET SC** project to social cohesion in the area.
- **FORESITE:** In Jur River County, interpretation during the FGDs was conducted by one of the beneficiaries and in Gogrial East County interpretation was conducted by someone who worked for one of the implementing partners. This may have influenced the translated transcripts of the FGDs. (However, the research team observed that the transcripts were in line with the results described in the evaluations of the project and that critical views were shared as well.) Further, due to unresponsiveness, it was not possible to speak to other organisations that also implemented projects in the implementation area to obtain an external perspective on the **FORESITE** project.

¹⁷ NRC implemented in Jur River, World Vision International implemented in Gogrial East, both World Vision and NRC implemented activities in Twic, and AVSI implemented in Cueibet County.

3. OVERVIEW OF ANALYSED PROJECTS

3.1 RDPP ET SC

Regional Development and Protection Programme in Ethiopia-Jijiga Area (RDPP ET SC)	
Implementation areas 	<p> Budget: €5.2M</p> <p> From January 2017 to April 2020</p> <p> IPs: Save the Children International, IRC, DRC and OWDA</p> <p> Overall objective: To create evidence-based, innovative, and sustainable development and protection solutions for refugees and their host communities in Ethiopia, primarily providing alternatives to irregular and secondary movements in Fafan Zone, Ethiopian Somali Regional State (ESRS)</p>

3.1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

For decades the Horn of Africa has experienced significant conflict- and climate-related challenges causing massive displacement across the region. In response to these challenges, the EUTF-funded Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) in the Horn of Africa was developed to improve protection and strengthen the development prospects of refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, with the goal of offering an alternative to irregular and secondary migration movements. The programme was implemented in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya, which all receive large numbers of refugees from countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.¹⁸

Ethiopia hosts the second-largest refugee population in Africa, totalling around 1 million as of September 2024. About 40% of the country's refugee population are South Sudanese refugees who are mostly hosted in Gambella Region, and 33% are Somalis who largely reside in Somali Region.^{19,20} In Ethiopia, the RDPP programme focused on refugee-hosting areas in Somali, Afar and Tigray Regions as well as the capital Addis Ababa. The RDPP project included in this case study (RDPP ET SC) focused on the refugee-hosting Jijiga area of the Fafan Zone in the Somali Region. The project ran from January 2017 to April 2020 and targeted refugees in Sheder, Aw-Barre and Kebribeyah refugee camps and surrounding host communities in Aw-Barre and Kebribeyah *woredas* (districts). In January 2017, when the project started, there were 244,437 refugees in the Somali Region. Most of the refugees in the Somali Region were from Somalia and resided in refugee camps in the Liben Zone (207,698), which is targeted by the RDPP ET NRC project. Meanwhile, 36,739 refugees resided in the Fafan Zone covered by the RDPP ET SC project.²¹ Most host community members and refugees in the Somali Region are ethnic Somalis. The Somali Region is one of the least developed regions of Ethiopia. The region faces recurrent droughts alternating with above average rainfall leading to flooding and is characterised by high levels of poverty and poorly developed infrastructure.²²

¹⁸ ARS Progetti S.P.A., 'Mid-term Evaluation: Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP)', 13 December 2018.

¹⁹ UNHCR, 'Operation Data Portal. Ethiopia'. Retrieved 29 October 2024 via <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/eth>

²⁰ The majority of the remaining 27% are from Eritrea (17%) and Sudan (8%).

²¹ UNHCR, 'Ethiopia Fact Sheet', January 2017.

²² REACH, 'The impact of drought and climate-related shocks on livelihood practices in Somali', March 2024; DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, 'End-line Evaluation Report on 'Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafan Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia'', November 2020.

3.1.2 OBJECTIVES AND SOCIAL COHESION

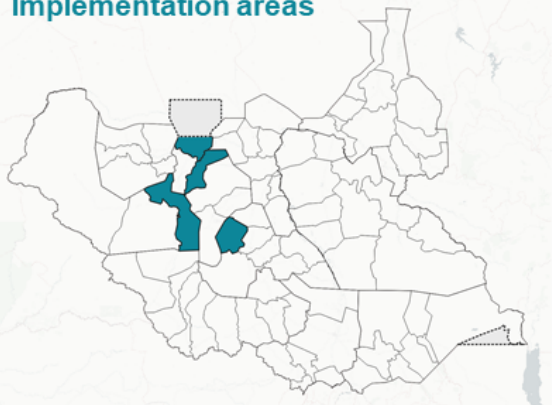




RDPP ET SC was one of the first projects to target both refugee and host communities in the Fafan Zone. The overall objective of **RDPP ET SC** was **to create evidence-based, innovative, and sustainable development and protection solutions for refugees and their host communities in Ethiopia, primarily providing alternatives to irregular and secondary movements in Fafan Zone, Ethiopian Somali Regional State (ESRS)**. The project's specific objectives included:

1. Greater social cohesion through improved access to integrated basic service delivery for Somali refugees (in and out of camp) and their host communities.
2. Improved livelihoods and employment opportunities for Somali refugees (in and out of camp) and their host communities.
3. Improved access to justice (protection) services of Somali refugees (in and out of camp) and host communities, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.
4. Strengthened capacities of local authorities and multi-stakeholder coordination platforms to cooperate in developing an integrated approach for refugees, host communities, and mixed migration flows.²³

As suggested in the project's corresponding specific objective above, the foundation of the project's logic around social cohesion was that cohesion would be enhanced through improved access to integrated basic service delivery benefitting both host communities and refugees, and by supporting the integration of refugees into the host community.²⁴

RDPP ET SC was implemented by a consortium led by Save the Children International, together with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the local non-profit Organisation for Welfare and Development in Action (OWDA). Each organisation focused on different activities in accordance with their experience, with Save the Children focusing on education and livelihoods in host communities, IRC on WASH, education and livelihoods in refugee camps, DRC on energy and access to justice and OWDA on WASH in host communities.

3.2 FORESITE

Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE)	
Implementation areas 	 Budget: €6.4M  From July 2019 to March 2023  IPs: World Vision South Sudan, NRC and AVSI  Overall objective: To contribute to strengthening resilience of communities, improving governance and conflict prevention and reducing forced displacements due to loss of livelihoods.

3.2.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Since South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011, the country has faced significant challenges, including a political crisis that turned into a violent conflict from 2013 to 2016, and several

²³ Shared by the implementing partner due to differences in objectives in the different project documents.

²⁴ The RDPP project in Addis Ababa was the only RDPP project in Ethiopia that didn't include 'social cohesion' in its specific objectives. However, the description of action of the project states that strategic objective 3 of the project ('improving access to justice for refugees residing in urban areas in Ethiopia and their host communities') aims to reduce 'tensions between refugees and host communities [which] is a precondition for social cohesion'.

humanitarian, economic and social crises. In 2018 a peace agreement was reached, but sub-national and intercommunal violence, crime and weak security and justice institutions continue to trigger widespread displacement and hinder access to basic services. The country faces high levels of violence, exploitation and abuse, including conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence.²⁵

Around 65% of people in South Sudan are illiterate,²⁶ and most face limited economic opportunities and live in poor health and sanitary conditions.²⁷ The majority of the population lives in rural areas, either in settled households and engaged in subsistence farming or in pastoralist communities while breeding cattle herds and practicing transhumance. Most smallholder farmers use simple manual tools for their crops and cannot afford power sources or agricultural inputs. **Smallholder farmers face constant insecurity and are at risk of being displaced due to drought, floods and conflict.**²⁸

In this context, the EUTF-funded South Sudan Rural Development programme (SORUDEV) aims to strengthen community resilience, improve governance and conflict prevention and reduce forced displacement due to loss of livelihoods. The programme focuses on Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap and Lakes States in the Greater Bahr el Ghazal Region.²⁹ The SORUDEV component analysed in this case study is the **Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE)** project, which was implemented in Gogrial East, Twic, Jur River and Cueibet Counties in Lakes, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States in South Sudan. The project ran from July 2019 to March 2023.

3.2.2 OBJECTIVES AND SOCIAL COHESION

The overall objective of **FORESITE** was **to contribute to strengthening the resilience of communities, improving governance and conflict prevention and reducing forced displacements due to loss of livelihoods.** The specific objective of the project was **to improve food security among rural smallholders in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and to empower them to cope with environmental volatility and insecurity.** The project aimed to achieve this by attaining the following results:

- i) Reduced barriers to engagement in resilience building, food security and income generating activities, especially for women and youth;
- ii) Increased anticipatory, absorptive and adaptive capacity with respect to climate change and disruptive events including natural disasters and conflict;
- iii) Improved longer-term food security and income especially for women and youth.

Social cohesion is not mentioned in the overall or specific objectives of the project. However, project activities included establishing and supporting savings groups, peace committees and farmer and mother garden groups, **in part with the objective of fostering linkages between the groups to form mutually beneficial intercommunal relationships** (according to interviews with the implementing partner and the project inception report).³⁰ To that end, one of the result areas **includes a social cohesion-related outcome indicator.**

The project was implemented by a consortium led by World Vision South Sudan (WV), together with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI). Each organisation was responsible for implementing all project activities within a specific geographic area and provided technical guidance in one project component based on their expertise. World Vision led implementation in Gogrial East and parts of Twic County and provided technical support on agronomy and S4T. NRC operated in other parts of Twic County and advised on Information,

²⁵ UNOCHA, 'South Sudan: Humanitarian needs and response plan 2024', November 2023.

²⁶ World Bank Group, 'Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above) - South Sudan'. Retrieved 8 July 2024 via <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=SS>

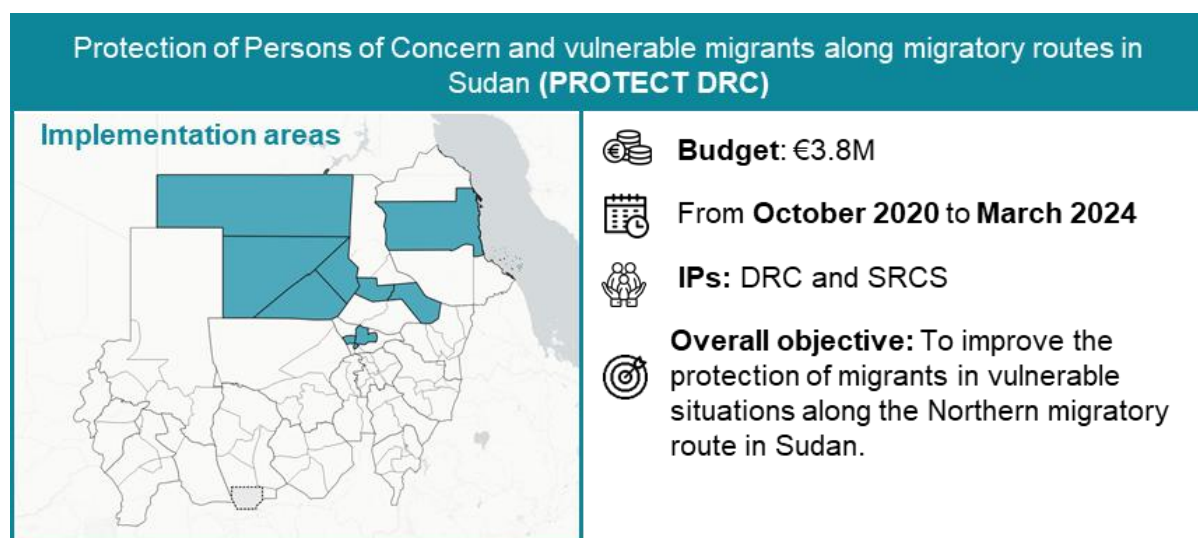
²⁷ UNOCHA, 'South Sudan: Humanitarian needs and response plan 2024', November 2023.

²⁸ Action Fiche for the implementation of the Horn of Africa Window. T05-EUTF-HOA-SS-49.

³⁰ Ibid.

Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). AVSI implemented in Cueibet County and played an advisory role in peacebuilding activities.³¹

3.3 PROTECT DRC



3.3.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Sudan has long been a source, destination and transit country for mixed migratory flows along several routes, including refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Most migrants in and transiting through Sudan originate from the Horn of Africa. Since the start of the ongoing conflict in April 2023, refugees and Sudanese people have been forcefully displaced within the country and beyond its borders. As of June 2024, Sudan hosted the largest number of IDPs in Africa (10.5 million) and the third largest number of refugees (909,325). The majority (73%) of refugees hosted in Sudan come from South Sudan, distantly followed by Eritrean refugees (17%).^{32,33}

In 2017, the Danish Red Cross (DRC) and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) piloted a project in Northern State ('Humanitarian Response to Displacement Crisis in Sudan') to respond to the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants, including poor physical and mental health. Following the pilot, **DRC and SRCS developed the 'Protection of Persons of Concern and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan' project (PROTECT DRC), targeting migrants in transit, migrants that settle in Sudan for shorter or longer periods of time, and host communities.**³⁴ It should be noted that in line with the migration policy of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the term 'migrants' in this case includes asylum seekers and refugees, labour migrants, migrants considered irregular by public authorities and stateless migrants. The project ran from October 2020 until March 2024 and was led by DRC, which was responsible for the overall coordination and execution of the project. SRCS was responsible for the operational side of the project, from planning and implementation to financial management.³⁵ PROTECT DRC was co-financed by the EUTF and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁶

The PROTECT DRC project falls under the PROTECT programme, which also consists of one other project, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The PROTECT programme

³¹ Kenwill International Limited, 'Mid-term evaluation report for Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project,' November 2021.

³² UNHCR, 'Operational Data Portal. Sudan.' Retrieved 9 July 2024 via <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/sdn>

³³ The majority of the remaining 10% are from Ethiopia (8%).

³⁴ Danish Red Cross and Sudanese Red Crescent Society, 'Project mid term review report. Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan Red Sea. T05-EUTF-HOA-SD-43-02.', April 2023.

³⁵ Description of the Action, PROTECT – Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan.

³⁶ The EUTF was responsible for € 3 million and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for € 831,276.

aims to improve the management of mixed migration flows in Sudan. While the project implemented by DRC and SRCS focuses on improving access to assistance and protection for persons of concern, IOM focuses on increasing the capacity of police and judiciary to respond to the needs of persons of concern.³⁷

3.3.2 OBJECTIVES AND SOCIAL COHESION

The overall objective of the **PROTECT DRC** project was **to improve the protection of migrants in vulnerable situations along the northern migratory route in Sudan**. The specific objective of the project was **to improve access to assistance and protection for migrants and host communities along the migratory route in Red Sea, Northern, River Nile and Khartoum States**. Social cohesion is not mentioned in the overall or specific objectives of the project, and no social cohesion indicators are included in the project's log frame. However, the project states in its Description of Action that it will organise activities to promote social inclusion and connectedness between the different groups, such as sports and cultural activities.³⁸ This is in line with IFRC's 2009 Policy on Migration, which states that the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies aim to promote interaction between migrants and host communities when they engage in the area of migration.³⁹ **By targeting all groups along the route, the project aimed to minimise tension between the different communities caused by increased pressure on resources.**

³⁷ Description of the Action, T05-EUTF-HOA-SD-43.

³⁸ Description of the Action, PROTECT – Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan.

³⁹ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 'Policy on Migration', November 2009.

4. BEST PRACTICES FROM EUTF SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAMMING

4.1 ADAPTING PROJECT DESIGN TO LOCAL CONTEXT AND SOCIAL COHESION DYNAMICS

The three projects assessed by the study highlight some of the ways in which **a robust understanding of the local context and social cohesion conditions is key to effective and efficient programming**. For example, integrated service delivery appears to be an effective means of addressing tensions related to competition over resources, but if there are additional factors underlying those tensions such as a lack of shared cultural or linguistic affinity, or a lack of trust despite such affinities, supplementary activities aimed at bringing people together and increasing interaction may be needed.

Both the **RDPP ET SC** and **PROTECT DRC** projects focused on social cohesion between host communities and refugees and/or migrants. In societies affected by displacement, various factors can influence the level of cohesion, including '(1) the amount and quality of contact between communities, (2) the scale, speed and duration of displacement, (3) spatial living configurations, in particular whether refugees reside in closed camps, open settlements or are integrated into urban settings, (4) competition over scarce resources, (5) ethnic, religious and linguistic allegiances, and (6) the role of aid and assistance on social relations'.⁴⁰

Moreover, increased population pressure caused by influxes of displaced or migrating populations can stress the local environment by depleting natural resources in the area. The resultant competition over scarce or damaged natural resources can lead to tension and conflict between the host community and the refugee or migrant population. These dynamics are often exacerbated by the tendency of international responses to refugee crises to focus on delivering assistance and services to the refugee community, resulting in a perception among the host community that they receive less support despite experiencing similar levels of need. **The differences in the distribution and quality of services between the two communities therefore amplify existing tensions, which further increases the risk of conflict.**

In the case of **RDPP ET SC**, social interaction between the refugee and host communities was reportedly relatively positive before the project started implementation in 2017, as the two communities **share the same culture, language, religion and clan affiliations**.⁴¹ In fact, of the 67% of surveyed refugees and 48% of surveyed host community members who affirmed the occurrence of interactions between the two communities at baseline, 85% reported that the quality of these interactions was 'good' to 'very good' (as opposed to moderate, bad or very bad).⁴²

However, the interviews conducted for this study as well as the project baseline survey indicated **tensions around various topics, including perceived differences in support for refugees compared to host communities**.⁴³ Moreover, the project baseline survey concluded that these perceptions were based on reality, with refugee communities enjoying better access to most basic services than host communities in the area.⁴⁴ These circumstances were likely exacerbated by the fact that prior to the launch of the **RDPP ET SC** project, the Somali Region in Ethiopia was experiencing

⁴⁰ Berry, J.P. de and Roberts, A. (2018). Social cohesion and forced displacement: a desk review to inform programming and project design. Washington DC: World Bank.

⁴¹ KIIs and FGDs.

⁴² DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, 'End-line Evaluation Report on 'Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafen Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia'', November 2020.

⁴³ KIIs with implementing partners.

⁴⁴ Development Research and Training, 'Baseline survey for Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Awabare and Kabribayah Woredas of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia', 13 September 2017.

some of the lowest levels of access to basic services in the country, with the project baseline survey identifying significant gaps in all basic services for both the refugee and host communities in Aw-Barre and Kebribeyah *woredas* (including education, energy and WASH).

Meanwhile, in the **PROTECT DRC** project implementation area, large numbers of migrants and refugees had been welcomed for years despite the poor conditions in which the host communities often live. However, migrants can put additional pressure on economic, social and health structures, the labour market and available land,⁴⁵ which has led to **tensions between the migrant and host communities**. In certain areas where agriculture is the main source of livelihood the host community and local authorities have asked the migrants in their area to leave, because they **exert additional pressure on land appropriate for cultivation**.⁴⁶ Moreover, the cultural, linguistic, religious and clan affiliations enjoyed by the communities targeted by the **RDPP ET SC** project are less present in the **PROTECT DRC** intervention area.

Both projects therefore sought to improve social cohesion through **integrated service delivery** benefitting both host and displaced or migrant communities, which was found to be an effective way of bringing different communities together and improving perceptions of unequal access to services.

Key differences in the project's approaches are largely explained by the abovementioned differences in context. While **RDPP ET SC** focused primarily on integrated service delivery to ensure that both communities receive (and, importantly, perceive that they receive) the same services, the **PROTECT DRC** project required additional recreational activities. These activities aimed to help the target communities to get to know each other and foster mutual respect, especially given the relative absence of cultural, linguistic and other commonalities. The activities aimed to augment the intended positive effect of the project's integrated health services (and other services-related activities) on social cohesion.

Meanwhile, unlike the **RDPP ET SC** and **PROTECT DRC** projects, which aimed to improve relations between local and non-local communities, the **FORESITE** project **targeted social cohesion between and within local communities** in the project implementation area. However, as with **PROTECT DRC**, the communities targeted by the **FORESITE** project were experiencing an absence of mutual trust prior to project implementation, necessitating the implementation of activities that actively bring people together and encourage direct interaction.

Although the Bahr-el-Ghazal Region in South Sudan (where the **FORESITE** project implemented activities) has a relatively homogenous ethnic composition, violent conflict frequently takes place within and between different communities.⁴⁷

Drivers of conflict range from cattle raiding, cattle destroying farmland and disputes over water points to revenge killings, forced marriage and unpaid dowries. As a result of these conflicts as well as the general background of war,

trust levels were low among the different communities in the implementation area before the project started.⁴⁸ Interviews conducted for this study indicate that this had created a context of minimal interaction or cooperation outside direct family networks.⁴⁹ **The **FORESITE** project therefore implemented a group approach to increase savings and improve food security among target**

‘Before the project, someone would steal your daughter and not pay a dowry. As a response, the women would yell, the men would come and then they would start fighting.’

– Chief, Gogrial East County (located in the Bahr-el-Ghazal Region), South Sudan

⁴⁵ Description of Action, T05-EUTF-HOA-SD-43-02.

⁴⁶ FGD with implementing partners.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ KII with implementing partner.

⁴⁹ KIIs and FGDs.

beneficiaries. This approach led to people getting to know each other, learning from one another and experiencing how positive external relationships can benefit them.

As conflict dynamics in the area are exacerbated by the absence of a reliable justice system to fairly adjudicate disputes,⁵⁰ the project also implemented complementary activities aimed at improving judicial and conflict resolution processes. These include support to peace conferences as well as peace committees and youth led peace clubs set up to resolve disputes and prevent revenge killings. One such peace conference was found to be particularly effective, having put in place rules around the return of stolen animals.⁵¹

4.2 USING INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT TO ADDRESS RESOURCE-BASED TENSIONS

The **RDPP ET SC** project sought to improve social cohesion in its implementation area by **addressing the underlying driver of tension: competition over services and resources**. First, the project brought together key government and non-government actors via a series of planning sessions to facilitate the signing of a memorandum of understanding among local authorities to integrate refugees' needs and concerns into local development plans, primarily through the provision of integrated basic services to both host and refugee communities. In addition, the project organised integration workshops for representatives of refugee and host communities, including school directors, WASH committees, RCC members and youth groups. Finally, the project increased access to basic services and livelihoods for both host and refugee communities through direct support that targeted both communities. For example:

- **Access to education** was improved for both communities in six primary and three secondary schools by constructing 16 additional classrooms, the furnishing of libraries, laboratories and pedagogical centres, building the capacities of several local coordination structures (such as PTAs and RCCs), school staff and district offices, and conducting back to school campaigns. The project also established three recreational centres for youths and equipped them with indoor and outdoor games materials.
- **Access to energy** was enhanced by distributing energy-efficient cooking stoves and solar lanterns, providing training on efficient usage of the stoves and training refugee youths on solar light skills – largely with the aim of reducing the need for firewood collection, which was identified as an important source of tension between the host and refugee community during the project baseline survey.
- **Access to WASH** services was improved through the construction of water points for people and livestock, drilling boreholes, installation of solar water points and providing training to WASH committees and local authorities.
- **Access to legal assistance** was strengthened by building the capacities of law experts and law enforcement bodies, disseminating information and conducting awareness raising campaigns on several legal and protection issues.
- **Access to livelihoods** was enhanced by providing enterprise development, financial literacy and vocational skills training, and facilitating start-up loans.⁵² Aside from bringing the two communities together through joint trainings, these activities also allowed some refugees to set up businesses outside the camps, further increasing intercommunity interaction.

Picture 1: Refugee in his tailor shop in Aw-barre, set up with support from RDPP ET SC

Picture 2: Refugee in his sportswear shop in Aw-barre, set up with support from RDPP ET SC

⁵⁰ KILs with implementing partners and FGDs with beneficiaries.

⁵¹ AVSI South Sudan, 'Participatory Conflict mapping – a look at the 'hard data'', November 2022.

⁵² DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, 'End-line Evaluation Report on 'Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafen Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia'', November 2020.



Picture 3: Waterpoint for livestock near Aw-Barre, constructed by RDPP ET SC



Picture 4: Classrooms at a primary school in Shedder, constructed by RDPP ET SC



Focus box 1: Social cohesion-related outcomes for the RDPP ET SC project

The **RDPP ET SC** endline evaluation found that the project effectively improved access to services in several sectors, often particularly for the host community. For example, 100% of refugee respondents and 99% of host community respondents had access to primary education at endline (compared to 99% and 87% at baseline) and 88% of refugee and 83% of host community children had access to recreational areas (compared to 83% and 16% at baseline). Moreover, 82% of surveyed refugees and 73% of host community members stated at endline that the water supply in their area was adequate for meeting their household demand (compared to just 20% and 60% at baseline). In addition, virtually 100% of refugees and 77% of host community used latrines at endline

(compared to 98% and 61% at baseline, with latrines already being commonly used in the refugee camps at baseline).

There are strong indications that these improvements in access to basic services contributed to improved social cohesion outcomes. During the endline survey, 93% of the respondents surveyed reported an improvement during the last three years in the interaction between host and refugee communities, against a target of 40%. However, as this was a recall-based question that was only asked at endline, the reliability of this datapoint may be negatively affected by the fallibility of human memory.⁵³

Despite the apparent limitations of the quantitative data collected, the **RDPP ET SC** project endline evaluation concludes (based on qualitative data collected during focus group discussions and key informant interviews) that **social cohesion between refugee and host communities was enhanced through integration and experience-sharing activities, with both communities**

‘...’ and sharing each other’s concerns.’ Refugees felt safe in host community areas and when they interacted with host community members.⁵⁴ According to the countrywide programme impact evaluation, the integrated service delivery supported by the RDPP projects in Ethiopia narrowed the socioeconomic differences between the communities and strengthened peaceful coexistence.⁵⁵

These findings are supported by interviews conducted for this study, with implementing partner staff and beneficiaries alike observing that **RDPP ET SC** had increased interaction between refugees and host communities. For example, the construction of classrooms made it easier for refugee children to attend the secondary school in the host community area of Aw-Barre (there is no secondary school in the refugee camps), bringing more youths from both communities into direct contact with one another. The PTAs as well as the WASH and livelihood trainings (all of which involved participation from both communities) also fostered increased levels of interaction. Moreover, and as alluded to above, some of the refugees that participated in the project’s livelihood activities were able to obtain a loan and start a business in the host community area, which attracted more refugees to the area as well.⁵⁶ Lastly, the sports events organised by the recreation centres established and equipped by the project have resulted in friendships between refugee and host community youth. All in all, it appears that the project led to increased interaction and a consequent positive effect on relations between the two communities, as illustrated by a notable increase in the number of mixed marriages and mixed working relationships since the

‘In the past, the refugees felt like this school was not for them. Access was not easy, because we had no space. After construction of the extra classrooms the refugees felt welcome here as well.’

– PTSA member, Aw-Barre, Ethiopia

‘Business opportunities increased for both communities and they became shareholders and started businesses together.’

– RCC member, Aw-Barre, Ethiopia

⁵³ At baseline, the respondents were asked slightly different questions, which appear to have also been included in the endline survey of which the answers were however not available. The research team reached out to the implementing partner, but they did not have access to the raw data (answers to all questions asked during the endline survey, including the ones that were not discussed in the endline report).

⁵⁴ DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, ‘End-line Evaluation Report on ‘Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafen [sic] Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia’, November 2020.

⁵⁵ GFA Consulting Group, Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) – Ethiopia Final Evaluation. Annexes to the Final Report, February 2022.

⁵⁶ KIIs and FGDs

beginning of the project.⁵⁷ An important factor to repeat here, especially with regards to mixed marriages, is that host and refugee communities share the same culture, language, religion and clan affiliations.

It is worth noting – as indicated in Section 5.4 on programming challenges and limitations – that **positive social cohesion outcomes linked to integrated service delivery are dependent to a large degree on the continued delivery of services**. They may therefore be more difficult to preserve in the medium to long term than those obtained through other methodologies, such as the group-based approach implemented by FORESITE that is described in Section 4.3 below, which is designed to be self-sustaining. However, in the case of **RDPP ET SC**, field visits conducted by the research team to the project implementation area confirm that **several project-supported WASH and education structures are still in use and that other projects have built on these achievements by constructing additional structures or renovating supported structures**. For example, Dekak, an Ethiopian civil society organisation, constructed four extra classrooms for the supported secondary school in Aw-Barre and IOM renovated their library.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, challenges faced with regard to the provision of energy access, as described in Section 5.4 below, mean that tensions related to the collection of firewood by the refugee population in the area around Sheder camp continue to this day.

4.3 SUPPORTING MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL GROUPS TO INCREASE INTER- AND INTRA-COMMUNITY TRUST

The **FORESITE** project used a group-based methodology to achieve its resilience and social cohesion objectives. The project worked with groups focusing on different interventions, including groups focused on farming, S4T, mother gardens, seed multiplication, demonstration gardens and marketing, peace development committees and youth-led peace clubs.⁵⁹ As described in the project overview in Section 3.2, while the formal primary objective of the project was to improve food security and increase resilience to natural disasters and conflict among targeted communities, it was also anticipated that establishing and supporting intercommunal groups would ease existing distrust, strengthen relationships and improve social cohesion.

During inception, the **FORESITE** project team mapped existing savings and farmer groups. The project worked with these existing groups, linked ‘new’ people with those groups and also established new groups, all while aiming to include participants from different communities in each group.^{60,61} Project participants belonged to at least one group, and 35% belonged to two project groups. The group members received trainings and material support such as farming inputs, bicycles and/or furniture. For certain farming items, such as ox ploughs, the project applied a ‘cost-recovery approach’ and only covered part of the costs, while the rest had to be paid for by the members of the project group. This

⁵⁷ FGDs with beneficiaries; DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, ‘End-line Evaluation Report on ‘Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafen [sic] Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia’, November 2020.

⁵⁸ As mentioned in the Methodology section of this case study, many people that were involved in the project were not working in the implementation area anymore due to the completion of the project four years ago. Therefore, the research team conducted fieldwork in Aw-Barre woreda as the implementing partner still had contacts there, and not in Kebrebeayah woreda. However, even in Aw-Barre many people involved in the project had left. This made it difficult for the research team to construct a complete picture of what structures set up by the project are still in use and what structures are not.

⁵⁹ Kenwill International Limited, ‘Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan’, June 2023.

⁶⁰ WV, NRC AVSI, ‘Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project. Annual narrative report. Year 1: 26th July 2019 – 25th July 2020., September 2020.

⁶¹ KII with implementing partner.

approach was applied to reduce the dependency of project participants on external assistance and to increase their sense of ownership.⁶²

Focus box 2: Social cohesion-related outcomes for the FORESITE project

According to the **FORESITE** endline evaluation, **the involvement of project participants in different project groups (such as farmer and saving groups) promoted networking and experience sharing, which strengthened social capital and social cohesion within the communities.**

Beneficiaries interviewed for this study shared that **membership of the project groups has improved relationships within and between communities supported by the project in different ways.** Given the low levels of trust within and between communities in the area, many of the project participants were not used to working closely with people who were not direct family members, but by attending trainings and working together, they got to know each other better. Moreover, they can now more easily seek and receive assistance from others if they need help.⁶³ One of the implementing partners shared that some members of farming groups even started sharing the tools they were able to buy through the project with their neighbours, who were not supported by the project.⁶⁴

‘We can now tell others about our issues. In the past, you would keep these to yourself.’

– Peace committee member, Jur River County, South Sudan

‘Farming was my grandfather’s main activity, but he did it alone. Now we learned to do it in a group.’

– Farmer group member, Gogrial East County, South Sudan

Similarly, members of the peace committees shared that they did not previously have contact with neighbouring communities. Thanks to their committee work they had to collaborate with these communities, and now they are in regular contact and are even invited to each other’s social events. This increased interaction improved trust among community members, as they learned that they could share their issues with each other whereas in the past they would keep their problems to themselves.

The above-described effects of FORESITE’s group approach appear to have contributed to increased social cohesion in the project intervention area. **FORESITE** measured social cohesion within its target communities by scoring answers to the following three statements: 1) people in this community readily help each other in times of need, 2) people in this community tend to trust one another, and 3) people in the community actively take care of those that are poor, weak or marginalised. Survey respondents who answered ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ to all three statements were categorised as reporting ‘good’ social cohesion.⁶⁵ **80% of the surveyed households reported good social cohesion at endline** (against a target of 80%), compared to 60% at the beginning of the project. All counties of implementation reported improvements in this area, with Twic County reporting the highest percentage at endline (93.8%) and the biggest improvement compared to baseline (+44.6%), and Cueibet County reporting the smallest improvement compared to baseline (+6.7%). The percentages of households reporting good social

⁶² Kenwill International Limited, ‘Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan’, June 2023.

⁶³ FGDs with beneficiaries.

⁶⁴ KII with implementing partner.

⁶⁵ Kenwill International Limited, ‘Baseline survey for Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River counties of Lakes, Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan, Appendix 2.1 Household survey questionnaire’, 28 May 2020.

cohesion at endline in Cueibet, Gogrial East and Jur River Counties range from 76% to 80%.⁶⁶ The situation in Cueibet County will be discussed in further detail in Section 5.1.

The final evaluation used the Counterfactual Self-Estimation of Programme Participants approach to construct a counterfactual for several of its outcome indicators. This entailed asking project participants to estimate what their situation would be today without the project's intervention. With regard to social cohesion, only 44% of the respondents estimated that there would be good social cohesion in their community if the project had not been implemented (versus the abovementioned 80% of respondents who reported good social cohesion under current circumstances).⁶⁷

According to the key informant interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study, **the relationships within and between communities in the FORESITE implementation area were still good, as of May 2024.** According to the implementing partners, many of the supported project groups were still in place and operational.⁶⁸ The research team was able to meet several project beneficiaries in Jur River and Gogrial East Counties, who stated that **they had no plans to leave the groups because they had learned what to do through the project and could continue on their own. They were particularly motivated by the concrete financial benefits of group membership.** For example, being a member of an S4T group improved their financial situation, which made it possible to open a business and pay school fees for their children, while membership to a mother garden group made it possible to provide their family with different types of vegetables and to sell the rest at the market, which improved their family's nutritional and financial situation.⁶⁹ According to the project endline evaluation, the S4T groups were a particular source of pride for the beneficiaries and other stakeholders on account of their strong performance, which naturally promoted the sustainability of the initiative.⁷⁰ **In fact, the benefits the project group participants experienced, the knowledge they acquired, and the sense of ownership created through the cost-sharing approach to buying ox ploughs have collectively led to non-beneficiaries forming new farmer and mother garden groups in the implementation area.**⁷¹ These findings strongly appear to confirm the robustness of the approach, particularly in terms of sustainability.

Picture 5: S4T member from Gogrial East County who was able to start a business in assorted traditional wears and beads

Picture 6: S4T member from Gogrial East County who was able to open a small restaurant

⁶⁶ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ KIs with implementing partners.

⁶⁹ KIs and FGDs.

⁷⁰ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023.

⁷¹ KII with implementing partner.



Moreover, **several aspects of the FORESITE project have been adopted by other interventions in South Sudan.**⁷² The follow-up project ‘Promoting a Green and Resilient Economy in South Sudan’, funded by the EU’s Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) has not yet started but will combine successful elements of the FORESITE project. For example, project groups and concerted efforts to include women in project activities are foreseen, as was done by FORESITE through the use of gender male champions, in an effort to respond to challenges associated with the high influx of refugees resulting from the ongoing conflict in Sudan.⁷³

While the project has clearly delivered significant achievements and positive outcomes, it is worth noting that the supported groups do face a number of sustainability risks and challenges. For example, during project implementation the supported peace committees received incentives from the project to organise events to share messages of peace, and participants were provided with refreshments. However, due to high costs, this practice was not sustainable after the project ended, which lowered the interest of community members in attending these activities.⁷⁴ Since the refreshments positively influenced attendance, it is not necessarily recommended to eliminate incentives entirely but rather to **explore more sustainable or symbolic ways to encourage participation beyond the completion of the project**, such as collaborating with relevant stakeholders to integrate the activities into existing community structures or events.

There are also **several contextual factors that could threaten the sustainability of the project’s initiatives in the future**, including flooding (which affects farming activities), a limited market for high volumes of products produced by the farmers, mother gardens and seed multiplication groups, the continued provision of free inputs by humanitarian agencies (which may negatively affect the transition to the cost-sharing approach promoted by the project), and ongoing hyperinflation and extreme currency depreciation in the country (which reduces the value of S4T savings and loans). While the project has enhanced beneficiaries’ adaptive capacity – for example, by diversifying income sources through participation in multiple project groups and fostering collaboration – the impact of flooding on farming activities during implementation highlights the need for additional measures to strengthen resilience against external shocks in future programming. For this reason, the NDICI-funded ‘Promoting a Green and Resilient Economy in South Sudan’ project will place a strong emphasis on protecting farmers from shocks, including through value addition strategies to increase the marketability and sustainability of their produce.

⁷² Kenwill International Limited, ‘Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan’, June 2023.

⁷³ KII with EU project manager.

⁷⁴ KIIs and FGDs.

4.4 COMBINED APPROACH: INTEGRATED HEALTH SERVICES, RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY EFFORTS

The **PROTECT DRC** project implements multiple interventions along the northern migratory route in Sudan, each with a primary or secondary social cohesion objective. For instance, the project set up Humanitarian Service Points (or HSPs) along the route, which are effectively run by (and for) members of host, migrant and displaced communities.⁷⁵ The HSPs **offer integrated health and protection services to migrants, displaced populations (including refugees and IDPs) and members of the host communities, including first aid, psychosocial support, referrals and legal aid.** The centres also organise **recreational activities for all communities**,⁷⁶ from sports activities and coffee and tea ceremonies to hosting weddings and religious events. (Before the project started implementation in 2020, very few activities were organised for migrants and host communities in the implementation area.) Furthermore, the project advocates for increased access to basic services for both communities through humanitarian diplomacy.⁷⁷ This has led to improved access to secondary health care for non-host communities⁷⁸ and IDP children being accepted in schools in certain areas.⁷⁹

Focus box 3: Social cohesion-related outcomes for the PROTECT DRC project

The possible effects of the **PROTECT DRC** project's multifaceted approach on social cohesion outcomes are impossible to quantitatively assess due to the absence of project outcome data. However, according to the **PROTECT DRC** mid-term evaluation, the HSPs enhanced social inclusion of migrants among host communities.⁸⁰ Moreover, the implementing partner staff interviewed for this study shared **that the inclusion of IDP children in schools as a result of advocacy efforts and the organised recreational activities led to increased interaction between all communities.** As a result, they got to know each other and learned about each other's culture and lifestyle, thereby enhancing mutual respect and trust.⁸¹ (Unfortunately, it was not possible for the research team to triangulate these findings due to the ongoing inaccessibility of the intervention area.)

‘Sudanese people and refugees singing Sudanese or international songs together. Sometimes I go there to analyse. When the drums start they all start dancing, the same dance, as if they are the same.’

– Implementing partner PROTECT DRC

The EU project manager for **PROTECT DRC** expressed confidence in the sustainability of the initiative for many of the same reasons as those enjoyed by the **FORESITE** project. Since the centres are run by the target communities, the knowledge and skills gained through the technical assistance provided by the Red Cross is likely to remain in the implementation area.⁸² The fact that the HSPs are run by the target communities has furthermore **created a sense of ownership among the communities**, which

⁷⁵ FGD with implementing partner.

⁷⁶ Description of Action, PROTECT – Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan.

⁷⁷ Description of Action, PROTECT – Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan.

⁷⁸ SRCS & DRC, Project Mid Term Review Report Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan Red Sea, April 2023.

⁷⁹ FGD with implementing partner.

⁸⁰ SRCS & DRC, Project Mid Term Review Report Protection of Persons of Concern (PoC) and vulnerable migrants along migratory routes in Sudan Red Sea, April 2023.

⁸¹ FGD with implementing partners.

⁸² KII with EU project manager.

is expected to promote sustainability and continuity. As with **FORESITE**, the successes of the initiative have also inspired non-beneficiaries, with traditional leaders in Red Sea State even setting up their own centres.⁸³ While it is too early to speak definitively to the sustainability of these non-supported groups and centres, particularly as the area faces numerous environmental and political challenges that may affect continuity, it would certainly be worthwhile to more closely assess the factors that lead to replication so that these can be actively promoted, supported and monitored in future programming.

PROTECT DRC ended in March 2024 and **entered a second phase in April 2024**. However, the beginning of the ongoing war in Sudan in April 2023 and the consequent internal displacement crisis (which is currently the largest in the world) is **exacerbating pressure on the already limited services and resources** in the country, which is likely to have negative consequences for the relationships between migrants, displaced populations and host communities. The **PROTECT DRC** implementing partner highlighted that this has already created challenges for the project, as they must contend with additional tensions while supporting a constantly growing target population experiencing multiple vulnerabilities,⁸⁴ including increased risks of trafficking and smuggling along the routes in Sudan.⁸⁵

4.5 ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

According to the **RDPP ET SC** endline evaluation, **the project's close collaboration with community-level structures (such as the RCCs and PTSAs) and local authorities (such as woreda- and regional-level government offices) during implementation contributed significantly to the sustainability of its activities**. Notably, many results remained strong even four years after the project ended.

For example, the project maintained close engagement with local authorities through joint planning sessions at the outset to coordinate integrated service delivery. It also organised integration workshops during implementation, bringing together representatives from refugee and host communities to review project outcomes and gather feedback.⁸⁶

In addition, the project set up multi-stakeholder coordination platforms with local authorities, representatives of refugee camps and other NGOs. These platforms aimed to prevent duplication of efforts and promote efficient use of resources. After project completion, responsibility for facilitating these platforms was transferred to the Somali regional government. According to the RDPP programme impact evaluation, the platforms continued operating in refugee-hosting areas, although they faced some challenges.

With regard to WASH and educational structures supported by **RDPP ET SC** specifically, the impact evaluation highlighted that these were handed over to refugee, host community and government agencies after completion of the project to ensure sustainable management and service delivery,⁸⁷ which was confirmed during fieldwork conducted for this study. Staff from OWDA, the organisation that implemented WASH-related activities in the host community, observed that the WASH committees (consisting of refugee and host community members) still play an important role in the maintenance of the structures. They also shared that they continue to visit the area frequently and that they contact the local authorities if they discover any maintenance-related issue. Similar mechanisms appear to be in place for the educational structures.⁸⁸ These successes highlight the importance of engaging key local stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the integrated service delivery approach.

Meanwhile, **FORESITE** implementing partners identified close collaboration with the government as a key project success factor. The project engaged a range of government stakeholders, from local

⁸³ FGD with implementing partners.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ KII with EU project manager.

⁸⁶ DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, 'End-line Evaluation Report on 'Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafen Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia'', November 2020.

⁸⁷ GFA Consulting Group, Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) – Ethiopia Final Evaluation. Annexes to the Final Report, February 2022.

⁸⁸ KIIs with implementing partners.

authority officials who helped with the selection of beneficiaries to extension workers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry who provided the farmer groups with technical trainings and monitored their activities.⁸⁹ In addition, the project trained local authorities on S4T, agronomic practices and peacebuilding and conflict resolution, to monitor and facilitate key processes of project activities even after the project ended.

However, **significant financial and human resources constraints faced by the government** means that it is difficult for local authorities to continue this monitoring and facilitation work.⁹⁰ This could affect the sustainability of project groups and their ability to adapt to new circumstances. During implementation, the project refunded transportation costs for monitoring and facilitation work and provided meal allowances to local authority officials.⁹¹ Since limited transportation capacity remains a key barrier for government officials, international partners could advocate for increased government budget allocations to support local authorities in carrying out their responsibilities, including funding for transportation, allowances, and operational costs. This could be reinforced through policy dialogue and capacity-building efforts aimed at helping government institutions integrate these costs into their annual planning and budget cycles to ensure long-term sustainability.

⁸⁹ KIIs with implementing partners.

⁹⁰ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023; KIIs and FGDs.

⁹¹ KII with implementing partners.

5. UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS IN SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAMMING: LESSONS LEARNED

5.1 PRIORITISING CONFLICT PREVENTION VS. SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAMMING

The relationship between social cohesion and conflict is highly interdependent, which is why social cohesion interventions are often included as complementary components in conflict prevention programmes. **Cohesive societies – characterised by trust, interdependence, and collaboration – are better able to foster constructive relationships across different groups and work collectively toward shared goals.** This, in turn, helps reduce the risk of fragility and violent conflict.⁹²

Conversely, when conflicts are poorly managed, they are more likely to escalate into violence. In such situations, collective fear can spread quickly, undermining social cohesion by amplifying group differences and reinforcing intra-group bonds at the expense of inter-group trust. If left unaddressed, this fear can lay the groundwork for further conflict.⁹³

The close interconnection between social cohesion and conflict, as well as their combined susceptibility to rapidly shifting dynamics, means that **it is both challenging and critical to determine which to prioritise in a given intervention area and context.** For example, one of the **FORESITE** project implementing partners noted **that it is difficult to work on social cohesion in areas where there is constant conflict**, as was the case in Cueibet County, South Sudan. Prior to implementation, Cueibet faced significantly higher levels of inter- and intra-communal cattle raiding and revenge killings compared to other counties. Due to the security situation, it was often impossible for community members to move safely between villages.

The implementing partner quickly recognised the need to prioritise conflict prevention and resolution activities in these areas.⁹⁴ In addition to the peace-related activities implemented across all counties (including a conflict mapping exercise,⁹⁵ supporting peace committees and youth-led peace clubs, contributing to peace dialogues, training community leaders on conflict resolution and peace building, and organising sports activities for youth), the project also worked with Lakes State authorities to organise a county-wide peace conference in Cueibet. This initiative aimed to restore calm and stability in the county after years of conflict.^{96, 97}

According to the project endline evaluation, **FORESITE's** peace activities have effectively helped to address issues related to cattle raiding by youth and to discourage revenge killings, in part by establishing (through the peace committees) a mechanism to identify and communicate with perpetrators of raiding in order to facilitate compensation to the affected communities. While this

⁹² Alexandre, M., Willman, A., Aslam G. and Rebosio, M. (2012). Societal Dynamics and Fragility: Engaging Societies in Responding to Fragile Situations. Washington, DC: The World Bank; UNDP, 'Strengthening social cohesion. Conceptual framing and programming implications', 2020.

⁹³ UNDP, 'Strengthening social cohesion. Conceptual framing and programming implications', 2020.

⁹⁴ KILs with implementing partner.

⁹⁵ For this exercise, focus group discussions were held with community leaders, cattle camp leaders, members of peace committees, women and students, and key informant interviews were conducted with people who were most positively engaged in conflict resolution, according to the focus group participants. The objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the conflict situation in the area, available conflict resolution mechanisms, important actors and gaps.

⁹⁶ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023; AVSI South Sudan, 'Participatory Conflict mapping – a look at the 'hard data'', November 2022.

⁹⁷ There was also a peace conference organised by NRC in Jur River County. However, that conference had a slightly different focus as the level of violence was way lower than in Cueibet County. The conference focused on uniting youth from different *payams* (the administrative division below counties) and retaining peace by creating a space where communities could connect and engage in sports activities.

appears to have contributed to positive conflict prevention outcomes across all intervention areas,⁹⁸ Cueibet County reported a particularly significant reduction (-52.3%). According to the implementing partner, the positive effects have been sustained in the county for at least a year after the completion of the project. By contrast, the improvement in social cohesion in the county was relatively small (+6.7%) during implementation, which can likely be explained by the high levels of conflict exceeding the baseline level of peace required for adequate social cohesion. As the project had to work on lowering these levels first, there was less time left to strengthen social cohesion.⁹⁹

5.2 ENGAGING WOMEN

Given their critical role in caretaking and relationships, women are key to creating and assuring social cohesion. This is why **community initiatives that aim to strengthen social cohesion are often more successful when women are actively involved**.¹⁰⁰ However, at least two of the EUTF projects assessed in this study faced notable challenges in this area.

The **RDPP ET SC** project endline concluded that the sports events organised by the supported recreational centres led to friendships between youths from the refugee and host communities. However, girls were much less likely to attend these events on account of gender inequalities and cultural norms. Based on this finding, it was recommended that future projects consider the types of **activities that girls are more likely to engage in when establishing and equipping recreational centres**.¹⁰¹ However, according to the implementing partner's field experience, the low participation of girls is less about the nature of the activities and more rooted in cultural barriers that restrict girls' socialisation and involvement in public life. As such, they recommend placing greater emphasis on addressing the underlying cultural and social barriers to girls' participation, in addition to offering inclusive activity options.¹⁰²

FORESITE deliberately targeted female members of the community for their activities and trained local authorities on gender issues. However, the mid-term evaluation observed that 'the change in attitudes [in the implementation area] towards gender is not happening as envisaged'.¹⁰³ For example, **the inclusion of women in certain project groups, such as the saving groups and the peace committees, was not always welcomed by men**,¹⁰⁴ as traditionally women in the implementation area did not take part in decision-making and income-generating activities. However, according to the endline evaluation, **FORESITE** effectively responded to this finding by undertaking direct action to address these attitudes and working towards making the community safer for women. The project introduced a **'gender male champions' approach**.¹⁰⁵ These 'champions' were selected together with the county department on the basis of being well known and highly respected in the community.¹⁰⁶ The gender male champions raised awareness on topics such as the importance of letting women earn money and the consequences of early marriage and gender-based violence. They did this by speaking to community members both one on one and at gatherings, including in places where project groups would come together.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁸ 13.9% of the surveyed households reported conflict to have occurred one or more times at endline, compared to 26.1% at the beginning of the project.

⁹⁹ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023.

¹⁰⁰ UNDP, 'Strengthening social cohesion. Conceptual framing and programming implications', 2020.

¹⁰¹ DAB Development Research and Trainings PLC, 'End-line Evaluation Report on 'Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP) in Fafen Zone of Somali Regional State, Ethiopia'', November 2020.

¹⁰² KII with implementing partner.

¹⁰³ Kenwill International Limited, 'Mid-term evaluation report for Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project', November 2021.

¹⁰⁴ KIIs with EU project manager and implementing partner.

¹⁰⁵ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023.

¹⁰⁶ KIIs with implementing partners.

¹⁰⁷ KIIs and FGDs.

Likely as a result of these dedicated interventions, at endline 26% of surveyed households reported that they believe the majority of their friends and community members currently agree with key gender attitude statements, compared to 7% at baseline. All counties in the implementation area reported an increase. The endline evaluation observed a deliberate effort to include women in project activities, which resulted in more than half of the beneficiaries being women. These women were able to join all types of supported project groups, from S4T to the peace committees. Women beneficiaries interviewed for this study stated that they felt empowered and have taken the lead in household welfare thanks to economic empowerment gained through the project activities.¹⁰⁸ **Changing gender attitudes and making project groups gender inclusive made it possible for women to engage in networking and experience sharing activities, which has almost certainly contributed to the positive social cohesion outcomes identified in the project's endline evaluation.**

5.3 ADDRESSING THE RISK OF SPILLOVER CONFLICT FROM NON-SUPPORTED COMMUNITIES BY CONDUCTING CONFLICT ANALYSIS

In three of the four counties in which **FORESITE** implemented activities in South Sudan there were increases in reported conflicts at endline – specifically, a rise of 16.9% in Twic and slight increases of +1.4% in Jur River and +1.2% in Gogrial East.¹⁰⁹ According to the project implementing partners, these increases are attributable to conflicts between targeted communities and neighbouring communities from *payams* (the administrative division below counties) or counties that were not supported by the project.¹¹⁰ For example, the surge in Twic seems to have been caused by cattle raiding from neighbouring communities in Unity State.¹¹¹ Such conflicts often undermined security in affected parts of the project's implementation area. Some beneficiaries interviewed for this study noted that communities that were not supported by the project continued to engage in fighting because they had not learned how to live peacefully as they (the beneficiaries) had through the project.¹¹² Moreover, many beneficiaries reported that non-beneficiaries felt excluded and overlooked by the government, as the project had collaborated with local authorities during implementation. This perception reportedly led to tensions between the communities.¹¹³

One **FORESITE** implementing partner therefore recommended to **include a cross-payam or cross-county element in future programming**, focused on *payams* or counties that are not part of the implementation area.¹¹⁴ With regard to non-beneficiaries feeling excluded, future projects could include a **knowledge sharing component**, whereby local authorities disseminate insights on low-cost peacebuilding activities to **neighbouring communities, enabling them** to replicate these activities independently. To prevent and mitigate cross-community conflict, future projects could begin with a **comprehensive conflict analysis** to better understand inter-community conflict dynamics. Based on this analysis, specific peacebuilding activities could be designed with a **cross-community scope**, such as:

- Appointing cross-community peace champions to spread peace messages in 'border' areas.
- Establishing peace committees that specifically focus on resolving conflicts with non-supported *payams* or counties.
- Supporting youth-led peace clubs in neighbouring areas to address cattle raiding, which often involves youth.

¹⁰⁸ Kenwill International Limited, 'Final evaluation report for conducting end of project evaluation of Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project in Cueibet, Gogrial East, Twic and Jur River Counties of Lakes Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, South Sudan', June 2023; KIIs and FGDS.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ KIIs and FGDS.

¹¹¹ Kenwill International Limited, 'Mid-term evaluation report for Food Security and Resilience in Transitioning Environments (FORESITE) project', November 2021.

¹¹² FGDS.

¹¹³ KIIs and FGDS.

¹¹⁴ KIIs with implementing partners.

A relevant example of the above-described approach to conflict analysis is described in Section 5.1, whereby AVSI, the **FORESITE** implementing partner in Cueibet County, conducted a thorough conflict mapping exercise followed by organising a county-wide peace conference that included communities beyond those directly supported by the project.

5.4 TARGETING PRIMARY DRIVERS OF SERVICE-RELATED TENSIONS WITH EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION

As described in Section 4.2 on the integrated service delivery approach, many of **RDPP ET SC**'s service delivery interventions (particularly those pertaining to WASH and education) are still in place four years after the end of the project. However, the refugees interviewed for this study in the Sheder camp stated that despite the project's efforts to provide the refugee and host populations with energy-saving cookstoves, the collection of firewood by refugees in the host community area is **still contributing to intercommunal conflict**.

As the implementing partner's preferred approaches of either connecting the refugee camps to the national power grid or installing a solar system in the camp proved infeasible (for legal reasons in the former instance and due to budgetary constraints in the latter), it was instead decided that members of the target communities would be trained to produce and sell energy-saving cookstoves. When the project ended, those engaging in cookstove production quickly discontinued their activities due to the high cost of the raw materials needed to produce the stoves. Although members of the refugee community took over production, the cookstoves proved largely inadequate in meeting the population's needs. The running costs of the energy-saving cookstoves, which rely on expensive charcoal, cannot compete with 'free' firewood.¹¹⁵ Moreover, their comparatively small size is inadequate for the large families that characterise both communities.¹¹⁶ As a result, and despite the project's notable achievements, **one of the most critical underlying contributors to intercommunal tensions in the project intervention area appears to have been inadequately addressed**. It is worth noting that Mercy Corps, in partnership with Humanitarian Energy PLC, is currently implementing the Enter Energy Ethiopia project, which aims to install a solar system in the refugee camps in Sheder. The system will target both cooking and lighting needs in the camps and may therefore reduce the need for firewood collection in the future.¹¹⁷

In parallel, refugees interviewed in the Sheder camp noted the recurrence of water shortages in the camp, beneficiaries in Aw-Barre did not raise this issue.¹¹⁸ There are several explanations for this. For instance, in the Sheder camp, the project upgraded existing structures, while in Aw-Barre they also constructed a new borehole. Moreover, both the booster station and the water source are connected to a solar system in Aw-Barre, while the booster station in Sheder still relies on fuel. The WASH structures are now managed by International Medical Corps and during the data collection phase for this study, they were forced to reduce fuel consumption due to funding shortages.¹¹⁹ In addition, the distance between the water source and the communities is longer in Sheder than in Aw-Barre, which leads to higher operational costs. Lastly, the implementation area is prone to recurrent droughts which can affect water resources.¹²⁰

However, with regard to social cohesion, refugees interviewed in Sheder camp expressed the belief that the host community receives more water than they do – an assertion that, according to the implementing partner, is almost certainly incorrect, and that the local authorities are unresponsive to their complaints about the issue. Research shows that competition over aid or resources is often driven

¹¹⁵ GFA Consulting Group, 'Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) – Ethiopia Final Evaluation. Annexes to the Final Report', February 2022.

¹¹⁶ Interestingly, beneficiaries in the Aw-Barre camp did not raise the issue with the firewood collection, although the research team was unable to triangulate the reason for the difference.

¹¹⁷ KII with implementing partner; Mercy Corps, 'On the grid: Connecting refugee communities to solar power', 14 October 2024.

¹¹⁸ FGD with beneficiaries.

¹¹⁹ KII with implementing partner.

¹²⁰ KII with implementing partner.

more by **perception** than reality.¹²¹ It is therefore critical to ensure that real access issues do not translate into perceived *unequal* access. **A strong communication and visibility strategy may help to protect against this precursor to intercommunal tensions.** This strategy should include:

- **Transparent communication:** Clearly inform communities about how activities will be implemented, the expected outcomes, potential challenges and their implications, and any changes to implementation plans.
- **Two-way engagement:** Establish dialogue or grievance mechanisms that allow communities to voice concerns, submit complaints, and receive timely and meaningful responses.

¹²¹ Humanitarian Policy Group, 'Social cohesion in displacement. The state of play.', October 2022.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS AND SIMILAR SUPPORT

Based on the above analysis of the relevant contributions of the **RDPP ET SC**, **FORESITE** and **PROTECT DRC** projects to enhanced social cohesion in their operating contexts, the following recommendations could be considered by donors and implementing partners seeking to strengthen social cohesion through indirect social cohesion programming, whereby social cohesion is a smaller complementary component of a programme focused on topics such as food security, strengthening livelihoods or basic service delivery.

Recommendation 1. Clearly define social cohesion and measure related outcomes:

Since social cohesion can be defined in different ways, projects should define social cohesion clearly at the beginning of the project, to be able to measure the concept effectively. For the three projects included in this case study the definition used by the project had to be extracted from the way the related outcome indicator was measured or from policy documents. This complicates effective monitoring and evaluation of social cohesion.

Creating social cohesion should be adequately factored into the intervention logic of the project. For two of the three projects included in this case study it was not very clear at the beginning of the project how they would strengthen and measure social cohesion. In addition, one of the three projects did not have an outcome indicator on social cohesion. If a project aims to enhance social cohesion, the concept should be well defined and integrated in the intervention logic (and logframe, including through relevant indicators). This will facilitate more effective and actionable analysis of the impact of the interventions.

Recommendation 2. Develop and maintain a clear and updated understanding of the context and conduct conflict analysis:

When designing social cohesion activities, projects should make sure that the causes of tensions are well analysed and that effective solutions are offered. For example, at the start of the **RDPP ET SC** project, an assessment identified energy-related tensions between refugee and host communities. However, the project did not have sufficient resources to implement what had been identified as the most effective solutions (connecting the refugee camps to the national power grid or installing a solar system in the camp) and therefore opted for a less expensive alternative (energy-saving cookstoves). Unfortunately, this strategy proved financially unsustainable, ineffective, and tensions between the communities are still present four years after completion of the project. This example highlights the importance of not only conducting a robust conflict analysis but also ensuring that the findings are operationalised through adequate funding and well-structured project design. This includes efforts to assess the likely impact, sustainability and profitability of proposed activities prior to rolling them out.

It is equally important to continually monitor the evolving context of the implementation area throughout the project lifetime, especially with regard to relations between and within communities. One effective approach is to conduct a thorough mapping exercise at the project's outset, involving diverse stakeholders such as community representatives and local authorities. Additionally, holding regular meetings during implementation can help maintain an up-to-date understanding of community dynamics. Further, **since conflict resolution and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing, social cohesion projects should make sure they are conflict sensitive and consider including conflict resolution activities when relevant.** Cohesive societies can prevent conflict through high levels of trust, interdependence and collaboration, which stimulate relationships across different groups and constructive interaction on common goals. However, social cohesion can

be undermined when conflicts are not adequately managed, escalate and become violent. This leads to fear which underlines differences between groups, strengthens intra-group bonding and can ultimately lead to more conflict. The **FORESITE** project worked on the prevention of conflict in all counties of the implementation area. However, in counties where conflict levels were high, additional conflict prevention activities were implemented in the way of working on social cohesion. For example, in one of the counties the project collaborated with local authorities to organise a county-wide peace conference to restore calm and stability after years of conflict. This led to less conflict and higher trust levels, which in turn led to a more conducive environment to enhance social cohesion.

Finally, it is essential **to consider contextual factors when determining the most appropriate type of social cohesion programming**. The three projects assessed in this case study mainly focused on indirect approaches, such as strengthening community ties through livelihood interventions or integrated service delivery. However, the findings indicate that when target communities share fewer common characteristics or when tensions are more pronounced, a more direct approach is needed. This can include the set up and support for peace committees and youth peace clubs, facilitated dialogues and interactive activities that encourage communities to engage with one another and thereby build mutual understanding and respect. In this regard, establishing a dedicated platform or space for regular dialogue that can continue after the completion of the project can help to ensure the long-term sustainability of social cohesion efforts.

Recommendation 3. Accentuate inclusivity given its importance for social cohesion:

Implementing partners should aim for gender balance among project participants, by making sure the project activities meet the needs and interests of both men and women. Social cohesion initiatives are often more successful when women are involved.¹²² In addition, projects can have an important though gradual impact on changing gender attitudes in the implementation area and can lead to women being able to take a more proactive role in activities and to support the continuation of the activities after project completion. Even though **FORESITE** deliberately targeted women for their project activities, it was assessed at mid-term that attitude change towards gender had not taken place as expected: for example, the inclusion of women in saving groups and peace committees was not always welcomed by men. Together with the local authorities, **FORESITE** selected highly respected men in the community to become gender male champions. During one-on-one sessions or gatherings, the gender male champions raised awareness on topics such as the importance of letting women earn money, as well as the consequences of early marriage and gender-based violence. This resulted in a change of attitudes which led to women being more welcome in project groups and able to play a role in strengthening relationships between and within communities.

Since creating social cohesion is about strengthening relationships between communities or among community members, **all parts of the community should be actively engaged in project activities**. While this was not explicitly raised in the findings from the selected projects, the literature and lessons learned from other project evaluations show that projects should aim to make sure that all vulnerable groups are represented in project activities, including the elderly, people living with disabilities and minority groups.

Recommendation 4. Document, share and promote successful approaches:

Future programming should gather information on previously implemented approaches that enhanced social cohesion in the implementation or surrounding area and build on the successful approaches.

It is recommended to continue providing (and advocating for the provision of) integrated service delivery to refugees (or migrants) and host communities. Both **RDPP ET SC** and **PROTECT DRC**

¹²² UNDP, 'Strengthening social cohesion. Conceptual framing and programming implications', 2020.

show that this approach has proven to be successful in minimising tensions and enhancing positive interaction between different communities.

The EUTF has funded several projects in the HoA that support the integration of refugees in host communities. To further enhance interaction between refugees (or migrants) and host communities, successful approaches should be continued, including out-of-camp movement of refugees and integration of refugees (or migrants) into national systems.

Projects should continue to organise social and sports events for different communities to get to know each other better. PROTECT DRC has shown that these events can lead to more positive interaction and enhances mutual respect between different communities, while sport events organised by FORESITE and RDPP ET SC lowered tensions between youth of different communities. As these events mainly have an effect on the direct beneficiaries it should be complemented by other social cohesion activities to be sure that non-beneficiaries are reached as well.

When working on topics such as enhancing food security, increasing livelihood opportunities or strengthening peace, projects should consider applying a group-based methodology This approach can be applied to different situations. FORESITE has shown that this approach has proven to be successful in strengthening relationships among community members by letting group members experience and learn what the benefits are of working together.

To ensure that social cohesion is not treated merely as a “positive side effect,” successful approaches should be systematically documented and disseminated both within and across organisations. Sharing information on what has worked – including best practices and lessons learned – can support replication and improve the design of future interventions.

In line with this, where projects aim to strengthen social cohesion, evaluations should explicitly assess this dimension. This includes measuring observed changes, analysing how project components contributed to those changes, and identifying specific practices that proved effective or could be improved. Among the three projects reviewed, two have no social cohesion-related recommendations in their available evaluations. In the third, the recommendations lack clarity on the underlying evidence base. To improve future programming and learning, it is essential that project evaluations include a thorough analysis of social cohesion components – at both baseline and endline – clearly describing their contribution, impact, and potential for further strengthening.

Recommendation 5. Enhance visibility and communication of development initiatives to avoid misconceptions that can be detrimental to social cohesion:

Projects should ensure that development support is delivered with a high degree of transparency and that its scope and rationale are clearly communicated to all relevant communities. Perceptions of inequality often fuel tensions more than actual disparities. While there were real inequalities in access to water prior to the project, findings from the RDPP ET SC project showed that both refugees and host communities almost certainly received the same amount of water after completion of the project. However, the refugees perceived that they received less than the host community, which led to tensions.

To reduce such misunderstandings, **local authorities should be encouraged to share information about low-cost and replicable activities with communities that were not directly supported by the project.** In the FORESITE project, non-beneficiary communities felt excluded and overlooked by the government due to the project’s collaboration with local authorities, which led to tensions between non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries.

In addition, projects should **include activities that focus on preventing and resolving tensions with neighbouring communities.** While FORESITE achieved positive results within the direct implementation area, unresolved conflicts with neighbouring communities continued to affect security in certain counties. In one case, the organisation of a county-wide peace conference that included previously unsupported communities contributed to a reduction in conflict.

To further mitigate these challenges, it is also recommended to **establish a feedback mechanism** that allows communities to voice concerns and submit complaints. Proactively addressing grievances, mitigating any negative externalities arising from the project and providing fact-based communication or counter-narratives when needed can all help to deescalate tense situations.

Finally, to ensure long-term sustainability, this feedback mechanism should be handed over to local authorities or community representatives at the project's conclusion, to enable continued follow-up and resolution of community concerns.

Recommendation 6: Enhance coordination with government and other donors to promote a more equitable distribution of development support:

Donors should work towards a more even geographical distribution of projects together with governments, local authorities and other donors. For example, some areas in and around the implementation area of the **FORESITE** project are much more supported than others for various reasons (e.g. preference for areas where the implementing partners have more experience, with higher literacy rates, better safety, etc). In addition, some projects give free inputs to beneficiaries while others, including the **FORESITE** project, worked with a cost-sharing approach. The costs of ox-ploughs were shared among the project and members of the farmer groups, which fostered a sense of ownership. Donors should aim to work together with authorities and other donors to try to minimise disparities in development support. When communities feel treated fairly, tensions between different communities can be prevented.

Recommendation 7. Minimise dependency and include elements that enhance the sustainability of social cohesion activities and results:

Projects should continue engaging both target communities and local authorities throughout project implementation and ensure that activities are transitioned to local structures upon project completion. For example, in the **PROTECT DRC** project, humanitarian service points were successfully sustained because they were managed by volunteers from both migrant and host communities. This sense of ownership not only ensured continuity but also led to the establishment of additional service points by non-beneficiaries. When local authorities are unable to continue supporting activities, community-led structures can play a crucial role in the sustainability of activities.

It is recommended to minimise dependency on external assistance by enhancing the knowledge of target communities (as all projects did through various trainings), **including:**

- **Through cost-sharing approaches**, such as **FORESITE**'s model of co-financing ox-ploughs within farmer groups.
- **Building ownership by involving communities as much as possible**, as **PROTECT DRC** did by letting volunteers from the target communities run the humanitarian service points, while **RDPP ET SC** supported WASH committees to independently monitor and maintain the WASH infrastructures.
- **Finally, involving project participants in diverse project activities to ensure that they benefit in multiple ways.** **FORESITE**, for example, engaged beneficiaries across different project groups, providing training on various topics. This not only expanded their networks but also made it possible for the project participants to establish valuable connections. Furthermore, as membership in multiple groups provided participants with a range of benefits, it reinforced the sustainability of these groups and encouraged non-beneficiaries to form new ones.

7. ANNEXES

7.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Social cohesion

Per project:

a. Situation pre-EUTF

- How was the situation on the ground, and in the broader region, before the project started implementation? What were the dynamics in terms of social cohesion, as perceived by the affected communities and other relevant stakeholders?

b. Impact

- What are the project's key achievements with regard to social cohesion?
- What was the impact:
 - for the different communities;
 - for other relevant stakeholders;
 - for the broader region?
- Which components or approaches of these activities have helped contribute to positive results?
- To what extent were the results intended? Were there also activities that unexpectedly led to enhanced social cohesion? Or activities that had unintended negative effects?

c. Activities

- What activities led to enhanced social cohesion?
- Who were the beneficiaries of these activities (e.g. refugees, host community, IDPs, migrants in transit)? And what are their characteristics (e.g. how long had they been living in the implementation area)?
- What was the role of the different communities, community leaders and local authorities in these activities?

d. Success factors

- In what context did the activities take place? To what extent did context specific elements play a role in its success? To what extent did the success differ in the different implementation areas?
- What kind of IP was responsible for the project? To what extent did this (or the IP's specific strengths, background or experience) play a role in its success?

e. Challenges

- What challenges did the project face that limited their success in terms of enhancing social cohesion?
- How have these challenges been addressed?

f. Project design

- How did research or other forms of knowledge shape the project design, and if applicable, ongoing flexibility in terms of programming?

2. Commonalities and differences:

- What do the projects have in common with regards to:
 - the impact they had;
 - successful activities;
 - components, approaches;
 - context specific elements?
- In what ways do they differ?
- What do the projects have in common with regards to the challenges they faced? In what way do they differ?

3. Sustainability:

- What activities, components, approaches and/or context specific elements led to short-term results? What could have improved the longevity of those results?

- And which ones seem to have led to long-term results? What were the success factors that contributed to their longevity?
- Project specific questions, for example:
 - RDPP ET SC: To what extent are basic services shared between refugees and host communities nowadays? What is the current opinion of people in target areas on the interaction between the two communities?
 - FORESITE: Are the project groups still in place? What role did/do the associations play in social cohesion after the project ended and nowadays? What is the current perception of individuals towards peaceful co-existence?
 - PROTECT: To what extent are the cultural events still taking place? What is the current opinion of host communities, IDPs and migrants on the relationship between the different communities?¹²³
- Which sustainability and continuity mechanisms have been put in place by the projects? How effective were they?
- What could have been done to improve the sustainability of the results achieved?

4. Good practices, lessons learnt and future programming:

- What are the key lessons learnt from the projects with regard to social cohesion? What worked well and what did not?
- In light of the different contexts/countries the projects were implemented in, to what extent are the approaches replicable to other contexts/countries?
- Were any lessons learnt or best practices integrated into the design of follow-up EUTF projects? Were there lessons/best practices that were not integrated but should and feasibly could have been? (If relevant: What prevented the take-up of relevant lessons learnt?) For example for CRRF ET MC (a follow up of the RDPP ET SC project, that ended in August 2023).¹²⁴
- Did any of the follow-up EUTF projects successfully build on positive outcomes achieved by the two selected projects?
- What lessons on social cohesion that have been drawn can be used for future programming?

7.2 OVERVIEW PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Type of informant	Type of interview(s)	Organisation / project involvement	# of people
<u>RDPP ET SC</u>			
IPs	KII	SC	4
		DRC	1
		IRC	1
		OWDA	2
Funding agency	KII	EU delegation in Ethiopia	2
Stakeholder	FGD	Aw-Barre woreda officials	4
Stakeholder	KII	Refugees and Returnees Service official	1

¹²³ Due to a lack of access to the implementation area of PROTECT DRC, the research team was not able to gather information from beneficiaries on the relationship between the different communities.

¹²⁴ Due to unresponsiveness, the research team was not able to include the opinion of CRRF ET MC on what lessons learnt with regards to social cohesion were integrated in the project.

Beneficiary	FGD	RCC members Aw-Barre	8
		PSTA members Aw-Barre	8
		WASH committee members Aw-Barre	3
		Youth business Aw-Barre	8
		RCC and PTSA members Sheder	2
Beneficiary	KII	Youth business Aw-Barre	1
		PTSA member Shedder	1
Subtotal			46
FORESITE			
IPs	KII	WV	5
		NRC	2
		AVSI	4
Funding agency	KII	EU delegation in South Sudan	1
Stakeholder	KII	Gogrial East County official	1
Stakeholder	KII	Jur River County official	1
Beneficiary	FGD	Seed multiplication group members Jur River County	5
		Mother garden group members Jur River County	7
		Peace committee members Jur River County	5
		Gender male champions Jur River County	3
		S4T group members Gogrial East county	7
		Farmer group members Gogrial East County	7
		Peace committee members Gorgial East County	5
		Gender male champions Gogrial East County	2
		Chiefs Gogrial East County	2
		Beneficiary	KII
Subtotal			58
PROTECT DRC			

IPs	FGD	DRC	2
		SRCS	5
Funding agency	KII	EU delegation in Sudan	1
Beneficiary	KII	Community leader	1
Subtotal			9
Total			113