

Evaluation of the resilience component of the European Union Trust Fund of Africa in the Horn of Africa

Introduction

This brief presents the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations of the European Union Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa) Thematic Evaluation on Strengthening Resilience of Vulnerable and Displacement Affected Communities in the Horn of Africa (HoA). The study was commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) with the aim of providing an independent assessment of the results achieved and lessons learnt in the HoA in relation to the second strategic objective of EUTF. This second strategic objective aimed to strengthen resilience of communities and the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and displaced people.

During the evaluation period (2016–2024), the HoA region experienced major challenges including civil war, political instability, natural disasters, the effects of Covid-19 and persistent poverty, confirming the pertinence of the EUTF's resilience support, although it also presented challenges for the smooth implementation of the interventions.

Against this background, the evaluation assessed the extent to which the EUTF contributed to improved food security and natural resource management, strengthened disaster and conflict risk management and social cohesion among IDPs, refugees and host communities. It also uncovered obstacles and opportunities for sustainability, reviewed the effectiveness and efficiency of project delivery and assessed the overall added value of the EUTF's support to the region. The evaluation covered the EUTF's resilience-related assistance to Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, South-Sudan, Uganda and to cross-border regions between 2016 and 2024 during which EUR 756 million was expended.

The evaluation is timely as it can help to inform future EU strategies, programmes, and actions to counter vulnerabilities. It also offers lessons on how to organize and fund future support to resilience in complex environments under the current Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe as well as the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), starting in 2028. NDICI-GE has continued to fund a number of interventions previously financed by the EUTF, but there is a risk that valuable experiences and lessons learnt from the EUTF's support to resilience are lost if the attention to vulnerability in complex environments is reduced under the next MFF.



Figure 1. Resilience-related EU policies, the EUTF implementation and EU financing instruments

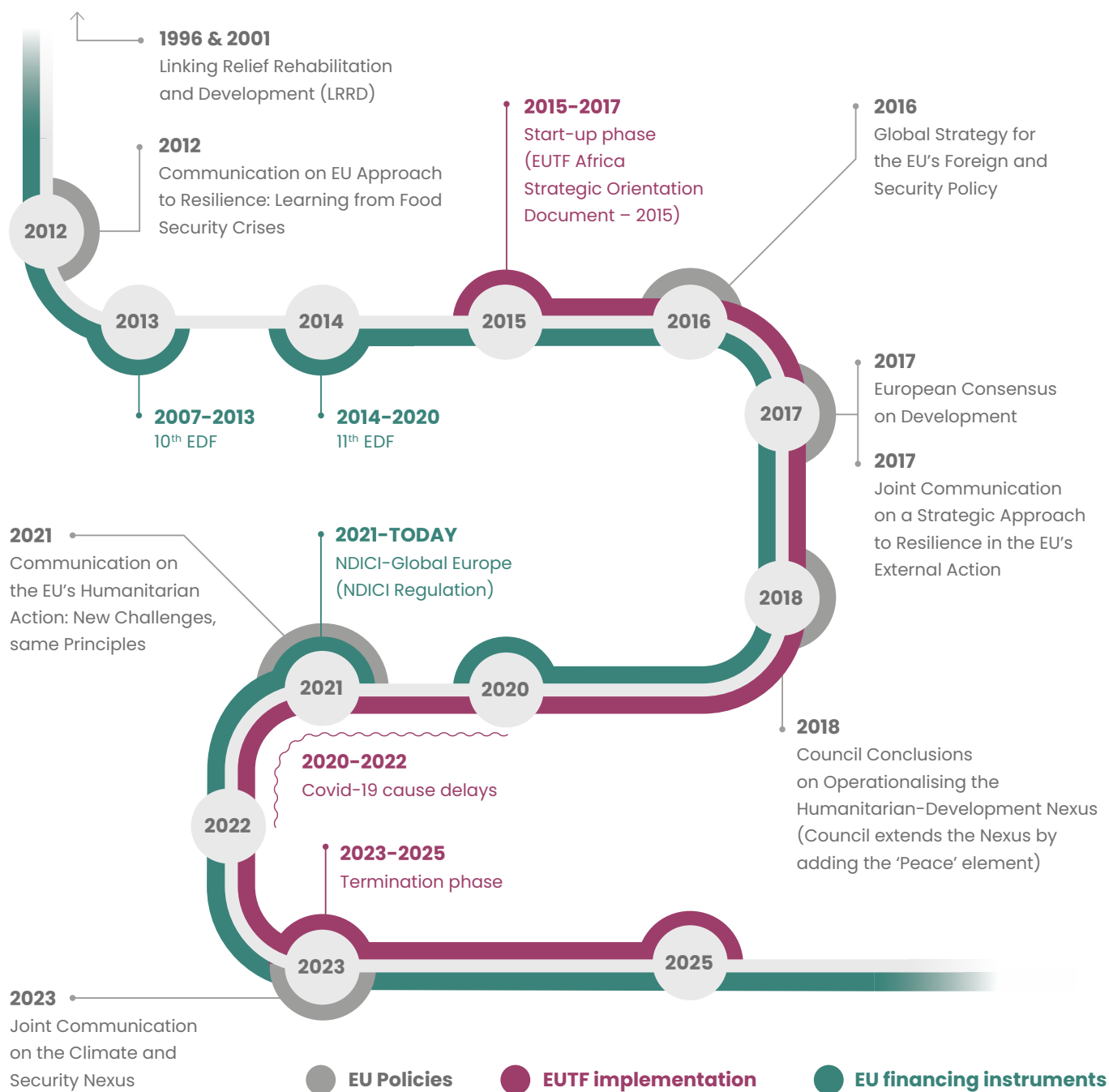
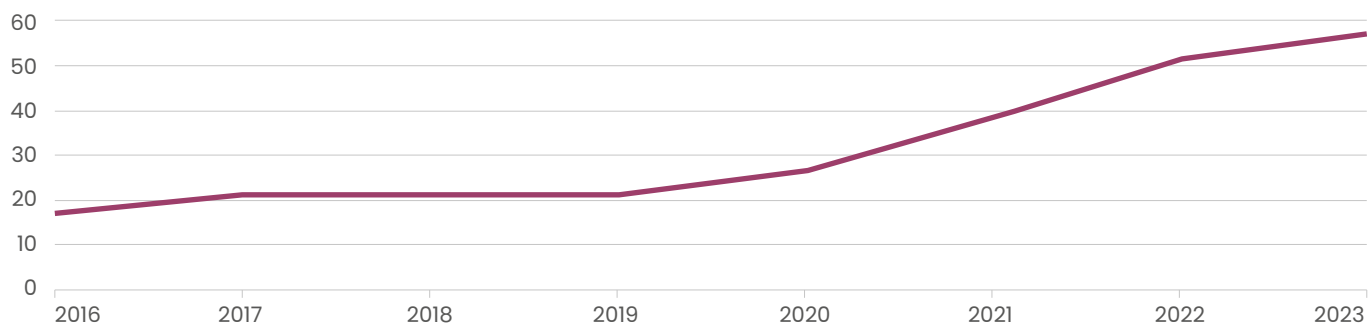


Figure 2. Number of people (millions) food insecure in the Horn of Africa Source: Global Reports on Food Crises (2024)



Overall assessment

The evaluation found that EUTF resilience-focused interventions were able to address the principal root causes of instability, including marginalization, economic exclusion, weak governance, food insecurity, conflict, and natural disasters. Besides the quality of project designs and the performance of implementing partners, project success was influenced by features of the specific country context as well as by the underlying instability of the region.

Interventions helped reduce vulnerability among selected host communities, refugees, and IDPs, in particular at household level and in surrounding communities. Stakeholders agree that, given the scale and depth of vulnerability in the region, as well as protracted crises, it would have been unrealistic for the EUTF support to have made a more substantial impact on reducing vulnerability in the region.

Primary beneficiaries were vulnerable households located in both rural and urban settings who were either members of host communities, IDPs or refugees. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of public authorities to address resilience recorded positive results in relatively stable contexts such as Kenya and Uganda, but were limited in Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

A particular achievement of the EUTF was its ability to bring together different EU services at headquarters and in the field to set priorities in relation to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance in a protracted crisis situation. While the EUTF also encountered several challenges, it provided flexibility and responsiveness to rapidly changing needs on the ground.



Figure 3. Countries reviewed in the Horn of Africa



Ethiopia



Kenya



Somalia



South Sudan



Sudan



Uganda

Key conclusions

- 1 The attention given to improving the food security of vulnerable communities was appropriate and was in most cases promoted through a multi-sector approach which took account of the multiplicity of factors shaping food security including access to incomes outside the agriculture sector.
- 2 The management of natural resources was a key consideration in the design and implementation of SO2 interventions and was often linked to food security, DRM and conflict management interventions.
- 3 DRM is generally regarded to be one of the cornerstones of resilience building and was considered a relevant area for SO2 funding in a region prone to natural shocks. However, DRM was not consistently addressed as a priority and as a result the contribution of SO2 interventions to DRM strengthening has been comparatively limited.
- 4 A key strength of SO2 interventions was their orientation across the humanitarian-development nexus to respond to humanitarian situations and/ or to development opportunities, depending on the context. The peace element of the HDP Nexus was mostly addressed implicitly through attention to social cohesion and by working in a conflict-sensitive/ 'do-no-harm' manner. Explicit conflict analyses were not often found.
- 5 The CRRF provided an important framework to orient SO2 interventions, helping to address social cohesion between host communities and IDPs/ refugees and thereby helping to promote the peace-element of the HDP nexus at community level. The CRRF also helped to promote a harmonised approach to resilience building via country policy, planning and coordination frameworks in Uganda and Kenya.
- 6 The choice of management modalities and delivery methods, including the choice of delivery channels, was determined by context including the track-record of implementing partners, where the role of EUDs in shaping designs and approaches proved critical. The selection of different modalities and methods allowed SO2 interventions to tailor the responses and to link up with other EU services, EU member state agencies and non-EU donors.
- 7 The EU's institutional set-up at HQ and country level facilitated the delivery of SO2 interventions that were generally responsive to needs, timely and flexible. However, better use could have been made of the EUTF knowledge management and learning system to inform country level decisions and to provide insight on impacts.
- 8 SO2 support was of added-value in difficult-to-reach, and remote areas characterised by weak state presence and/or governance, including border regions, because it allowed the EU to become one of the few international partners that was able to provide significant levels of funding over the medium-term in such contexts.
- 9 It has proven challenging to sustain the results of SO2 interventions across the region, however, where the right pre-conditions were in place, (some level of) sustainability was achieved both at public authority and community levels.
- 10 In addressing vulnerability and building resilience in the HoA, the EU identified the right priorities for funding via SO2 interventions and, in most cases, delivered the support in the right way. However, there was scope to better focus the support in order to prevent interventions being spread too widely and/or thinly.

Main recommendations

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Food security and NRM should remain key thematic entry points for strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities.
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Greater attention should be given to **strengthening the DRM capacities of vulnerable communities** and, depending on context and needs, linking such support to NRM and food security interventions.
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Make better use of the EU's comparative advantages in supporting resilience in remote and cross-border areas by better coordinating the management of such support between EUDs and HQ, implementing organisations, EUDs and partner governments.
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Continue **applying a multi-sector approach when addressing the different dimensions of vulnerability** while ensuring coherence in the scope and breadth of interventions.
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The HDP nexus should be further promoted, particularly in contexts of protracted crisis and long-term refugee/IDP management. Given the potential risks of social and political unrest, **more attention should be paid to the Peace element** of the Nexus.
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Depending on country contexts, **continue to promote the CRRF** as a relevant framework for achieving a better country-led international response to regional migration and to the integration of refugees/ IDPs into their host communities.
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Considering the **growing number of problems caused by natural disasters and violent conflicts** in the region, the EU should **strengthen its focus on diverse partnerships and forms of collaboration**, including the promotion of TEIs, because the EU is unable to address existing and future problems on its own.
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Carefully **assess implementation partners' capacity and their suitability** to be contracted for assignments in different contexts.
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Undertake more solid and regular analytical work as part of the design and implementation of resilience support together with implementing partners, but do not overload implementing partners with excessive requirements for diagnostic work.
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Continue to include flexible funding provisions across all interventions in support of vulnerable communities and provide implementing partners sufficient discretion to react timeously to emergencies and rapidly changing situations on the ground.
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Ensure that knowledge and data collected from the EUTF research and evidence facility (REF) and monitoring and learning system (MLS) is retained after the EUTF's termination to further improve the design of resilience interventions and use the knowledge and data acquired to further improve the MLS indicators for resilience-related support.
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Ensure the continued availability of experienced staff to design and accompany resilience-related interventions and retain proven practices of setting up task teams comprising staff from EUDs, geographic desks and thematic sections across DG INTPA and other concerned EU services.
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Wherever possible, **programme and project design should include explicit attention to promoting localisation** through the strengthening of public authorities at national and local levels, and by further engaging local NGOs, Community-Based Organisation (CBO)s and the private sector.
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With a view to the sustainability of resilience-strengthening interventions, ensure that project designs include an explicit exit strategy even for engagements which, upfront, appear to require a very long-term commitment of EU support.
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Use the available knowledge across EU institutions and from non-EU actors to thoroughly examine how best to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities through a more strategic engagement.

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