EUTF Thematic Evaluation on strengthening resilience of vulnerable and displacement affected communities in the Horn of Africa

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Acronyms/Abbreviations[1]

Acronym	Meaning
ACF	Action Against Hunger (*Action Contre Le Faim*)
AfDB	African Development Bank
BORESHA	Program focused on enhancing economic development and resilience among vulnerable populations in the Horn of Africa
CAAP	Community Action and Adaptation Plans
CEWARN	Conflict early warning and response mechanism
CIDP	County integrated development plan
CRISP	Community Resilience In Somaliland & Puntland
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDRM	Decentralisation of disaster risk management
DG DEVCO	Now known as DG International Partnerships (INTPA)
DG INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
DOP	Omo delta project
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRM	Disaster risk management
EAMR	External assistance management report
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EQ	Evaluation question
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUTF	European Union Trust Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FGD	Focus group discussion
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS	Federal Member States
FPI	Service for foreign policy instrument
GBV	Gender-based and domestic violence
GCR	Global compact on refugees
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*)
HARISS	Humanitarian Assistance, Resilience, and Integration Support Strategy
HDP	Humanitarian development peace
HoA	Horn of Africa
HQ	Headquarters
IDDRSI	Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILED	Inclusive local and economic development
ILO	International Labour Organisation

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[1] Abbreviations will be updated in Final Report version

Acronym	Meaning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
INTEG	Integration program INTPA
IP	Implementing partners
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JC	Judgement criteria
KISEDP	Kalobeyei integrated socio-economic development program
LET	Local economic transformation
MDT	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MEL	Monitoring evaluation and learning
MID	Ministry of Interior
MILG	Ministry for the Interior and Local Governments
MIP	Military Intelligence Program
MIS	Ministry of Internal Security
MLS	Monitoring and learning system
MOPIED	Prime Minister's Office, the Federal Ministry of Planning, Investment, and International Cooperation
MOPIR	Ministry of Planning and International Relations
MOPND	Ministry of Planning and National Development
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MS	Member state
NDICI	Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument
NIEC	National Independent Electoral Commission
NIP	National intelligence program
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODP	Operational data platform
PFM	Public financial management
PM	Project Manager
RBA	Rights-based approach
RDPP	Regional Development and Protection Programme
RE-INTEG	Enhancing Somalia's responsiveness to the management and reintegration of mixed migration flows programme
REAL	Resilient Economy and Livelihoods
RED	Reaching Every Dream
REF	Research Evidence Facility
RESET	Resilience Building and Creation of Economic Opportunities in Ethiopia
RESTORE	Large-scale, farmer-led land restoration initiative aimed at restoring degraded landscapes and improving livelihoods
RISE	Regional Investment Support for Enterprises
RG	Reference Group
ROM	Results-oriented monitoring
RPLRP	Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project
SAGAL	Social Transfers to Vulnerable Somali People
SCF	Save the Children

Acronym	Meaning
SD	Sustainable development
SEEK	The Selam Ekisil project
SMS	Special Measures for Sudan
SO	Strategic objective
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SOMREP	Somalia Resilience Program
STARS	Sustainable Transformation and Resilience Support
SUPREME	Strengthening, Protection and Economic Empowerment
TL	Team leader
TOR	Terms of reference
TPM	Third-party monitoring
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSF-G	Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Germany
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WATSAN	Water and sanitation
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHH	Welthungerhilfe

1 Executive summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations of the European Union Trust Fund (EUTF) 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 overall independent assessment of the results achieved and lessons learnt in the HoA in relation to the second strategic objective of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (2015-2025). The second strategic objective (SO2) aimed to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable sections of society, including refugees and displaced persons.

The evaluation focused on the HoA countries which received most support from the EUTF, namely Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. It also examined cross-border interventions. Temporally, the evaluation looked at interventions from the start of the EUTF in 2016 up until 2024. During this period, approximately EUR 756 million in contracted funding was allocated to resilience interventions in the HoA region.

Throughout the EUTF implementation period, the HoA region experienced major challenges including civil wars, political instability, natural disasters, the effects of Covid-19 and persistent poverty. These challenges underscored the pertinence of the EUTF's resilience support, although it also presented challenges to a smooth implementation. 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 (DRM) and social cohesion among Internally Displaced People (IDPs), refugees and host communities. It also identified 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 was carried out in 2024 and included missions to Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. Support to Sudan and to cross-border regions was investigated remotely. A mixed methods approach for data collection and analysis was deployed embracing nearly 250 semi-structured interviews, 39 focus group discussions (during which 315 people participated), documentation review, a targeted e-survey, quantitative (financial) reviews of project portfolios and direct observation through project visits (to the extent feasible, given security and logistical constraints).

Policy relevance of the evaluation

The evaluation is timely for several reasons:

- At European Union (EU) policy level, there is an ongoing debate on how best to support complex environments and protracted crisis contexts, particularly in the HoA, where the number of vulnerable and displaced communities continues to grow.
- With the conclusion of the EUTF and the introduction of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation instrument–Global Europe (NDICI-GE) it is crucial for policy makers and practitioners to assess to what extent the new instruments and mechanisms are suited to providing support to vulnerable communities and to counter factors which promote displacement and migration.
- At the institutional level, the new European Commission leadership, approved by the European Parliament in November 2024, will require information and guidance on how to further engage in such complex and protracted crisis contexts.
- Finally, the policy relevance of this evaluation was confirmed via the Council Conclusion on Stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition on 16 December 2024, a topic that is at the heart of this evaluation.

The rationale for the EUTF interventions in the HoA was the region's persistent fragility and a state of protracted crises which has lasted for several decades. There is a persistence of poverty and

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vulnerability underpinned by scarce resources, social grievance, absence of the rule of law, unaccountable governance, violent conflicts and disputes around natural resources. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was felt strongly in the region where gains in poverty reduction reversed.

The HoA remains one of the most food-insecure regions in the world. It has faced a series of devastating natural disasters over the last decade, driven by climate change and environmental degradation. Prolonged droughts, including the worst in forty years, have led to severe water shortages, crop failures, and livestock deaths. Concurrently, intense flooding destroyed assets and infrastructures, exacerbating vulnerability in the region. These events have continuously threatened the livelihoods of millions of rural households triggering increased levels of internal displacement and relocations across borders. As a result, the number of people suffering from acute food insecurity has steadily increased and has risen sharply since 2019. By 2023, *Ethiopia*, *Somalia*, *Sudan*, and *South Sudan* ranked among Africa's ten most food insecure countries, according to the Global Report on Food Crises.

Overall assessment

The evaluation found that EUTF resilience-focused interventions were able to address the principal root causes of instability, including marginalisation, 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 and the underlying instability in the region.

Interventions helped reduce vulnerability among selected host communities, refugees, and IDPs, in particular at household level and in surrounding communities. However, 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 throughout 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 (HDP nexus) in a protracted crisis situation. While the EUTF also encountered several challenges, it provided flexibility and responsiveness to rapidly changing needs on the ground, including in cross-border contexts.

Conclusions

Main conclusions	Justification
C1 – Appropriate attention to food security	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.
C2 – Natural resource management as a key consideration	The management of natural resources was a key consideration in the design and implementation of resilience-related interventions and was often linked to food security, DRM and conflict management interventions.
C3 – Disaster Risk Management not consistently addressed	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 resilience-related interventions to DRM strengthening has been comparatively limited.
C4 – Interventions strongly oriented towards the humanitarian-development nexus	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 Humanitarian-Development-Peace (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 conducted.
C5 – The CRRF is relevant to orient resilience interventions	The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) provided an important framework to orient resilience-related interventions, helping to address social cohesion between host communities and IDPs/refugees and thereby 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.
C6 – Choice of delivery and management modalities was highly determined by context	The choice of management modalities (direct, shared, indirect) and delivery methods (projects/ programmes/ budget support), including the choice of delivery channels (multilateral organisations, NGOs, EU member state agencies), 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.
C7 – Institutional set-up of EUTF was relevant	The EU's institutional set-up at Headquarter (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 (MLS) to inform country level decisions and to provide insight on impacts. Impeding factors to the optimal use of the MLS included its late development, as well as limited time during the early years of the EUTF to formulate outcome indicators and to conduct baseline studies.
C8 – Relevance of EUTF for remote areas confirmed	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.

C9 – Sustainability was only marginally achieved	It has proven challenging to sustain the results of resilience-related 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.
C10 – EUTF was of added value but there is scope for better targeting	In addressing vulnerability and building resilience in the HoA, the EU identified the right priorities for funding via resilience-related 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 too thinly.

Recommendations

A. Strengthening resilience via thematic and geographic entry points

1. Food security and Natural Resource Management should remain key thematic entry points for strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities

- It is challenging for households to meet their food security needs because of persistent high levels of poverty, and exposure to repeated natural and human-made shocks that contribute to a high incidence of forced displacement.
- Evidence points to the importance of creating income generating opportunities both within and outside the agriculture sector as an alternative pathway for vulnerable households to meet their food security needs.
- The management of natural resources, water in particular, is key to a better and more sustainable food production.

2. Greater attention should be given to strengthening Disaster Risk Management capacities of vulnerable communities and, depending on context and needs, linking such support to Natural Resource Management and food security interventions

- The attention required for disaster risk management will vary by context, but in principle, should be an integral part of community-level interventions that support food security and natural resource management.
- Engaging with and supporting public authorities with mandated responsibilities for disaster management needs is essential as they provide the frameworks and technical resources that support community level actions.

3. Make better use of the EU's comparative advantage in supporting resilience in remote and cross-border areas by better coordinating the management of such support between EUDs and HQ, implementing organisations, and partner governments

- Given that these areas often host refugees and internally displaced populations – and face heightened risks of instability and tensions with host communities - the EU is encouraged to reinforce its engagement in such regions. To achieve this, the EU should explore ways to strengthen management and coordination mechanisms that facilitate engagement among different EU Delegations present in the region, the different implementing partners involved and enhance the participation of public authorities.

B. Effective approaches underpinning support to resilience

4. Continue applying a multi-sector approach when addressing different dimensions of vulnerability while ensuring coherence in the scope and breadth of interventions

- The causes of vulnerability are multi-dimensional and intertwined which requires in most cases a multi-sectoral approach. This not only calls for a well-balanced approach to address relevant policy, institutional and capacity issues at the national and sub-national levels but also working directly with vulnerable communities.
- However, overly complex multi-sectoral engagements, that demand a high level of coordinated action across multiple actors and stakeholders can lead to dysfunctions and loss of effectiveness.

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5. ***The HDP nexus should be further promoted, particularly in contexts of protracted crisis and long-term refugee/IDP management. Given the risks of social and political unrest, more attention should be paid to the Peace element of the Nexus***
   - The HDP nexus approach has demonstrated its usefulness in linking interventions at the interface of a humanitarian situation and the need to provide longer-term resilience and development assistance.
   - It has also demonstrated its applicability in vastly different settings and at very different moments in time, ranging from the management of refugees and host communities in Kenya and Uganda to protracted crises in parts of Ethiopia or Somalia.
   - EUDs should ensure that implementing partners pay more explicit attention to addressing social cohesion and conflict reduction at the local level, including the conduct of baseline and periodic conflict analyses.

6. ***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***
   - While the opportunities to promote the CRRF depends on country context, including political dynamics, public finances and the capacity of public institutions, it should be promoted, even in contexts where the pre-conditions do not appear to be in place.
   - Supporting the CRRF can help open pathways towards country-owned policies, frameworks and interventions as well as achieve results at the community level in terms of social cohesion and integration. EU interventions should therefore align with, and support the CRRF, or similar partner country initiatives (e.g. country pledges at the Global Refugee Forum), or in their absence should be ready to promote their formulation and implementation.

7. ***Considering the growing number of problems caused by natural disasters and violent conflicts in the region, the EU should further explore different kinds of partnerships and forms of collaboration, including the promotion of TEIs, because the EU is unable to address existing and future problems on its own***
   - Partnerships between the EU and various international funding institutions and implementing partners – multilateral organisations and NGOs – were indispensable for addressing the needs of vulnerable communities across the region.
   - While the EUTF facilitated successful collaboration with various partners, more should be done to encourage partnerships, with a particular focus on promoting Team Europe Initiatives.
   - This might require adopting common conceptual approaches, addressing timing and alignment issues, identifying the most appropriate division of labour among partners, engaging in joint operations and/or the setting up of pooled funding mechanisms.

8. ***Carefully assess implementation partners' capacity and their suitability to be contracted for assignments in different contexts***
   - For the implementation of support at the community level in protracted crises contexts, local and international NGOs were generally better suited compared to agencies from multilateral organisations or EU member states agencies, with management systems that are comparatively lighter and more agile.
   - Public entities, such as UN organisations and EU member states agencies however, may have a comparative advantage over NGOs in engaging public authorities at national and local levels. Accessing policy makers and dealing with more strategic issues, are generally better dealt with by such entities.
   - These perspectives, such as cost-effectiveness or good knowledge of the context, should be taken into account, in the assessment of suitable implementing partners, but should not be read as something cast in stone.

C. Institutional set-up and operational provisions for resilience-related support

9. Undertake more solid and regular analytical work as part of the design and implementation of resilience support, but do not overload implementing partners with excessive requirements for diagnostic work

- A careful balance should be struck between insisting on diagnostic work when preparing an intervention and leaving space for implementing partners to shape designs and structure interventions according to their own insights and locally acquired knowledge and experiences.
- Implementing partners should however be required to conduct periodic assessments/reviews and/or organise reflection moments as a way to pinpoint challenges impacting on progress as well as contributing to overall learning and accountability.

10. 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

- The EUTF generally provided the needed agility via flexible funding arrangements (contingency funding options or crises modifier provision) to make needed changes to project designs, including shifting from a more developmental focus to a more humanitarian focus. Such flexibility needs to be retained in future resilience interventions.
- In line with good practices of various international development partners, discretionary decision-making powers should be assigned to implementing partners to use such contingency funding but should be guided by clear criteria on how such authority can be used.

11. 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 indicators for resilience-related support

- Ensure the wealth of knowledge and data accumulated by the EUTF's MLS and REF remains accessible to inform the design of future resilience support, and to this end determine where the current MLS and REF should be institutionally stored once the EUTF ends.
- Continue to fund research initiatives as well as learning events that deepen insights on how to support resilience efforts and further strengthen the scope and robustness of the indicator framework for capturing resilience results including enhancing the collection of baselines and outcome data.

12. 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

- In view of the growing need to address resilience in protracted crises countries across the globe, ensure that knowledgeable and motivated EU staff - both at HQ and EUD level - is retained after the termination of the EUTF to support the design, implementation and monitoring of future SO2-type interventions.
- The EUTF built up a modus operandi that featured drawing staff from across different HQ geographic and thematic units, from EUDs and from other EU services (FPI, ECHO) to work as a de facto task team in support of designing and accompanying resilience interventions. Ensure that this way of working is not lost and will continue as a good practice for addressing future resilience interventions.

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D. Sustainability of resilience interventions

13. *Wherever possible, programme and project designs 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 Organisations (CBOs) and the private sector*

- The sustainability of resilience-related support to vulnerable communities, can only be realised if national institutional structures, including public authorities at the national and sub-national levels, local NGOs and CBOs, associations and private sector organisations participate fully in interventions funded by the Commission.
- Programme and project designs should make explicit how interventions will engage with, mobilise and strengthen public authorities and relevant national NGOs, CBOs and other community-based structures. Those designs should also look beyond public sector interventions and try to involve local private actors. A thorough capacity diagnostic exercise can be useful to pinpoint potential entry points for support and areas for priority attention.

14. *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*

- Resilience interventions should include an exit strategy developed as part of the initial design that considers options for eventual withdrawal and handover to public authorities, local NGOs/CBOs or other international organisations. Such an exit strategy should set out the preconditions for exit and the processes through which an exit could take place. It should also be reviewed and updated during the course of implementation.
- While certain engagements will require a long-term support commitment from the EU, thinking about an exit is recommended because it can help identify upfront the actors whose capacity would need to be strengthened, as well as gaps in legal frameworks, strategies or operational processes that would need to be enhanced to ensure sustainability.

E. Strategic targeting of the support

15. *Use the available knowledge from 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*

- With the ending of the EUTF, and with considerable knowledge and experience gained and many lessons learned, the EU should reflect how such support can be integrated into a wider EU strategic engagement in the HoA region.
- Strategic entry points for interventions could be specific corridors in line with the Global Gateway perspective; specific population groups which are at risk of being undermined by radical groups, or vulnerable communities for which the drivers of forced displacement are most acute, potentially leading to a broader destabilisation in the region.
- A strategic analysis of possible engagements should identify the strengths and comparative advantages of the EU to act, but also the limitations the EU is facing in view of shrinking humanitarian budgets and less partners the EU can work with.
- The EU and EU member states should use their comparative advantages to explore options for enhanced collaboration and joint action on resilience-related engagements through Team Europe Initiatives.

2   Introduction

This Final Report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the document review, statistical analysis, field missions, EU headquarter (HQ) interviews and e-survey for the **EUTF Thematic Evaluation on Strengthening Resilience of Vulnerable and Displacement Affected Communities in the Horn of Africa (HoA)**. The evaluation was commissioned by the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and coordinated by DG INTPA's Unit A4 (Eastern and Central Africa). Following the finalisation of the Inception Report, the Desk Report, the Field Notes and the presentations to the Reference Group (RG), this Final Report is the main deliverable of the evaluation. A final deliverable will be the dissemination of the report to stakeholders in Brussels.

2.1   Objectives, purpose, focus and scope of the evaluation

The overall objectives of the evaluation according to the Terms of Reference (ToR) are to provide the relevant EU services, interested stakeholders and the wider public with:

- an overall independent assessment of the performance of the 2nd strategic objective of the EUTF on resilience, paying particular attention to its different levels of results measured against its expected objectives; and the reasons underpinning such results.
- key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future interventions, EU policies and strategies.

The ToR further specified the objectives as follows:

- Analyse the contribution of EUTF interventions to addressing specific drivers of fragility, potentially leading to (irregular) migration and forced displacement,
- Analyse the contribution of the EUTF to strengthening local capacities for resilience – including absorption, adaptation and transformation capacities in response to disasters, shocks and other pressures,
- Identify enablers for and barriers to the performance in achieving expected outputs and outcomes of these interventions, and
- Identify the lessons learned and best practices to be further incorporated in the EU policy, strategic and operational responses for fostering resilience.

The **thematic scope** of the evaluation is the EU's resilience support provided via the EUTF in the HoA. The evaluation investigates how the EU, through EUTF funding, tackled the drivers of fragility and instability, by funding interventions aimed at improving the food security of vulnerable communities, strengthening the capacity of (local) public authorities, increasing access to basic services, e.g. health and education, for local populations as well as providing immediate relief to refugees and displaced persons (among others via social protection support) as well as countering of tensions between host communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Thematically, the evaluation pays attention to natural resources management, income generation opportunities, environmental sustainability, agricultural production and a number of cross-cutting issues, such as gender and support to the most vulnerable.

In terms of **geographic scope**, the evaluation focuses on the countries in the HoA window which have received most support, i.e. *Sudan*, *South Sudan*, *Ethiopia*, *Somalia*, *Uganda* and *Kenya*. The evaluation also covers *cross-border* interventions[2]. Given the scale of the EUTF's support to resilience in *Ethiopia*, *Somalia*, *Sudan* and South-*Sudan* the evaluation investigated a larger number of decisions and contracts compared to *Uganda* and *Kenya*. In **temporal terms**, the evaluation looked at interventions which started since the beginning of the EUTF support to the HoA, i.e. as of 2016. These included closed as well as ongoing interventions.

In terms of **policy relevance**, the evaluation is timely as questions exist at EU policy level on how best to support fragile and protracted crisis contexts and, more specifically, vulnerable and displaced

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[2]   Regional programmes are managed by different EUDs in the region and cover interventions in the seven HoA countries for this evaluation (Ethiopia, *Somalia*, *Sudan*, *South Sudan*, *Kenya* and *Uganda*). Regional interventions were extended to additional countries namely Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and DRC.

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communities in the HoA in view of a growing number of people in need. The termination of the EUTF for Africa, the introduction of the NDICI-Global Europe guided by the "geographisation principle" (mainstreaming EU priorities through geographic instruments, reduced use of thematic budget envelopes) has also raised questions among policy makers and practitioners on how far the new instruments and mechanisms are suited to providing support to vulnerable communities and to counter factors which promote displacement and migration. The recently published EUTF European Court of Auditors (ECA)[3] report commented critically on a number of issues concerning the implementation of the EUTF in all three regions of the EUTF for Africa (North Africa, Sahel and Lake Chad, HoA). The ECA is an important reference for future policy discussions on the topic which this evaluation, together with several other knowledge products currently produced by INTPA/A4, will contribute to. Moreover, the new European Commission leadership was approved by the European Parliament in November 2024 and will require information and guidance on how to further engage in such fragile and protracted crisis contexts. Finally, the policy relevance of this evaluation was confirmed by the Council Conclusion on Stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition on 16 December 2024, a topic that is at the heart of this evaluation as well.

The **structure of the report** is as follows: following this introductory section about the objectives and scope of the evaluation, **Chapter 1** presents the profile of the EUTF, the outputs realised via EUTF HoA resilience interventions and closes with a presentation on how this assignment has approached the evaluation of the resilience support. The methodology is described in **Chapter 2** which explains the evaluation question (EQ) coverage, includes the evaluation matrix and describes the evaluation process. In **Chapter 3**, the findings in relation to the evaluation matrix are presented, including an answer for each of the five EQs. **Chapter 4** presents the overall assessment, the conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

In Volume II, various **Annexes** are listed: the methodology is more extensively explained in the first Annex, followed by the evaluation matrix (Annex 2), the delivery channels (Annex 3), a list of documents consulted (Annex 4), a list of people interviewed (Annex 5), an overview of the projects reviewed per country (Annex 6), the EUTF HoA portfolio's output per SO2[4] indicator (Annex 7), a summary of the online survey (Annex 8), reflections on the extent this SO2 has contributed to the reduction of illegal migration and forced displacement (Annex 9), observations in relation to the EU's resilience concept (Annex 10), key points from a ROM consolidated analysis of EUTF interventions (Annex 11) and HDP nexus examples (Annex 12). The ToR (Annex 13) can be found in a separate document.

2.2   Profile of the EUTF and the EUTF HoA window

The EUTF for Africa - launched at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015 - aimed "to support all aspects of stability and contribute to better migration management as well as addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration, in particular by promoting resilience, economic and equal opportunities, security and development, and addressing human rights abuses". The EUTF was established as a special fund to complement the EU external financing instruments which existed to implement the EU budget 2014-2020. It was set up to respond rapidly and flexibly to migration and refugee situations as well as related matters.

Resources allocated to the EUTF for Africa have amounted to EUR 5.0 billion and covered the three regions mentioned, Sahel and Lake Chad, HoA and North of Africa. To address the overall objective of the Fund, the **EUTF established four strategic objectives (SO)**[5]: SO1 - Greater economic and employment opportunities; SO2 - Strengthening resilience of communities and the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and displaced people; SO3 - Improved migration management in countries of origin, transit and destination; SO4 - Improved governance and conflict prevention and reduction of forced displacement and irregular migration. This evaluation focuses on the support provided to strengthening the resilience of communities, with a focus on the most vulnerable, including refugees

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[3]   https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=SR-2024-17.
[4]   SO2 refers to the EUTF's objective to strengthen the resilience of communities and the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and displaced people, as explained in the next section.
[5]   All strategic objectives were covered under the Sahel and Lake Chad window and under the HoA window. Under the North Africa window, only the strategic objective dealing with improved migration management was covered.

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and IDPs (SO2).

The **rationale** for the EUTF's investment in the HoA was its persistent fragility and a state of protracted crises which has lasted for several decades. The challenges identified in the strategic orientation document of the EUTF in 2015 remain relevant today: notably persistent poverty and vulnerability underpinned by scarce resources (water, land and pasture) and exacerbated by the effects of climate change, as manifested through the 2020-2022 drought, social grievances, absence of the rule of law, corruption, unaccountable governance, insecurity; border conflicts, disputes over natural resources; and weak regional cooperation. Most dramatic in the region is the increasing food insecurity which is described in more detail in Box 1 below.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was felt strongly in the region where the pandemic reversed gains in poverty reduction. An estimated 12.3 million people (equal to 3.4 percent), out of a total population of some 360 million people fell into extreme poverty in Eastern Africa[6] in 2020 alone due to job losses and reduced household incomes according to the African Development Bank.[7] Civil strife including war in *Ethiopia* and *Sudan* (as well as on-going insecurity and conflict in *Somalia* and *South Sudan* and, further afield in DRC) has worsened the situation triggering increased levels of displacement and irregular migration. As indicated in the ToR, by the end of 2021, East Africa, the HoA and the Great Lakes region hosted 4.9 million refugees and asylum seekers, as well as 12 million IDPs. *Kenya* and *Uganda* in particular are playing a key role in hosting these populations, placing additional pressures on their social services and governance structures. Overall, up to 25 million people are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance.

Box 1: Overview of food insecurity in the HoA region

The HoA is one of the most food-insecure regions in the world due to natural disasters, violent conflicts, and governance issues[8]. The region has indeed faced a series of devastating natural disasters over the last decade, driven by climate change and environmental degradation. Prolonged droughts, including the worst in forty years, have led to severe water shortages, crop failures, and livestock deaths. Concurrently, intense flooding destroyed assets and infrastructures, exacerbating vulnerability in the region. These events have continuously threatened the livelihoods of millions of rural households[9], heavily impacting the lives of women[10] and youth[11]. As a result, the number of people suffering from acute food insecurity has steadily increased and skyrocketed since 2019 (Figure 1), contributing to mass displacement and protracted conflicts across the region. In 2023, *Ethiopia*, *Somalia*, *Sudan*, and *South Sudan* were among Africa's ten most food insecure countries according to the Global Report on Food Crises (2023).

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[6]   This covers the countries Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.
[7]   African Development Bank, East Africa Economic Outlook 2021.
[8]   ISS, Development prospects for the Horn of Africa countries to 2040 - ISS African Futures, 2024.
[9]   OCHA Policy Brief on Gendered Drivers, Risks and Impacts of Food Insecurity in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, 2023.
[10] See A gendered impact of the hunger and drought crisis in the Horn of Africa. Plan International, 2022.
[11] Horn of Africa floods and drought, 2020-2023 - Forensic analysis | UNDRR. OCHA. 2024.

Figure 1: Number of people food insecure in the HoA/ millions (IPC 3+)[12]
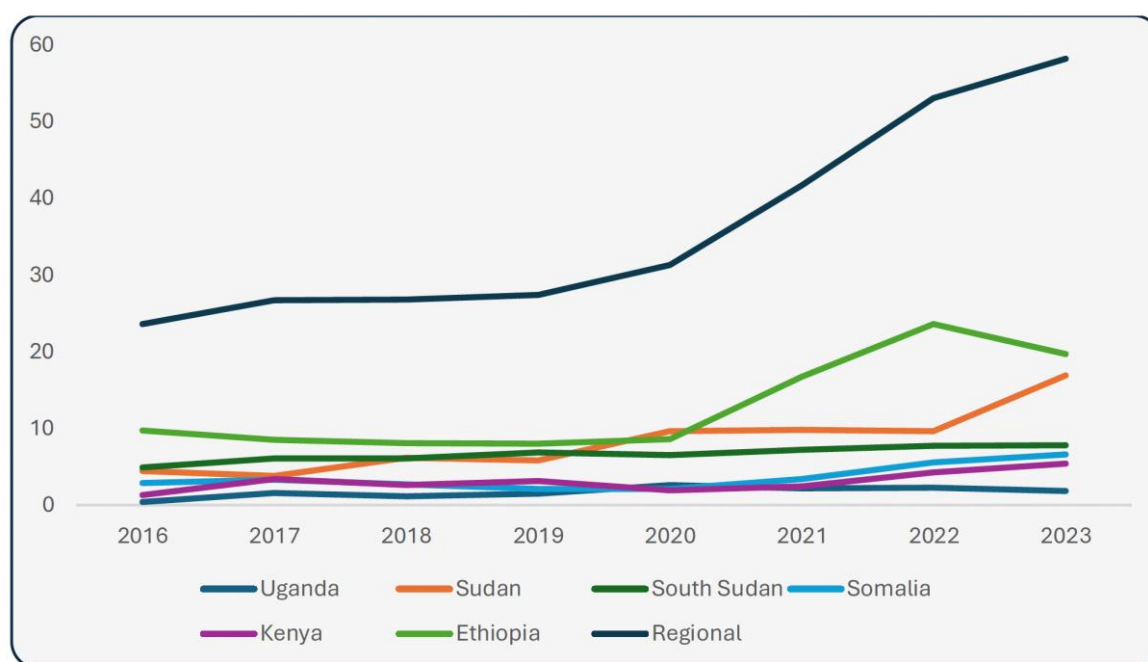
Source: Global Reports on Food Crises

The **EUTF HoA window** was set up as a dedicated regional response to counter these problems with programme funding coming on stream in 2016. In terms of its geographic scope, the window funded resilience programmes in Djibouti, *Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, *Somalia*, *South Sudan*, *Sudan* and *Uganda*. Some projects were also implemented through regional and *cross-border* interventions through which additional countries have benefitted. These comprise Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania.

In terms of spending, approx. EUR 1.78 billion were contracted for programmes falling under all four strategic objectives in the HoA according to the EUTF Annual Report for 2024. The need to fund resilience-related support was prioritised for the HoA compared to the other two regions. According to the EUTF's Monitoring and Learning System (MLS), an estimated EUR 756 million (42.5%) of the EUR 1.78 billion noted above was allocated to resilience efforts. By January 2025, the SO2 contracting for Sudan amounted to EUR 271 million (36%), for South Sudan EUR 158 million (21%), for Somalia EUR 124 million (17%), for Ethiopia EUR 94 million (12,4%), for Kenya EUR 33 million (4,4%), for Uganda EUR 27 million (3,6%) and for Djibouti 8 million (1,1%). Support for *cross-border* interventions was EUR 40 million.

In terms of the **SO2's thematic orientation**, the EUTF HoA identified six principal drivers of fragility and instability which were 'food insecurity', 'exposure to natural disasters', 'weak governance', 'social and political conflicts', 'lack of access to basic services' and 'lack of economic opportunities.' They are presented and discussed in terms of their relevance of this evaluation in more detail in section 1.4 below.

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[12] IPC stands for Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. The tool refers to the level of food insecurity which categorises it into five distinct phases: (1) Minimal/None, (2) Stressed, (3) Crisis, (4) Emergency, (5) Catastrophe/Famine https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/ipc-overview-and-classification-system/ipc-acute-food-insecurity-classification/en/.

The thematic areas addressed by the SO2 funding are varied and cover a wide spectrum, comprising support to social sectors, food security, disaster risk response, infrastructure, governance, peace and socio-economic development. In Graph 1, the spending across twelve main thematic areas is displayed. Close to 30% was spent under the heading 'socio-economic support' which comprised, for example, livelihood and agricultural support, TVET activities, natural resource management, drought response, livestock support, infrastructure development, but also governance support and social cohesion enhancement. Several of the SO2 interventions implement an integrated approach, meaning that they fall under several categories and therefore cover more than one thematic priority.

Graph 1: Spending on different thematic areas (in percent)
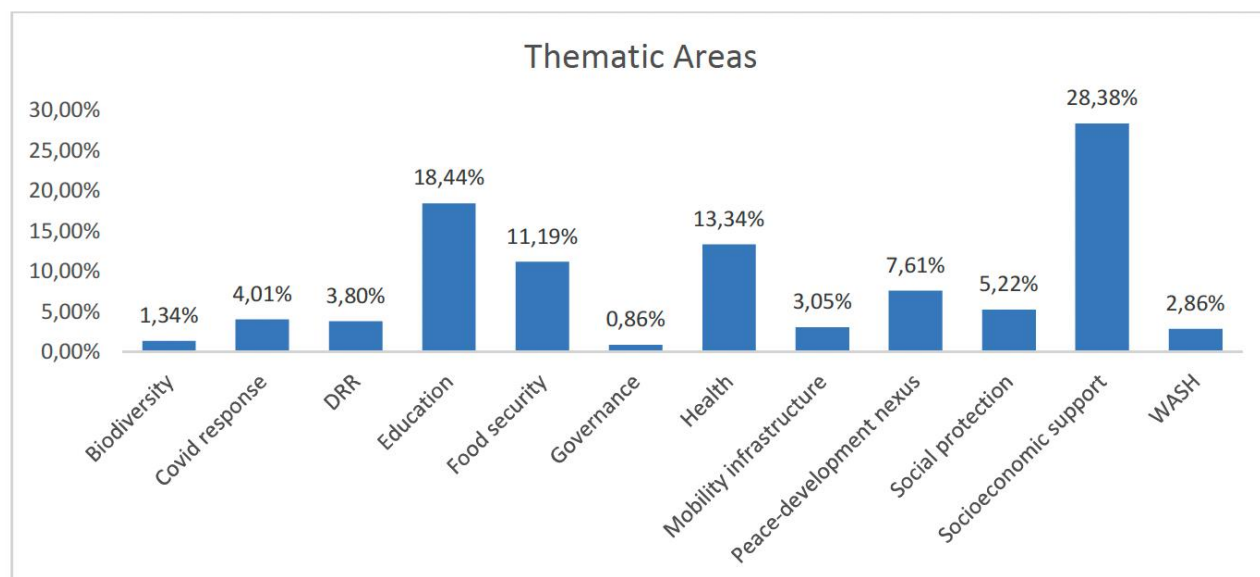
Source: INTPA/A4 MLS (2023)

Different **delivery channels** were used to implement the SO2 interventions in the HoA. In terms of contracting and spending, as displayed in Graph 2 below for the entire HoA region (see also Annex 3 for all countries), the most important channel was the UN agencies which received nearly EUR 390 million EUTF funding. The second biggest group comprises international NGOs, which received EUR 268 million, followed by EU member state agencies with some EUR 90 million. Smaller delivery channels were consultancy firms mobilised from the international market, EUR 36 million, followed by international financial institutions and national public authorities, each implementing some EUR 12,5 million. The smallest delivery channels were IGAD (the Regional Economic Community for the HoA) and local NGOs with IGAD implementing activities worth EUR 1,2 million via *cross-border* interventions, and local NGOs processing EUR 0,1 million in *Somalia*, only[13]. Worth noting is that *Ethiopia* was the only country where substantial SO2 support was provided also via national public authorities. *Somalia* and *Sudan*, and to a limited extent *Kenya*, were the countries where the EU cooperated with international financial institutions to channel SO2 support. In *Uganda*, almost all SO2 support was implemented via international NGOs, while in *Kenya*, the majority of the funding was implemented via UN agencies.

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[13] According to the MLS dashboard, the sum of Euro 4.6 million was awarded to a fully Ugandan NGO consortium, however, this figure is not captured in the aggregated data on delivery channels. In addition, a number of Ugandan NGOs participated in consortia lead by international NGOs and therefore were recipients of funding.

Graph 2: Delivery of SO2 support according to implementing actors[14]

Amount of funding to implementing actors (only SO2 support)
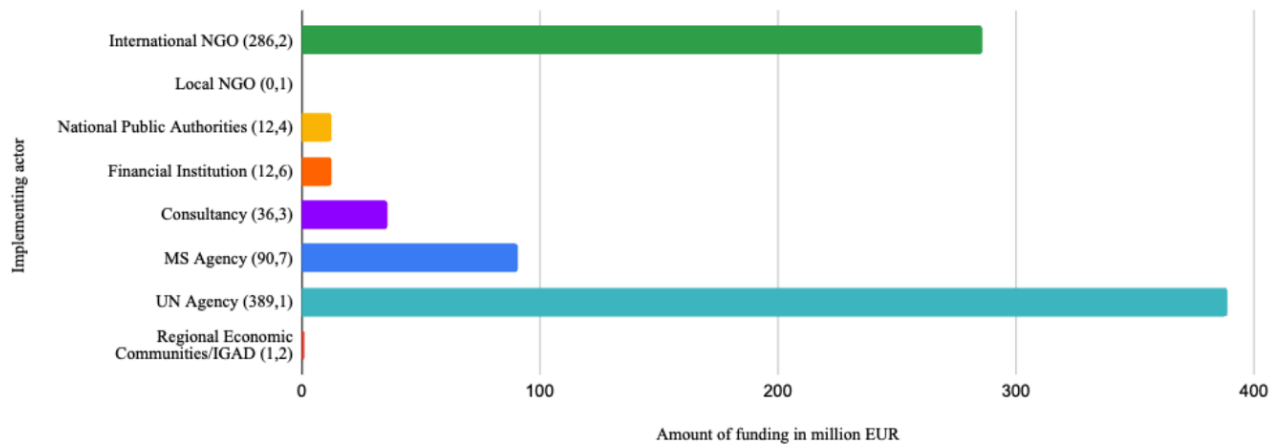
Source: INTPA/A4 MLS (2023)

2.3 The EUTF HoA SO2 portfolio's output

The EU collected a wealth of **output data** from the funding of SO2 related interventions in the HoA. The cumulative outputs up to December 2023 are summarised in Figure 2 below and display the results along the ten SO2 indicators selected by the EU. The details of these statistics are listed in Annex 7, where a breakdown of the underpinning statistical data can be consulted per indicator and per country. This compilation of output data has a number of limitations. The figures show that an impressive number of outputs were realised, but the compilation says little about their outcomes in terms of their effects on reducing vulnerability/ increasing resilience. To compensate for these limitations and to enhance the understanding of the effects the SO2 funding had for vulnerable communities, complementary lesson learned studies and outcome analyses were undertaken by the EU as of 2020. Findings and insights from this outcome-focused work are included in the findings section of this evaluation.

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[14] The data in this Graph are based on committed / contracted amounts for projects which have SO2-related activities as the major component in their contract. There are also a range of projects which are mainly SO1, SO3 or SO4 oriented, but which have also implemented some SO2-related activities according to the contract. Those projects are not included in the Graph.

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Figure 2: Outputs Strategic Objective 2, HoA [15] [16] [17]

Strategic Objective 2
Strengthening resilience of communities

218 projects in the report

157 with SO2 outputs

102 SO2 priority

€754M combined SO2 budget
44% of the total EUTF HoA budget

Private sector 6%
Partner governments 8%
International organisations 11%
Member state agencies 16%
UN 33%
NGOs 26%

67 implementing partners with SO2 funding

Implementation areas of SO2 priority projects

Number of projects
1
2 - 4
5 - 7
8 - 11
> 11

Overview of EUTF results for SO2

155 (9% in 2023) local development plans directly supported (2.1)

8,338 (6% in 2023) social infrastructures built or rehabilitated (2.1 bis)

9,260,871 (7% in 2023) basic social services delivered (2.2)

2,938,311 (17% in 2023) people receiving **nutrition assistance** (2.3)

5,655,190 (14% in 2023) people receiving **food security-related assistance** (2.4)

479 (13% in 2023) local governments and/or communities that adopt **local disaster risk reduction strategies** (2.5)

136,206 (3% in 2023) hectares of **agricultural and pastoral ecosystems** with sustainable management practices (2.6)

15,535,657 (4% in 2023) people reached by **campaigns on resilience-building practices** (2.7)

148,547 (13% in 2023) staff trained to **strengthen service delivery** (2.8)

15,771,231 (6% in 2023) people having **improved access to basic services** (2.9)

Source: EUTF Monitoring and Learning System Horn of Africa 2023 Annual Report
(covering until 31 December 2023), Altai Consulting for the European Union

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[15] EUTF funding data is valid as of February 2024, refers only to contracted (not committed) and operational projects, and has been rounded to the nearest EUR million.

[16] Projects with SO2 priority have a larger budget allocation to SO2 than to any other Strategic Objective, per the MLS portfolio analysis.

[17] 94 projects are represented on the map in this visual. The map only includes projects that implement activities at the first administrative level (e.g. province, county or region). Projects that are implemented only at the national level or that do not provide geographically disaggregated data to the MLS are not included.

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2.4 The evaluation of 'resilience' support and the intervention logic

The EU's support to resilience in international cooperation became an important objective of the EUTF for Africa. It resulted from **a long EU learning process** through which its understanding of resilience has evolved as further presented in Box 2 and discussed in more detail in Annex 10. The annex highlights the evolving conceptual framing, discusses the challenges associated with the application of the resilience understanding and points at the concept's potential value for framing and promoting the EU's support to countering root causes of fragility, vulnerability and protracted crisis.

Box 2: Summary of the EU's policy on resilience

The EU's approach to resilience has broadened from its initial focus on food security and natural disasters to encompass all sectors of external action.[18] This evolution includes a shift from a top-down, state-centric model to a multilevel approach (individual, community, society, and state) that better recognises local, endogenous resilience capacities and factors.

The EU's understanding of resilience has evolved significantly since its first institutionalised definition in the 2012 Communication Paper, "Learning from Food Security Crises." This paper established resilience as a core principle in supporting vulnerable countries, defining it as the ability to withstand, adapt, and recover from shocks and stresses at all levels, from individuals to regions. It also highlighted anticipation, prevention, preparedness, and crisis response as key policy principles, and acknowledged the crucial role of women. The 2012 paper also framed resilience as a tool for more effective crisis response, promoting better coordination between humanitarian and development efforts (later expanded to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus), flexible funding, and improved donor coordination. This instrumental approach, viewing resilience as a means to an end, remained influential.[19]

The 2016 EU Global Strategy marked a turning point, making resilience a priority in external action. It broadened the definition to encompass "all individuals and the whole of society" with a focus on democracy, trust, sustainable development, and capacity to reform. This multifaceted understanding applies across all sectors, including justice, human rights, security, defence, and migration, aligning with the approach used in the 2015 EUTF for Africa.[20]

The 2017 Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action broadened the definition to include state, societal, and community resilience, addressing crises, conflict, and structural pressures like environmental degradation and migration—though some feared it had become a catch-all. Building on the 2012 paper, it reaffirmed resilience as a means to an end, emphasising political engagement, local capacities, and risk analysis, while also highlighting women's role in societal resilience. Aligning with the EUTF, it linked EU security to neighbours' resilience and introduced a 'resilience approach to migration' for evidence-based responses.[21]

That same year, the European Consensus on Development committed to integrating resilience into development cooperation, applying a multidimensional approach across areas like food security and human rights to support recovery without hindering long-term development.[22] More recently, the 2021 NDICI-Global Europe Regulation, while not explicitly defining resilience, references it in crisis response, the HDP nexus, and geographic programming, with funding to support resilience at all levels.[23] The 2023 Joint Communication on the climate and security nexus also explicitly connects climate concerns with the resilience agenda, focusing on the role of climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, and DRR in strengthening the resilience of marginalised groups. It also highlights the importance of urban resilience, the climate resilience of the military and defense sector, and community-level resilience.[24]

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[18] [Resilience in EU international cooperation: A new fad?](#) ECDPM, 2012.
[19] [2012 Communication Paper 'Learning from Food Security Crises'](#), EU, 2012.
[20] [2016 EU Global Strategy](#), EU, 2016.
[21] [JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action](#). 2017
[22] [European Consensus on Development](#), EU website, accessed on 12 March 2024.
[23] [NDICI-GE Regulation](#). EU, 2021.
[24] [Joint Communication on the climate and security nexus](#). EU, 2023.

> More recently, the EU has emphasised the concept of "mutual resilience," recognising that its own security and well-being are intertwined with the resilience of its partners, but this is not enshrined in specific policies yet.[25]

One of the four EUTF strategic objectives, mentioned above, is on "Strengthening resilience of communities" (SO2). It aims to *"strengthen the resilience of communities with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable, refugees and displaced people"*. For the EUTF HoA window, the EUTF Strategic Orientation Document states that a *"complex set of drivers underpin forced displacement and mixed migration. They include armed conflict, political repression, poor governance, lack of economic opportunities, food insecurity and climatic disasters."* It also states that, depending on national and local contexts, *"marginalisation, lack of economic opportunities, weak governance, absence of the rule of law, natural disasters, food insecurity and long-standing conflict drivers are at the roots of these problems."*

To translate this understanding to the operational level, INTPA/ Unit A4 identified **six drivers of fragility** that can undermine resilience. These have provided the framing for the programming of SO2 interventions. These drivers, as stated in the ToR, comprise:

  i.   Food insecurity, aggravated by climate change;

  ii. Exposure to natural disasters, lack of access to natural resources, including land and water;

  iii. Weak governance and absence of the rule of law and effective justice delivery;

  iv. Long-standing social and political conflicts, combined with ineffective conflict-resolution mechanisms;

  v.   Marginalisation and lack of access to basic services for communities; and

  vi. Lack of economic opportunities, development and employment.

This framing provided a useful **point of departure to develop the evaluation matrix** (see Annex 2) for this thematic evaluation but also communicated that evaluating the EUTF's contribution to strengthening the resilience of vulnerable and displacement affected communities in the HoA is methodologically challenging. There are at least three reasons for this:

- Absence of a clear definition of resilience - internationally as well as at EU level - which would allow a concrete measurement of the extent to which the resilience of a given community has changed.
- No comprehensive understanding of the different factors, or drivers, that play a role in shaping or hindering resilience.
- Insufficient knowledge of the comparative weight of individual factors driving or preventing resilience from emerging, and the significance these factors play in different country contexts.

There are two additional issues that complicate the investigation of resilience in the context of this evaluation. First, the SO2-related framing partially overlaps with the EUTF's Strategic Objective 1 ("greater economic and employment opportunities") and Strategic Objective 4 ("improved governance and conflict prevention and reduction of forced displacement and irregular migration"). As such, interventions with a strong "SO1-orientation" and/ or a strong "SO4-orientation" had potentially to be considered as well for review in this evaluation.

Second, according to INTPA's orientation for this evaluation, and as set out in the ToR, particular attention was to be given to the first four drivers of fragility, and these were subsequently incorporated into the evaluation matrix. The desk review and the field phase, however, revealed that many interventions across the region followed a multi-sector approach whereby all 6 drivers were

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addressed.[26] EUTF funding for the "provision of basic services" and activities to enhance prospects for "economic development", the two de-prioritised drivers according to the ToR, were often key elements of such multi-sector interventions which helped to create a momentum for change and a source of resilience among beneficiaries.

Given these constraints, a **pragmatic approach** to the development of the evaluation matrix had to be chosen. As mentioned, the first four drivers were prioritised for the matrix to examine and judge the extent to which the EU's funding to counter food insecurity, natural disasters, weak governance/ institutional capacity and social/political conflicts scored positive outcomes. In addition, as this EUTF funding was often intertwined with support for setting up basic services and enhanced economic opportunities, the achievements recorded in these areas and their relevance for strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities were also included across the evaluation matrix.

Assessing the contribution of SO2 interventions to the overall goal of the EUTF for Africa to "reduce irregular migration and forced displacement" in the HoA, an assumption underpinning the EUTF for Africa, was beyond the scope of this evaluation. The evaluation therefore limited itself to assessing the intermediate impact of the support, i.e. the extent to which "**vulnerable communities could be assisted** in terms of a better social well-being, improved safety and more resilience to man-made and natural shocks", and the extent to which "**local and national partners have been strengthened** to manage and implement resilience-related responses effectively." This was done through the lenses of improved food security and nutrition, more equitable management of natural resources, better Disaster Risk Management (DRM), reduced conflict and improved social cohesion among host and IDP/ refugee communities, strengthened institutional and technical capacity of local and national authorities, improved ability to address IDPs and refugees and improved responses to resilience-related needs informed by knowledge management and related systems. Moreover, the extent to which the contributions realised via the EUTF had an added value for supporting vulnerable communities was evaluated.

This framing of the evaluation is also reflected in the reconstructed **intervention logic** (Figure 3) summarised below, which makes clear that the evaluation would start from the drivers of fragility, investigate the interventions, register outputs, analyse outcomes and their intermediate impact. The logic is coherent with the overall intervention logic, underpinning the EUTF's second strategic objective as formulated in the EUTF Strategic Orientation Document: *"If the Trust Fund can sustainably improve the provision of basic services and food security and protection for local communities and those displaced by violent conflict, political oppression and environmental pressures - tensions between host and displaced communities will be reduced and resource management, resilience, protection and human development will be improved for vulnerable communities."* [27]

To shed some light on the extent to which the SO2 support has contributed to "reduced irregular migration and forced displacement" as stipulated in the intervention logic and so as to be able to respond to a request of the RG to share some generic observations and reflections, the evaluation team drafted Annex 9, which also makes reference to selected documents discussing this question for the HoA. The scope and resources for this evaluation did not allow to undertake extensive impact studies for affected populations and to collect additional evidence. As such, Annex 9 can only be seen as a reflective complementary contribution to this evaluation.

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[26] Many interventions addressed more than one strategic objective. Whilst some were 100% SO2-oriented, many by design combined – for example –SO1 and SO2 objectives within an intervention resulting in complementarities between work on different Sos.

[27] *EUTF Strategic Orientation Document:* https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/system/files/2020.

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Figure 3: Summarised Reconstructed Intervention Logic

Source: Evaluation team

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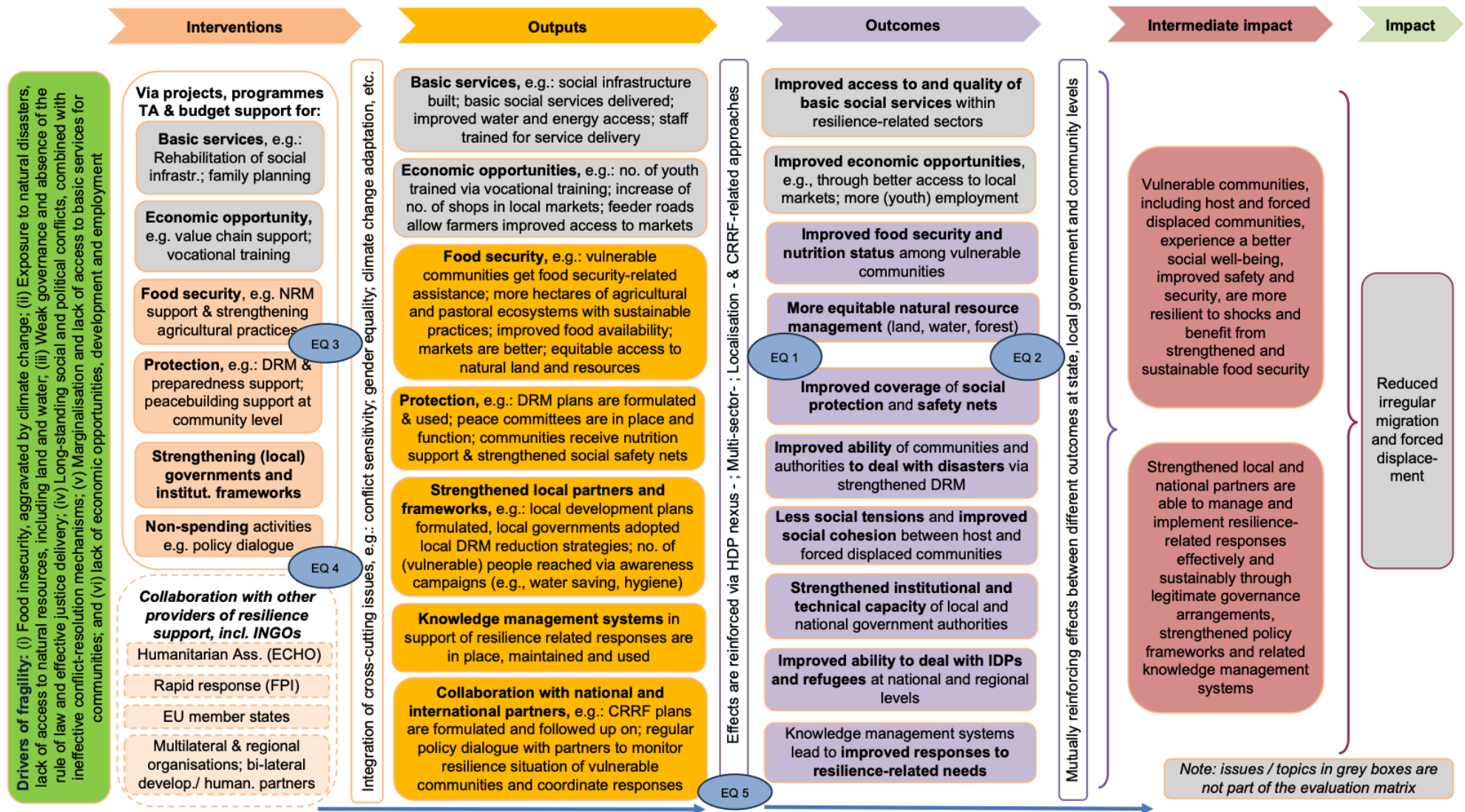
3 Methodology

3.1 Evaluation matrix

The full methodology can be consulted in Annex 1. The overall Intervention Logic constitutes one backbone of the evaluation. The second backbone was defined by the ToR, which requested the evaluation team to prioritise three of the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, i.e. "efficiency", "effectiveness" and "sustainability" plus the criteria "EUTF added value". A set of preliminary evaluation questions were formulated in the ToR which further informed the formulation of the evaluation matrix. Throughout the evaluation, the EU's guidance for conducting evaluations was followed.

Based on the Intervention Logic, **Evaluation Questions (EQs), Judgment Criteria (JC) and Indicators** were formulated and used as the overall framework for data collection and analysis. The evaluation matrix is composed of 5 EQs, 15 JCs and 47 Indicators. The EQs are clustered into three categories: i) EQs on SO2 results in terms of outputs, outcomes and sustainability; ii) EQs on the efficiency and effectiveness of the EUTF's delivery system; and iii) one EQ on the overall added value of EU SO2 interventions in strengthening community resilience across the HoA region. The full evaluation matrix can be consulted in Annex 2.

Table 1 provides an overview of how the three OECD/ DAC evaluation criteria and additional EUTF value-added criteria were addressed across the five evaluation questions:

Table 1: EQ coverage of the DAC and EC-specific evaluation criteria

EQ \ Evaluation criteria	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Sustainability	Added value
Results - Outputs and outcomes				
EQ1. Extent to which interventions strengthened resilience of vulnerable communities?		●●		
EQ2. Extent to which community resilience strengthened through interventions were sustained?		●	●●	
EUTF delivery system - Design and implementation				
EQ3. Extent to which interventions were designed and delivered in ways that enable results to be achieved and sustained?	●	●●	●	
EQ4. Extent to which interventions were designed and delivered in a timely and flexible manner?	●●	●		●
Overall added value				
EQ5. What has been the added value of interventions in promoting community resilience in the HoA?				●●

●● Largely covered   ● Also covered

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3.2 Evaluation process

The evaluation process consisted of three phases: (i) inception, (ii) data collection and (iii) synthesis and dissemination, as displayed in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Phases of the evaluation and key elements of the methodology

Source: Evaluation team

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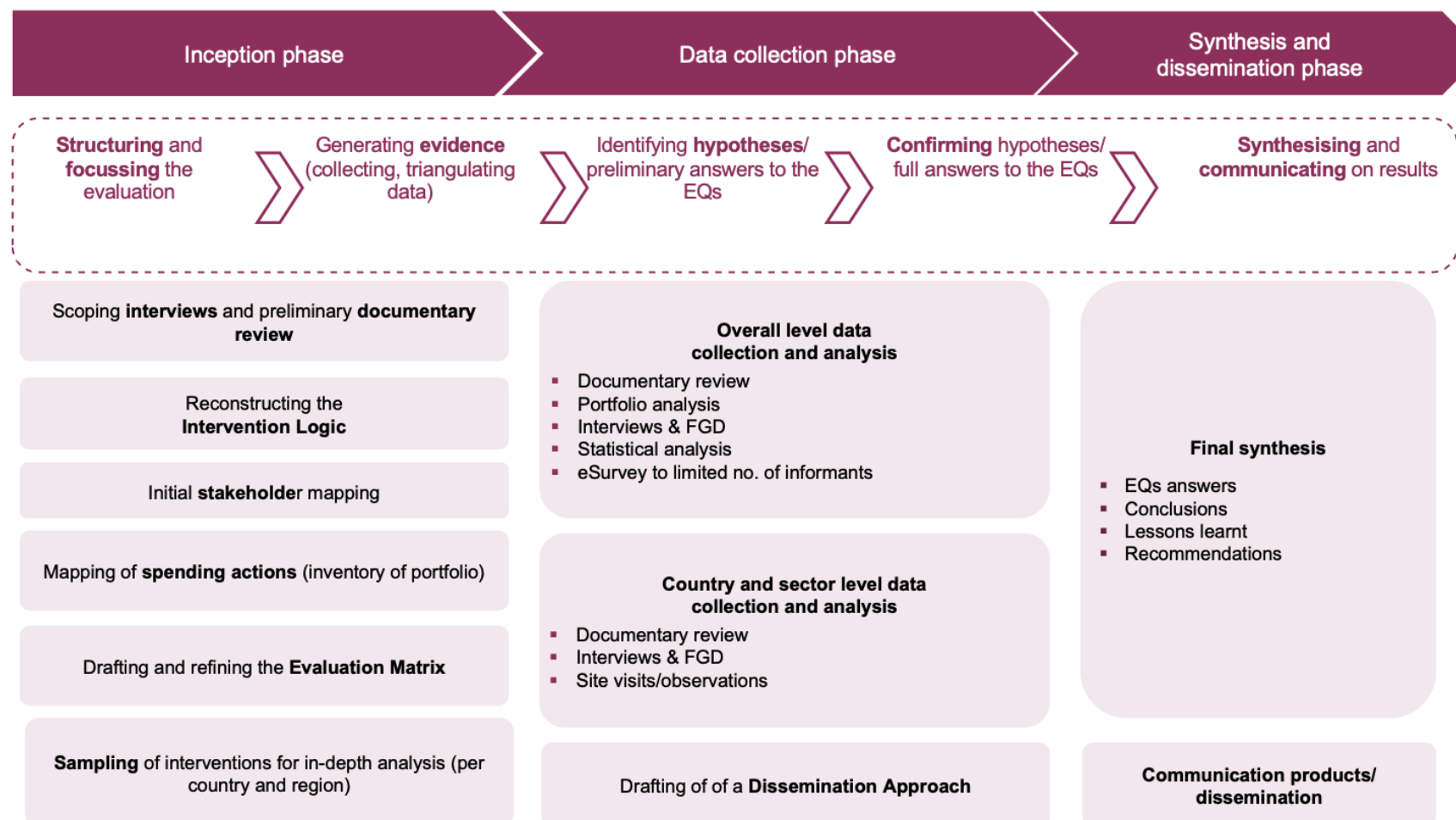
Regular exchanges took place within the team throughout the evaluation, including elaborate work sessions to compare findings across the region, and with the evaluation manager of INTPA/A4. Reference Group meetings took place in relation to each phase of the evaluation.

During the **inception phase** the full methodology was developed based on discussions relating to scope, understanding of resilience and the intervention logic. Moreover, interventions for review were selected via an iterative process between the evaluation team and INTPA/A4. The selection of interventions (see Annex 6) took place on the basis of several criteria, as described under the full methodology in Annex 1, and focused on decisions/ programmes and contracts/ projects which tackled the key areas of focus for this evaluation: i) food insecurity, aggravated by climate change; ii) exposure to natural disasters and lack of access to natural resources, including land and water; iii) weak governance and absence of the rule of law; and iv) long-standing social and political conflicts, combined with ineffective conflict-resolution mechanisms. The selection was done with the understanding that not all interventions focus 100% on resilience support but those interventions with a high percentage of resilience-orientation were prioritised.

The **data collection phase** consisted of the desk study and the field visits. Findings were meticulously recorded in elaborate data grids per country and for the *cross-border* samples. Documents for the **desk study** were collected and reviewed to inform the drafting of the Desk Report (see Annex 4), and initial interviews were conducted during the first part of the data collection phase to orient the preparation of the field missions. The second part of this phase consisted of the **field missions** (see below).

The team applied a **mixed methods approach** for data collection and analysis to answer each EQ. The evaluation was primarily based on qualitative tools and methods but it also analysed quantitative data, including financial data, food insecurity statistics and the number of outputs from the ten SO2 indicators. The main tools/methods used were: i) semi-structured interviews, ii) focus group discussions, iii) documentary review, iv) the targeted e-survey, v) quantitative (financial) reviews of project portfolios (in support of the qualitative analysis), and v) direct observation through project visits (to the extent possible due to security and logistical considerations). To compensate for the lack of qualitative data, qualitative insights were used based on interviews and field visits.

Findings and data were triangulated during field missions and the **synthesis phase**. To support this triangulation, an electronic survey with statements reflecting initial findings from the field missions was shared with EU staff at HQ and field level at the end of the data collection phase. Complementary interviews with senior EU staff at HQ level were additionally conducted to fill knowledge gaps and to triangulate findings from the data collection phase.

In-person field missions were conducted between the first week of August and the last week of September 2024 in *Ethiopia*, *Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan* and *Somalia* (see Map 1). Each in-person mission lasted between two and three weeks plus complementary remote interviews conducted for some of the countries visited. **Remote missions** for *Sudan* and *cross-border* interventions were conducted during the period July to early November 2024. The results of all missions were recorded in detailed Field Notes and served as an important element for the drafting of this Final Report.

In general, the evaluation team did not face any major or unusual challenges that would not be encountered in any other EU thematic evaluation conducted in similar fragile environments.

In terms of **geographical coverage**, the ability of the evaluation team to visit the respective implementation contexts differed between countries. The visits to *Kenya* and *Uganda* allowed for a more in-depth investigation because interventions are more geographically concentrated. In *Somalia*, due to the security situation, travel focused on Somaliland where the effects of the SO2 support could be observed at village and municipal levels. Interviews in the remainder of *Somalia* were limited to Mogadishu due to the security situation. In *Ethiopia*, also due to the security situation, the visits concentrated on the southern regions. In *South Sudan*, only two distinct areas outside the capital, recommended by the European Union Delegation (EUD), could be visited in view of the time and resources available for this field visit.

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Map 1: Field work HoA, including timing

Source: Evaluation team

The evaluation took note of **different country contexts** and has clustered findings in this evaluation report, where appropriate, according to the respective country situations. A distinction is made between the politically stable *Uganda* and *Kenya* on one hand, and the other four countries on the other hand which the evaluation team has chosen to label as "fragile countries".

A good number of similarities can be observed between *Kenya* and *Uganda*, which are both confronted with the influx of large refugee populations from the region (and beyond) and which have adopted what are considered to be progressive policy responses to the refugee crisis. In both countries, SO2 interventions have focused almost exclusively on supporting this policy response targeting refugees and their host communities in the specific geographical areas where refugees reside.

Among the other four countries, a distinction can be made between the highly fragile countries of *Sudan* and *South Sudan*, and *Somalia* and *Ethiopia* which feature pockets of fragility and protracted crises, but which overall are less fragile than *Sudan* and *South Sudan*. *Sudan* is enduring a protracted civil war that has entirely destabilised the functioning of the state and economy, and which has pushed large swathes of the population into a state of vulnerability. *South Sudan* continues to struggle to establish itself as a functioning nation-state and has been negatively impacted by the civil war in neighbouring *Sudan*, resulting in a large influx of *Sudan*ese refugees as well as interruption of transport routes impacting its oil exports.

In *Somalia*, a protracted fragility for many years characterises the country, caused by internal conflict and a range of other factors which concern the other countries as well, such as the effects of climate change. But forms of stability and progress can be observed in some parts of the country, such in Somaliland, regions in Puntland and around major towns in the remaining parts of the country. *Ethiopia* is one of the fastest-growing economies in the region, but despite high economic growth over the last decade which resulted in positive trends in poverty reduction, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The war in *Ethiopia*'s Tigray region, which began in November 2020 and lasted for nearly two years, had profound and far-reaching effects on the country, among others on food insecurity, internal displacements, weakened federal structures and ethnic tensions.

Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders conducted at HQ and at field level were a major source of information which helped to fill gaps identified during the desk phase. The total number of stakeholders per category are reflected in Graph 3 (249 persons were interviewed). This excludes the participants of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) interviewed during the on-site field missions. 39 FGDs were held during which 316 persons participated, see Graph 4. The full list of interviewees consulted is included in Annex 5.

Graph 3: Total number of stakeholders interviewed
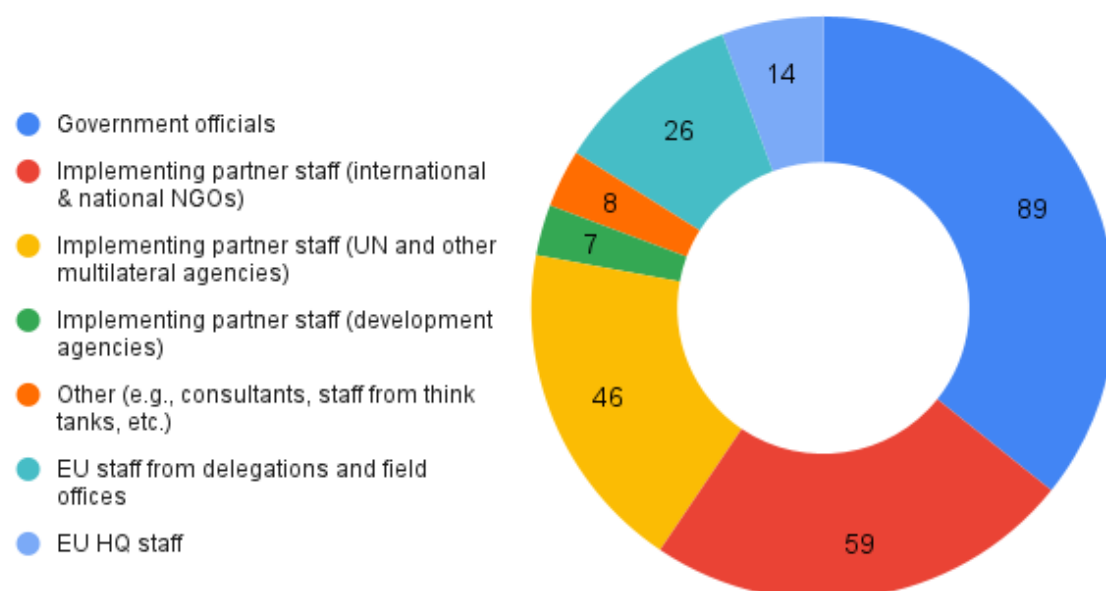
Source: Evaluation team

Graph 4: Total number of FGDs held and persons participating [28]
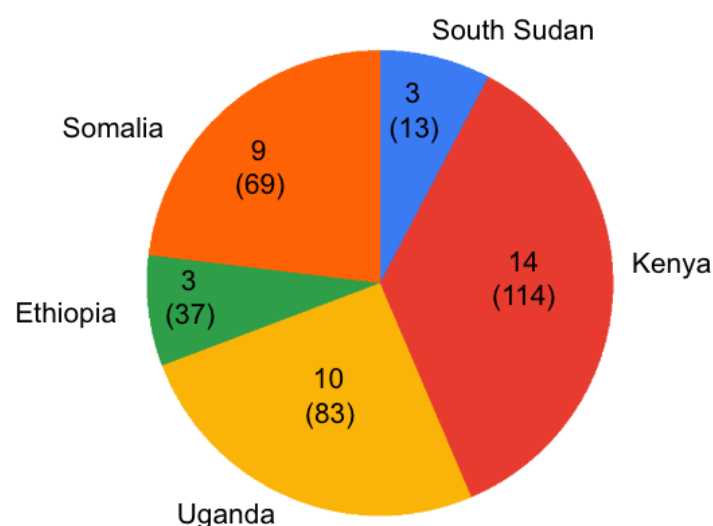
Source: Evaluation team

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[28] The comparatively higher number of FGDs for Kenya and Uganda relates to the more focused geographical areas in which EUTF support took place in those countries. As a consequence, visits to the respective countries were geographically focused which allowed talking to more refugee and host communities within a short time period. Given the spread of the EUTF support across Ethiopia and South Sudan, the logistics of the missions to Ethiopia and South Sudan were considerably more difficult to arrange, which resulted in fewer FGDs. Moreover, in South Sudan, for several projects partner staff had left the project sites and limited planning of the field mission by implementing partners had taken place prior to the arrival of the expert.

4 Findings

The following findings are the result of the above methodology applied to the desk phase and the field phase of the evaluation. It comprises the results of the document review, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the portfolio, the interviews and FGDs conducted at different levels for different countries and regions and the triangulation of results via complementary interviews and an e-survey.

4.1 EQ1 – Effectiveness of results at output and outcome levels

EQ1: To what extent have EUTF SO2 interventions strengthened the resilience of vulnerable communities and their relations with public authorities in the HoA?

Overall response: Evidence of **the effects of** SO2 support at output and outcome levels was found in and around project intervention areas, confirming the contribution the EUTF has made to strengthening the resilience of targeted vulnerable communities across the HoA region. This has been achieved mainly by improving their food security and their management of natural resources, and to a lesser extent better preparing them to respond to natural disasters. SO2 support has also helped to promote social cohesion between refugees, IDPs and their host communities. SO2 support was however unable to substantially combat vulnerability caused by disasters, reduce displacement and address integration of communities across the region with the exception of *Kenya* and *Uganda*.

Summary response: SO2 support was able to improve the overall food security of vulnerable households and communities who participated in SO2 interventions. Interventions were found to be context sensitive and to have accurately targeted needs. They combined efforts to boost agricultural and livestock production, improve natural resources management and open opportunities for income generation, including outside the agriculture sector. Paucity of data beyond output level however means that the contributions made towards improved food security cannot be easily measured. Support directed at strengthening DRM capacity of public authorities and vulnerable communities was based on identified priorities but was overall more limited. Nevertheless, where support was provided, community capacity to manage disasters was enhanced. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) provided important guidance to the EU on how to address social cohesion and risks of conflict between host communities, IDPs and refugees through SO2 interventions. The impact of the CRRF depended, however, on country capacity, the respective country's attention to the CRRF and its domestication into local frameworks and action plans.

Detailed response: SO2 interventions have helped vulnerable households and communities, including hosts, IDPs and refugees to improve their **food security**. However, given the growing level of food insecurity in the region, benefits were limited to those households and communities that had an opportunity to participate in SO2 interventions. These findings were also confirmed by the majority of online survey respondents (see Annex 8). Escalating problems brought about by the effects of climate change, civil war, the Covid-19 pandemic and the inability of the international community to provide sufficient food assistance resulted in a dramatic increase in regional food insecurity between 2016 and 2023 as shown in Figure 5, below. In and around project catchment areas, positive trends were observed that allowed communities to counter these negative effects and to strengthen their resilience. This can be attributed to the careful design of SO2 interventions resulting in the delivery of improved agricultural services via the funded projects, such as vaccination programmes for livestock, the provision of inputs and extension services to strengthen crop and horticultural production, and the promotion of community-based savings and loans schemes. The promotion of participatory approaches allowed stakeholders to share in the priority setting of interventions. Across many interventions, investments in water resources were prioritised to improve access to water for irrigation, livestock, and human consumption as well as for public health purposes. Project beneficiaries were also assisted to set up small businesses and to access downstream value chain segments that helped them to bolster their food security,

through the generation of incomes from agriculture (livestock, crops, horticulture and – in some areas – fisheries) and non-agricultural activities (carpentry, metal works, hairdressing, tailoring etc.). More precise information on the extent to which SO2 interventions contributed to food security is challenging to provide because the EUTF data management system only captured data at the output level (see also JC5.1). Concerning **Natural Resource Management** (NRM), SO2 Interventions helped communities to better manage the use and protection of water resources (as noted above), but fell short of addressing current and anticipated shortages in forest resources. Interventions were not consistently climate-smart although they generally attempted to mitigate emerging climate threats where they could. (JC1.1)

SO2 interventions have strengthened the **DRM** capacity of vulnerable communities and public authorities, to a limited extent. Similar to the situation of food security, the increasing incidence of natural shocks was on such a scale that the positive effects of the SO2 support could not counter the damages caused by recurrent disasters. Interventions at community level, as found for *Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan* and *Sudan*, were based on the identification of priority constraints, such as recurrent floods which demanded the construction of infrastructure to protect a community from flooding. These activities were - to some extent - linked to the structures and tasks of public authorities in support of DRM at municipal and sub-regional levels. Dedicated DRM support to public authorities was provided in *Ethiopia* and *Somalia* (Somaliland), in both cases with positive effects. Activities included the development of community-level action plans to deal with disasters and, more hands-on, the creation of multiple DRM, or early warning committees – some of which have been able to function mostly independently, while others (still the majority) are still in need of considerable external support and accompaniment. In *Uganda* and *Kenya*, DRM was not prioritised in SO2 interventions, however actions taken to manage natural resources and the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices indirectly contributed to mitigating the effects of drought and floods. (JC1.2)

In relation to **conflict risk management**, most EUTF support was provided by interventions with a SO4 objective. Shorter-term FPI peacebuilding and conflict prevention interventions, as in *Somalia*, also played a complementary role. A number of SO2 interventions, however, provided conflict risk management assistance via different entry points, such as in the *cross-border* interventions, where conflict risk management was an explicit area of attention. Here, actions were taken to strengthen community level capacity to address and resolve locally fuelled conflicts, for example via supporting local peace committees and via natural resource management committees which played a role in mediation and conflict negotiations. But this fell short of being able to tackle broader conflict dynamics. In other contexts, project designs tackled conflict as a cross-cutting issue where conflict analysis informed the design of interventions. This was mostly in countries abiding strongly by the CRRF principles, i.e. *Uganda* and *Kenya*. Here, it was positive in reducing incidences of conflict either in relation to the broader question of refugee integration into host communities (see below), or at a sector specific level in relation to specific trigger points, such as access to firewood and management of common resources such as water. From the *Ethiopia* and *South Sudan* case it was found that some interventions included conflict resolution mechanisms, such as management of local conflicts via local leaders. (JC1.2)

Across the interventions reviewed, SO2 interventions promoted and contributed to social cohesion and conflict reduction between IDPs, refugees and host communities in line with the objectives of the CRRF. This happened more explicitly as well as more implicitly, depending on the prominence of the CRRF in the respective country's policy and planning frameworks. The effects of this support therefore differ considerably between countries. In *Uganda* and *Kenya*, where the promotion of social cohesion between refugees and host communities is explicitly addressed through the CRRF's domestication into local policies and plans, SO2 interventions were well aligned and showed good results in the promotion of social cohesion and the avoidance of conflict between these communities.

In the other countries and for the *cross-border* cases, with the exception of *South Sudan*, the **CRRF** was more indirectly promoted but also constrained by political and regulatory restrictions. In *Somalia*, the CRRF was signed by the government but there was no particular attention given to the promotion of social cohesion between IDP and host communities. Moreover, relations

between these communities have been largely peaceful. Any local tensions or conflicts over natural resources were generally dealt with through local, or traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms. In *Ethiopia*, refugees and host communities from the Somali region share cultural and religious similarities, suggesting that this makes integration more successful than in other regions. In the *cross-border* support via the BORESHA project, resources were allocated to address potential crises caused by displacements, but there is limited evidence on whether tensions would have escalated without BORESHA's activities. As such, the picture is mixed for these countries and, contrary to *Uganda* and *Kenya*, do not confirm that the targeting of project resources on both refugee/ IDP and host communities has promoted social cohesion and avoided conflict. What has been noted in *Somalia*, *Uganda* and *Kenya*, however, is that interventions have promoted an equitable treatment of host communities, IDPs and/or refugee communities which suggests that this might have helped, next to complementary interventions by other international partners, to improve the relationships between these communities and thereby contributed to greater social cohesion. In *South Sudan*, the IDPs and refugees were mainly supported via the EU's humanitarian assistance, bilateral EU instruments (e.g. EDF) and other international partners but not the EUTF, which exclusively supported vulnerable host communities. Working with government institutions at national, district and local level to set up and strengthen institutional frameworks and structures in support of the CRRF has been positive in *Uganda* and *Kenya* but local government capacity constraints in both countries require further external funding and technical assistance to operationalise plans and deliver services for both refugees and hosts. Findings for the other countries are mixed showing that initial steps were taken institutionally in *Somalia* to deal with the IDPs in the context of SO2's durable solution support, while in *Ethiopia* and *Sudan* the political and security situation has prevented the achievement of concrete results after initial positive steps in the pre-civil war period. (JC1.3)

4.1.1 Improved Food Security and Natural Resource Management: Interventions have helped vulnerable communities improve their food security by promoting equitable access to natural resources and by adapting food systems in response to climate change. (JC1.1)

<u>Judgement summary</u>: **The evidence collected suggests positive trends in food security and NRM within and beyond the intervention catchment areas. However, these trends do not conclusively demonstrate a region-wide improvement in food security and NRM. The absence of standardised indicators across projects makes it difficult to establish clear causal linkages between interventions and broader food security outcomes. While localised progress may be observed, the lack of a harmonised reporting framework prevents a comprehensive understanding of how various factors—such as improved access to natural resources, inputs, and services contribute to food security gains at the regional level.**

Vulnerable communities in the HoA region have faced escalating food insecurity and increasing competition over diminishing natural resources. SO2 interventions were carefully designed to address these challenges, often using participatory approaches that actively engaged communities and, to a lesser extent, local authorities. Subsistence farming expanded (*Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, and *Uganda*) and boosted productivity as a result of inputs and services provided, while widespread livestock vaccination programmes and veterinary training improved the incomes of households' depending on livestock. These efforts tackled issues linked to displacement, climate change, and environmental degradation, though notable gaps persisted in addressing conflict resolution and fostering social cohesion as presented under JC1.2.

Substantial investments prioritised water access for drinking, irrigation, livestock watering, and sanitation (WATSAN) purposes. However, adopting sustainable water-use practices, such as the protection of water sources and maintenance, by the communities takes time, and evaluations underscored the need for continuous engagement and capacity building. A key lesson learned from 11 reviews underlined the need to allocate sufficient time and resources to ensure interventions are actively and effectively embedded within local stakeholders' policies and structures, including building capacities for decision-making (see Annex 11). Increased access to downstream value chain segments enabled host and refugee communities to generate income from both agricultural and non-agricultural production. Many displaced people have been assisted to set up small businesses as a

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way to diversify their livelihoods while facing systemic barriers and restrictive regulations which curtail their growth.

Interventions helped, to a certain extent, improve the regulatory environment for agricultural production, natural resources management and income generation. SO2 interventions were also implemented by a myriad of small-scale projects[29] implemented by consortia and contributing to address localised food security needs and adapting to changing context dynamics (*Somalia* and *Ethiopia*), helping vulnerable communities better anticipate and absorb various crises. In this context, the design of the EUTF's monitoring systems fell short of capturing the contribution of SO2 interventions to food security due to a lack of reliable cumulative outputs from these various projects stemming from inconsistent indicators across the projects. This situation resulted in fragmented data, an increasing number of metrics over time and project reports presenting only partial insights (see also Box 11 under JC 5.1). Progress in food security as an overarching outcome has not been documented over the period reviewed and across the region. Some positive trends have been reported, but the lack of aggregated indicators has hindered consistent regional-level reporting, leaving a gap in understanding and communicating the full impact of SO2.

Findings: Interventions identified the main priority constraints impacting food security and natural resource management affecting vulnerable communities. Often built on previous experience, such as the RESET initiative in Ethiopia, the assessment phase of the interventions was rooted in participatory processes engaging communities and, to different degrees, public authorities (*Uganda, Kenya* and *Ethiopia*). These processes contributed to analyse issues related to displacements and competition around natural resources, livelihoods and agriculture and pastoral development, and climate change and environmental degradation. Forest conservation, social cohesion and conflict management analysis (*Ethiopia*) tended to be less addressed during the SO2 design phase, notably where the humanitarian-development-peace nexus was not prominently implemented (see also I1.2.3). (I1.1.1)

Natural resource management systems were often improved, but limited attention was paid to forest resources in the context of firewood depletion. Natural resource management improved in *Ethiopia* (use of drought-resistant crops, zero greenhouse gas emission technologies, hydroponic fodder[30]), and *Somalia* for example (grazing management in Somaliland and Puntland). Better practices for soil conservation have been widely implemented by men and women, addressing environmental issues with positive results in *Ethiopia* and *Somalia*. In *Sudan*, the GIZ IMPROVE intervention led to increased soil fertility, reduced soil erosion and combating desertification according to the project's external evaluation. (I1.1.2) However, reforestation and agroforestry activities were given less attention, particularly in *Kenya*, where forest depletion is significant, and the management of firewood by host and refugee communities can lead to tensions (Turkana and Garissa camps and settlements). A final external evaluation of one project (El Nino SD WHH) in *Sudan* noted that while better natural resource management practices were taken up by beneficiaries, continued support is necessary to make such methods sustainable (I1.1.2).

Significant investments have increased the availability of and access to water for drinking, sanitation, livestock, and irrigation. Many interventions have contributed to water conservation and enhanced infrastructure and management systems, such as groundwater supply[31], groundwater recharge[32], rainwater catchment systems, and irrigation systems which contribute to sanitation[33]. The EU has also strengthened the capacity of water management committees, enhancing in *Ethiopia* and *Kenya*

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[29] With an average budget amounting of SO2 projects is some EUR 13 million, suggesting that a substantial number is below EUR 10 million which is considered a small amount of funding in EU practice See also the Mid-term evaluation of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa 2015-2019. Volume II: Annexes. 2020.

[30] Method of growing livestock feed without soil, in controlled conditions that use nutrient-enriched water, and producing fresh, highly nutritious fodder within a short time frame. Used as a resilient option in areas facing water scarcity and limited arable land.

[31] Construction of communities shallow wells, solar-powered water pumps, and hybrid solar and engine pump driven boreholes etc.

[32] Dams, rooftop rainwater harvesting in households and institutions, community ponds, small reservoirs to capture rainwater etc.

[33] See SO2 support tot drip irrigation or multi-use irrigation canals RESET and DDRM initiatives in Ethiopia and SOMREP program in *Somalia*.

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for example the skills, knowledge, and sense of ownership of local communities in water management practices, usage, and maintenance. If water management committees enhanced water governance and social cohesion, behaviour change is a slow process. As found from the field work, evidence points indeed to the need to incentivise communities engaged in structures showing good progress and address natural resource management, DRM and conflict resolution issues together - since they tend to overlap when addressed by different committees. For reference, see also a case from Ethiopia in Box 3 below. (I1.1.2)

Box 3: Enhancing conflict prevention and access to livelihood opportunities

In Ethiopia, the Regional Development Protection Programme (RDPP) contributed to mitigating conflicts between refugees and host communities in Shire area of Tigray region. The programme contributed to developing water and energy facilities, education services, business development support, and in-kind business start-up assistance. This support enabled beneficiaries from both refugees and host communities to have a more reliable access to safe drinking water (through water plants, boreholes, wells and pipelines), power supply (with a connection to national grid and solar lights); and market access (construction of a market centre). In addition to job opportunities for refugee and host youth, voluntary savings groups empowered women with training on financial services and entrepreneurship. Driven by a community-led approach, these saving groups are low-cost and adaptable models allowing scalability and improved access to credit when the context allows. One of the key take-aways of the endline assessment of the RDPP in Ethiopia was the need to develop and maintain robust coordination mechanisms – among the consortium partners implementing the activities and between them and the government and local authorities whose engagement from the onset of the interventions is recognised as a key success factor.

SO2 interventions have supported subsistence farming by strengthening household-level food production and productivity. Farmers have received seeds, fertilizers[34], tools, and equipment, benefitting from finance and extension services. They have also been introduced to a broader variety of crops and vegetables aimed at improving nutritional status, especially of women and children (*Uganda*, *Kenya*). They also developed methods and practices that increased production, mainly for their consumption (*Sudan*, *South Sudan*). The production surplus was sold whenever possible to buy additional food items and/or pay education and health expenses (*Kenya*, *Uganda*). In the livestock sector, the massive distribution of vaccines, health vouchers, nutritional feed and supplements to maintain or improve livestock health and productivity (*Ethiopia*, *South Sudan*) has increased vulnerable households' resilience. The Omo Delta project, implemented under the *cross-border* programme and the border regions between *Kenya* and *Ethiopia*, expanded the use of the Omo River for irrigation, reducing the costs for farmers and contributing to increased agricultural production. According to an external evaluation comprising the Omo Delta project, conducted in 2023, this reduced tensions among various pastoral communities as the expansion of agriculture provided alternative means for livelihood, especially for youth prone to cattle raiding. (I1.1.3)

SO2 supported - often successfully - livestock fattening cooperatives at country level, found in Ethiopia and South Sudan, and in *cross-border* areas, where livestock common interest groups promoted better livestock husbandry and increased fodder production. SO2 invested in veterinary services (for example the establishment of veterinary clinics and mobile units delivering disease diagnosis and treatment in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia cross border areas) and animal health training, enhancing livestock health. Reporting documents and field interviews praised the training of community animal health workers to support livestock health for pastoralists (*South Sudan*), playing a critical role in disease outbreak reporting and control (*Ethiopia* and *Somalia*). SO2 support has improved livestock productivity and, ultimately, household incomes in these countries while in *Somalia* and Somaliland, interviewees outlined that a higher focus on fodder production would have reduced import costs (I1.1.3)

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[34] The scale of this distribution varied from widespread support in Ethiopia (RESET initiative) to a much more limited one in *Somalia* for example, depending on the feasibility and contextual conditions and needs.

Micro and small businesses have flourished and contributed to livelihood diversification in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Across the countries, households have diversified their source of income thanks to vocational training and support to micro and small enterprises, which has particularly enhanced the livelihoods of refugee communities confronted with limited access to natural resources. SO2 focused this support on women and youth groups with good results: in *Kenya* youth were trained and worked in the production of cashew nuts and women from refugee settlements have sold agricultural produce to host communities and diversified income opportunities. (I1.1.3)

SO2 funding has contributed to providing small loans and financial services to households and small businesses lacking access to traditional banking. Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) have been a key intervention to support women, improving, for example, household incomes and financial literacy in the *cross-border* areas of *Kenya*, *Somalia* and *Ethiopia*, with evidence reporting increased savings and enhanced social cohesion. Evaluations indicate that participants experienced diversified income sources and were better equipped to manage financial risks and invest in productive assets (*Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, and *Uganda*) while in *South Sudan* VSLAs contributed to greater financial independence and the ability to support nutritional needs. (I1.1.3)

Vulnerable communities have also improved their access to downstream value chains segments that generated additional cash incomes. Host and refugee communities, including women, have had greater access to downstream local agri-food value chains segments in all the countries except *South Sudan*[35]. Although trading and selling farming surpluses remained small, local producers had better access to markets for agriculture and non-agriculture products, benefiting local consumers. The sales particularly benefited refugee communities in *Kenya* (horticulture, crop, and livestock production) and in *Uganda* (tailoring, carpentry, business printing centres, hair salons, motorbike repairs, production of energy efficient stoves and/ or alternative fuels such as briquettes). According to interviews, focusing on farmers associations and networks has been a successful approach as part of GIZ IMPROVE in *Sudan* and has led to increased income generated from value addition (50% increase for the GIZ IMPROVE targeted farmers associations) and to one of the supported farmers associations winning a large contract with WFP to provide sorghum to its operations. (I1.1.4)

In *Ethiopia*, interventions supported processing and marketing for honey (also *Kenya*), Enset crop, milk value chains, and off-farm activities such as soap processing and fuel-saving stoves successfully implemented (also *Uganda*), as well as a youth-led catering business and masonry production, which proved more profitable than poultry business and beekeeping. The documentation reviewed and field interviews show that many cooperatives, successfully strengthened, include members from hosts and refugee communities[36]. For instance, in Ethiopia (livestock fattening and mechanisation) and Kenya (farming, handcrafts, motorcycles). However, access to natural resources remains challenging as is access to markets, with often restrictive legal frameworks limiting access to services and employment rights, forcing most refugees to work informally (*Ethiopia*, *Kenya*). (I1.1.4)

SO2 interventions have likely contributed to food security but the depth and breadth of this contribution are challenging to determine. There is a wealth of reports and evaluations detailing SO2 contributions to addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity, including the priority needs arising from environmental issues, economic hurdles, and socio-political setbacks identified. Obtaining a precise picture on the extent to which food insecurity has been reduced, is however impossible given the set-up of the current MLS system and its indicators (see Box 11 under JC 5.1, which provides an illustration of the MLS indicator system for the cases of food security in *Ethiopia*).

Reviewing the broad trends from the MLS system, combined with the review of project documents and interviews during field visits, one can truly state that SO2 contributions have allowed targeted host and refugee communities to anticipate and absorb the effects of manifold crises in a context of increasing needs (Figure 5). In a region plagued by poor governance, competition over natural resources, and climatic and identity-driven conflicts, many projects were implemented by NGOs. Channelling more than 30% of SO2 funding (EUR 286 million), they contributed to address localised

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[35]   A situation mainly due to an access to markets hampered by insecurity conditions and poor infrastructures.
[36]   See in Ethiopia (livestock fattening and mechanisation), *Kenya* (farming, handcrafts, motorcycles)

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needs (*Ethiopia* and *Somalia*) but were too constrained in time, resources, and expertise to address food insecurity issues deeply tied to systemic issues and structural barriers (see also I3.1.2). (I1.1.3)

Figure 5: Number of people facing acute food insecurity in the HoA (IPC 3+)
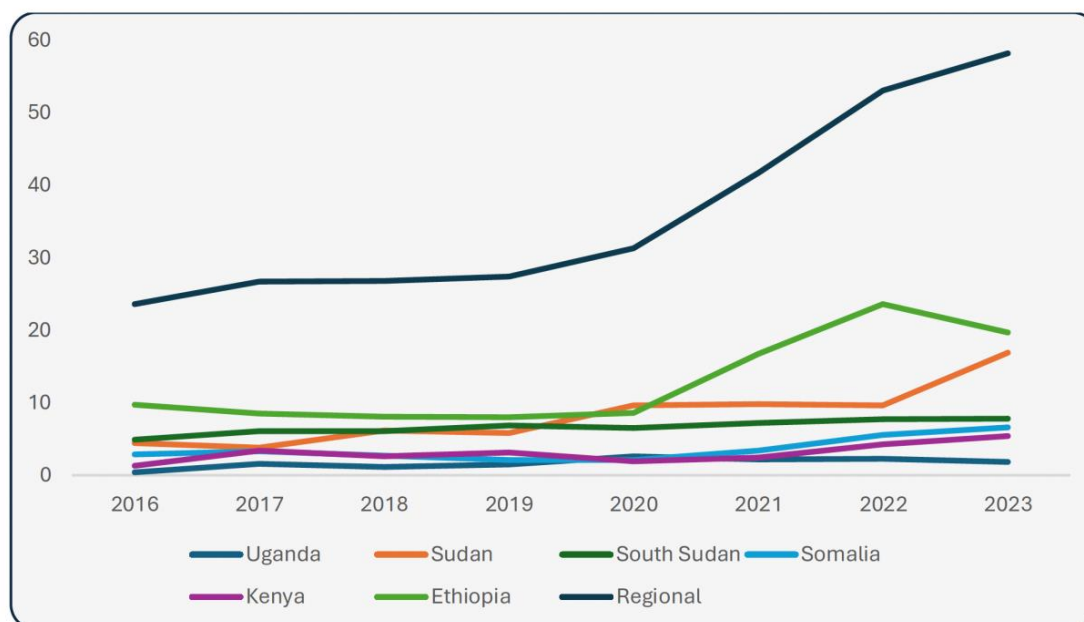
Source: Global Report on Food Crises

4.1.2 Strengthened Disaster and Conflict Risk Management: Interventions have supported vulnerable communities and public authorities to better prepare for, respond, withstand and recover from natural and man-made shocks. (JC1.2)

Judgement summary: **Across the majority of SO2 interventions, disaster and conflict risk management were addressed as secondary rather than primary objectives. Some important achievements were nevertheless recorded across various projects and in different countries, which helped vulnerable communities and public authorities to better address disasters and conflicts**. With respect to DRM, projects across several countries helped strengthen community capacity to manage disasters by establishing early warning systems, DRM committee structures and drawing up community-led DRM plans. In *Ethiopia* and *Somalia*, SO2 interventions also provided support to develop the capacity of national and sub-national coordination structures. Interventions in these countries as well as in the *cross-border* programmes, were guided by the results of upfront diagnostic/ needs assessment work. Conflict risk management was addressed in different ways across the region. In *Kenya* and *Uganda*, it was mainly addressed through the perspective of building social cohesion between host and refugee communities in and around refugee settlements/ camps (see further JC 1.3.), however in a number of NRM-focused projects in *Uganda*, mitigating the risks of conflict was addressed as a primary objective. Working with both public authorities and communities, and using the evidence of diagnostic work on the causes of conflict, a number of *cross-border* interventions recorded successes in tackling some of the drivers of conflict in a *cross-border* setting linked to competition over resources. In *South Sudan*, some efforts were made to strengthen the capacity of community structures to address conflict but the complex drivers of conflict and limited ability of communities to influence those drivers meant that there was little evidence of reduced conflicts.

Findings: The SO2 supported interventions in *Ethiopia* did identify priority constraints to addressing DRM. The *cross-border* interventions also did so, describing them in detail in the applications to the EUTF, including drivers of conflict. In *Somalia*, the SO2 interventions supported the development of community-level action plans, thereby identifying some of the priority constraints to disaster risks. In *South Sudan* there was no explicit identification of constraints to DRM or to the management of conflict. In *Uganda* and *Kenya*, DRM did not generally feature as an area of attention. (I1.2.1; I1.2.2)

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With regard to DRM, the EUTF in *Ethiopia* supported the development of national strategies and increased sub-national capacities at different levels including the establishment of early warning systems. Community DRM Committees were also established and capacitated to assist with better assessments of risks and planning. The financing agreement for DRM signed with the government in 2019 was praised by the national counterparts interviewed as it has promoted ownership and alignment with the policy framework and programming at federal and regional levels. Interviewees also reported that more was required with regard to improving the policy and institutional framework. (I1.2.4) The SO2 interventions in *Somalia* supported DRM through a number of activities at different levels as highlighted in Box 4 below.

Box 4: Outcomes of EUTF SO2 support to DRM Somaliland

DRM interventions in Somaliland supported the Somaliland public administration and communities at municipal and village levels. A consortium of international NGOs plus one local NGO implemented a project that covered various types of interventions in relation to the prevention of the effects of disasters, in combination with NRM support and the support to vulnerable groups at community level. At State-level, support was provided to the Somaliland National Disaster Preparedness and Food Reserve Authority (NADFOR) through technical assistance and institutional strengthening support. Committees at the level of municipalities and villages were set up for early warning and the development of Community Action and Adaptation Plans (CAAP) under the guidance of Somaliland National Disaster Preparedness and Food Reserve Authority (NADFOR). These were supported through advisory activities. Moreover, an increased participation of women and marginalised groups in decision-making was reported. Examples of other disaster risk reduction activities undertaken include the protection against flooding with the construction of gabions at the outskirts of small towns and villages. In some communities, the establishment of a contingency fund with money collected at community level and the subsequent limited support provided to deprived members of the community have continued without external support. According to the EUTF's MLS report (2023) there was an increase from 5% to 19% of communities reporting improved contingency planning. So far, however, not more than 5% of the communities in Somaliland have fully functioning and sustainable DRM structures in place. (I1.2.2; I1.2.4)

In *South Sudan*, DRM committees were established at the community level and remained active during project implementation. An example of their capacity is a committee that took the initiative to protect the local health facility from the risks of flooding as reported by one interviewee. The *South Sudan* public authorities' contributions to developing DRM strategies and plans were overall limited. (I1.2.1; I1.2.2)

Data from the INTPA EUTF MLS dashboard shows that over 75 communities adopted and had the capacity to implement local DRM strategies in *Sudan* as a result of SO2 support. However, this was realised by one contract (worth €4 million) implemented in the West Kurdufan state. The other reviewed projects did not explicitly focus on DRM, although the STARS Multi-donor trust fund aimed to set up a social security system for *Sudan*, however, following the coup and outbreak of civil war, priorities shifted to addressing more immediate needs of affected populations. (I1.2.2)

The SO2 *cross-border* interventions also trained and assisted communities in developing plans and strategies for addressing disasters, i.e. through community-led DRM plans – documentary evidence points to this having led to reduced effect of shocks. (I1.2.2)

In both *Kenya* and *Uganda*, the SO2 funding did not directly address DRM, but this does not mean it was overlooked. One intervention implemented in South-West Uganda by Oxfam for example had DRM in its title. However, an analysis of the project reveals that DRM was addressed primarily through a NRM lens with initiatives addressing land reclamation, management of water resources, forest protection and solid waste management. Other interventions in both Kenya and Uganda addressed DRM indirectly through the introduction of climate-smart agricultural practices (early season soil preparation, mulching, irrigation, integrated pest management, use of drought resistant seeds etc.) all of which could help to reduce the potential negative impacts of shocks associated with drought, flooding and pest invasions (I1.2.1; I1.2.4)

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With regard to conflict risk management, SO2 supported projects in *Ethiopia* helped establish a number of conflict resolution mechanisms related to water resources management and also developed community members' capacities to resolve conflicts. This is reported to have strengthened social cohesion among the concerned users of the water infrastructure. Otherwise, across other SO2 projects, conflict management was not prioritised. (I1.2.3; I1.2.5) In *Somalia*, there was also limited SO2 support to conflict management and social cohesion, which was instead implemented through FPI interventions. The SO2 supported interventions in *Sudan* were also not explicitly designed to address conflict management although some of the food security projects did involve local leaders in conflict management. (I1.2.1; I1.2.3)

Some of the SO2 interventions in *South Sudan* included elements of conflict risk management. However, the projects did not conduct a conflict analysis, or other types of analysis that would have assisted in identifying priority constraints to conflict management or to identifying ways to address the root causes of conflict. (I1.2.1) On their own, communities were unable to develop strategies or plans to address social cohesion and/ or conflict. Interviewees, moreover, explained how many drivers of conflict affecting communities were outside their control, e.g. cattle raids, including across borders. (I1.2.3) Overall, there is no evidence to suggest that social cohesion among targeted communities has improved or that incidences of conflict have reduced as a result of the SO2 interventions. The active contribution of public authorities to conflict management in *South Sudan* was limited. (I1.2.1; I1.2.4)

With regards to the *cross-border* interventions, there is strong evidence that communities have been able to respond to tensions and conflicts – however, it should be noted that some of these interventions were SO4 focused. *Cross-border* interventions identified drivers of conflict in border regions, notably those related to sharing and access to natural resources and were able to tackle some of the drivers. (I1.2.1) Natural resource committees for example were established with SO2 support and played a role in mediation around local conflicts. (I1.2.2) The SO2 funding also included the establishment of, and support to existing, local peace committees/structures. Government staff were also trained, together with newly established peace committees. A case study reported that the integration of conflict-sensitivity in the livelihoods and development activities was essential for peacebuilding efforts in *cross-border* regions due to conflicts linked to resources. (I2.3.2) A final evaluation raised critical remarks about the more long-term impact and sustainability of such interventions beyond the immediate increase in the capacity of local peace committees. (I1.2.3; I1.2.5))

In *Kenya*, support to the governance structures mandated to address conflicts between host communities and refugees, was beyond the scope of SO2 interventions, however, all actions paid attention to the promotion of social cohesion as part and parcel of the CRRF approach, as elaborated in JC 3.1. (I1.2.1) The situation was similar in *Uganda*, where mandated structures falling under refugee settlement authorities have overall responsibility for conflict management. As in *Kenya* all SO2 projects addressed social cohesion between refugees and hosts as part of the overall CRRF-informed refugee response. In addition, those projects with a specific NRM focus linked to the management of water resources and protection of forestry resources included specific provisions to address the risks of conflict associated with competition over these scarce resources. Attention was given to both strengthening community level structures as well as strengthening the capacity of public authorities to have effective stewardship of the sector and in so doing to tackle the factors that could precipitate conflict. The results of the interventions have been promising, with some evidence that community committees have helped to manage risks of conflict while also having helped bolster the regulatory and planning frameworks of the NRM sector. (I1.2.1; I1.2.2).

4.1.3 Increased Social Cohesion (and Conflict reduction) among IDP/refugee and host communities: Interventions have contributed to social cohesion and conflict reduction by promoting equitable treatment of IDP/refugee and host communities and by facilitating IDP/refugee integration into host communities, guided by the CRRF. (JC1.3)

Judgement summary: Reviewed interventions largely promoted social cohesion between displaced and host communities by fostering equitable treatment and integration of refugees, IDPs, and hosts, particularly in *Uganda* and *Kenya*, where the CRRF and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) have been domesticated into local laws, policies and plans and where evidence

shows positive outcomes. Across the countries, most projects aligned with the objectives of the CRRF (directly or indirectly), focusing on inclusive service delivery, participatory planning, and addressing conflict drivers, though results were uneven due to challenges such as political instability, regulatory barriers, and misaligned local assumptions. Broader achievements regarding social cohesion often depended on complementary efforts outside these interventions. While *Uganda* and *Kenya* saw notable successes in strengthening public authorities and integrated approaches, with the support of the international community including the EUTF, political instability and capacity constraints in *Sudan*, *South Sudan*, *Ethiopia*, and *Somalia* limited effectiveness and sustainability.

Findings: The EU has actively supported the roll out of the CRRF as well as later the preparation, adoption and implementation of the GCR[37]. Evidence from the 6 countries and *cross-border* programmes show that reviewed interventions have been largely aligned with and were implemented in support of the CRRF, as well as other relevant national and global frameworks (e.g. the Global Compact on Migration), with the exception of *South Sudan*. Interventions either directly and explicitly contributed to objectives of the CRRF and to CRRF-related structures or they promoted CRRF objectives through targeting the inclusion of refugees and IDPs and by supporting them alongside host communities. Some interventions did not explicitly mention the CRRF as such but were broadly aligned to its objectives. In *South Sudan*, humanitarian assistance was a prominent way to provide support to IDPs and refugees but also other funding instruments were used according to the forthcoming external evaluation on the EU's support to South Sudan (2011-2023). In South Sudan, the area of "Refugees, IDP, and Vulnerable Populations" was the most supported, with €1.32 billion, representing 16% of total ODA[38]. (I1.3.1)

In countries where CRRF structures were strong at national level (e.g. in *Uganda*, *Kenya*), SO2 interventions were well aligned with national policy frameworks and national level thematic priorities concerning refugees. Projects in Uganda and Kenya (see Box 5 below) advanced the inclusion of refugees and host communities in national and county services, with both groups participating in management and planning, while prioritising conflict prevention and social cohesion. In *Somalia*, especially the REINTEG and RESTORE programme were seen as contributing to the objectives of the CRRF, though rather indirectly (I1.3.1). SO2 interventions in *Ethiopia* supported the government's CRRF pledge and national policy framework, including the 2019 Refugee Proclamation, the CRRF roadmap, and later the GCR. For the interventions in *Sudan*, some reviewed SO2 interventions (e.g. RDPP, GIZ IMPROVE, ICRSES, EQUIP2, etc.) aimed to contribute to a paradigm shift away from encampment and towards integrated service delivery and durable solutions, yet found themselves constrained by political and regulatory restrictions. In *Sudan*, this approach (embodied in the RDPP and in the CRRF principles) was complicated by political upheaval. For *South Sudan* the evaluation research provides little indication that the interventions targeted IDPs, refugees and host communities in an integrated way and aligned with relevant national or international frameworks (such as the CRRF). In fact, refugees and IDPs seemed to have not been targeted by SO2 funding. (I1.3.1)

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[37] These processes aim to shift from a camp-based care model to one emphasising self-reliance for displaced people and their integration into regional and national development planning. Following this approach, the EUTF, including SO2 interventions, focused on integrated solutions for host communities and refugees in the HoA to foster social cohesion, reduce conflict, and enhance refugee self-reliance. EUTF support for the CRRF in the HoA evolved through 'first-generation' programs like the EU RDPP (EUR 84M), a precursor to the CRRF approach, and 'second-generation' interventions (EUR 74M) directly supporting CRRF structures, with 43% of funds allocated to SO2 (Altai Consulting, 2021).

[38] Between 2011-2023, according to this evaluation report, EU funding targeted humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, education, food security, justice access, and institutional strengthening, using mechanisms such as EDF, DCI thematic funds, EIDHR, FSCP, IfS, IcSP, EUTF, and NDICI envelopes.

Box 5: Support to the CRRF and GCR through EUTF funded projects

In Uganda, evidence confirms that SO2 actions have been proposed, designed, and implemented in alignment with the national refugee policy framework, including the CRRF. For instance, the RED-SCF action contributed directly to implementing the Ugandan Government's Water and Environment Sector Refugee Response Plan, while the EU RISE project advanced inclusion and participation in the national development agenda, focusing on food security, financial inclusion, and youth employment.

Interventions have also helped strengthen public authorities and institutional frameworks to implement integrated approaches towards IDP/refugee and host community development planning. Most of the SO2 interventions examined for Uganda included provisions to strengthen the capacity of district local governments to implement CRRF components. However, projects did so with different levels of intensity and explicitness, with one Mid-Term Review noting the poor articulation of expected results of working with District Local Governments (DLGs). In contrast, the direct support given by the EUTF to Koboko municipality has been viewed as a good practice due to its inclusive approach to refugee integration and urban development. By providing direct funding to the Koboko Municipal Council, the initiative empowered local authorities to lead projects that improved infrastructure and services for both refugees and host communities. This approach not only enhanced service delivery but also fostered social cohesion and local ownership, serving as a model for effective refugee integration in urban settings.

In Kenya, SO2 interventions in Turkana and Garissa aligned with national and international frameworks, including the CRRF, GCR/GCM, the Shirika Plan, and the Nairobi Declaration. This alignment ensured infrastructure projects were designed for equitable service access, supported facility handovers to local governments, and promoted fair opportunities using a flexible 50/50 targeting principle. These projects advanced the inclusion of refugees and host communities in national and county services, with both groups participating in management and planning, while prioritising conflict prevention and social cohesion.

The CRRF Ethiopia UNHCR project significantly bolstered CRRF governance and national structures in Addis Ababa and the Somali Regional State. However, implementation faced challenges from Covid-19, the Tigray war, and shifting political support. The suspension of the EUR 56 million Job Compact Sector Reform Programme due to the Tigray conflict negatively impacted CRRF progress. Unclear regulations for refugees' business activities, like opening bank accounts or meeting legal requirements also hindered the effectiveness of some SO2 agricultural support.

Many interventions were built on the assumptions that their activities contribute to reducing drivers of conflict (e.g. through better natural resource management). There is good evidence for *Uganda* and *Kenya* that the targeting of project resources has resulted in the promotion of social cohesion and the avoidance of conflict between IDP/refugee and host communities. In the other countries the picture is mixed and evidence at the outcome and impact level with regards to social cohesion and reduction of conflict at community level generally seems to be scarcer across the projects reviewed. However, concrete steps have been taken to promote cohesion between refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in many of the reviewed interventions.

Resources have also been allocated to engagement forums for discussing intercommunal disputes. The existing levels of social cohesion between refugees, IDPs and host communities also differed across countries, localities and projects giving different starting points for promoting cohesion. For Uganda and Somalia, for instance, conflict between refugee and host communities was reported as generally low, with occasional tensions arising (I1.3.2)

Projects have carefully pursued CRRF objectives through an integrated approach, ensuring equal treatment of host and refugee communities—often using a 50/50 target. Initially introduced in RDPP programs, this approach became a best practice and was adopted in the CRRF. However, as noted in Altai's 2021 CRRF case study, some project assumptions about conflict drivers lacked evidence (e.g., under RDPP in Uganda). In Kalobeyei, interventions did not fully consider host community preferences for mobility and pastoralist lifestyles. Additionally, adapting activities to meet the distinct

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needs of refugee men and women has remained a challenge. Finally, some erroneous assumptions could have been avoided through ethnographic or other studies. In sum, interventions have contributed to addressing tensions, if they existed, between refugee, IDP and host communities and promoted social cohesion. However, instances existed in which tensions remained or could have been addressed better through additional analysis and differentiated targeting and by recognising gender or intra-group differences and conflict drivers beyond the refugee/host dichotomy. Wider accomplishments in promoting social cohesion and reducing conflict often depend on supporting initiatives (e.g. on peace and community cohesion, reconciliation or conflict resolution programmed under SO4 or supported through non-EU funding) beyond the specific selected interventions looked at, as shown in a case study on the CRRF.[39] (I1.3.2)

In *Uganda*, reports indicate a generally low incidence of conflict, though occasional tensions arise over natural resource management. The SO2's alignment with *Uganda*'s policy promoting equitable access to services has likely strengthened social cohesion. Evidence shows that involving host communities in refugee interventions, ensuring shared benefits, and fostering dialogue through representative structures have been effective in maintaining peace. Isolated resource conflicts have been rare in reviewed interventions and often resolved through dialogue. For example, the RED mid-term evaluation reported fewer conflicts, and initiatives like refugees renting land from hosts have supported harmonious coexistence. In *Kenya*, the SO2-supported Kalobeyei settlement has fostered mutual benefits for host and refugee communities. Initiatives like community centres and sports facilities, developed through UN-Habitat consultations, have encouraged social interaction, while investments in covered markets have helped build trust. Host communities value opportunities to participate equally with refugees, a core principle of SO2 projects. To prevent conflict, livestock development for refugees was excluded to avoid land-use disputes. However, broader social cohesion outcomes cannot be solely attributed to SO2 interventions, as these were complemented by other initiatives, and addressing conflict risks requires institutional responses beyond the scope of individual projects. For *South Sudan* on the other hand, neither the document review nor interviews in the field found evidence that social cohesion has improved or conflicts have been reduced as a result of SO2 interventions. In Sudan, the impact of integrated service provision has been mixed. While initiatives like IMPROVE-GIZ strengthened community ties, restrictions by authorities on joint training for refugee and local farmers limited cohesion and access. Most interventions focused indirectly on social cohesion by improving relations among host communities, IDPs, and refugees. Conflict assessments were often included, though specific activities to promote cohesion or reduce conflict were rare. A key lesson from IMPROVE-GIZ and the RDPP LET was to make social cohesion and conflict management a core component or explicit intervention focus. In *Somalia*, social cohesion between IDPs and host communities has been largely positive, with no major tensions reported in areas of reviewed interventions. SO2 support aimed to sustain this cohesion through training and awareness-raising, though communities primarily relied on traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms, in one project limiting the impact of these efforts. Stabilisation and governance initiatives, such as solarising hospitals and installing streetlights, fostered trust between local governments and communities, indirectly enhancing social cohesion by providing equal benefits to both groups. In *Ethiopia* overall little evidence has been found to inform this indicator. Results seem to have been uneven across regions. Integration has been more successful in the Somali region, where refugees and host communities share cultural and religious ties. *Cross-border* interventions like BORESHA helped address displacement crises that might have caused conflict, though evidence on whether tensions would have escalated without these efforts remains scarce. (I1.3.2)

Reviewed projects committed to strong efforts to strengthen public authorities and institutional frameworks both at the national levels (e.g. dedicated CRRF structures /national structures and implementation) and at local community local level through community structures. However, in practice, given political situations, capacities at local level, national and local level politics as well as administrative delays in decentralisation and roll-out of the CRRF and related frameworks, support to public authorities in some cases (e.g. *Sudan* but also to some extent in *Ethiopia*) was challenging. Therefore, working with government institutions has led to mixed results. This highlights the

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[39] CRRF Case Study, EUTF Monitoring and Learning System, Altai 2021.

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importance of certain pre-requisites for effective CRRF implementation, such as political commitment, institutional capacity, decentralisation readiness, legal and policy frameworks, and administrative efficiency. In fragile states, where these conditions are often not fully met, alternative approaches, such as stronger engagement with local civil society organisations, UN agencies, and international actors, can help uphold the core principles of the CRRF, even without a formal roll-out. Efforts in such contexts can help prepare the ground for future institutional strengthening and gradually integrating CRRF principles where feasible.[40] (I1.3.3.)

In Uganda, SO2 interventions have supported public authorities and district governments in implementing integrated refugee and host community development planning, though effectiveness varied, with Koboko municipality cited as a best practice. In Kenya, projects ensured strong county government involvement in designing and implementing interventions for both host and refugee groups, fostering 'learning by doing' and identifying best practices for community engagement. This approach reportedly shifted perspectives among technical and political leaders toward the benefits of integrated approaches.

SO2 interventions also provided training and capacity building for county government actors. Limited local government capacity in Uganda and Turkana County, Kenya, has made external funding and the mobilisation of specialised partners essential for operationalising plans and delivering services, despite progress in strengthening planning frameworks. In Somalia, the development of the Durable Solutions Strategy by the Benadir Regional Administration has been a positive achievement of the RE-INTEG project though it needs dedicated attention and follow-up actions by the Administration. The Somalia case positively notes that SO2 funding has paved the way for kickstarting conversations around the issue of integrated IDP housing, which is actively being taken over by the government. In Ethiopia, human and institutional capacity has been strengthened yet sustainability remains uncertain given persisting financial capacity constraints of local institutions. In Sudan, the political situation made it challenging to achieve concrete results regarding integrated approaches by the government authorities through SO2 interventions. Interventions still aimed to provide for equitable treatment (e.g. in the education sector (EQUIP2, ICRSES) but with limited ambitions towards authorities and instead focusing more on community structures. The review of documents and field interviews in South Sudan did not reveal any evidence that SO2 interventions have strengthened public authorities and institutional frameworks to implement integrated approaches towards IDP/refugee and host community development planning. (I1.3.3)

4.2   EQ2 – Sustainability of results

EQ2: To what extent has community resilience strengthened through SO2[41] interventions been sustained?	

Overall response: The limited evidence available does suggest that overall, but with some notable exceptions, it has proven difficult to sustain the results of SO2 interventions across the region due to on-going instability and fragility.

Summary response: Due to the lack of ex-post analysis of outcomes and impacts it is difficult to judge how sustainable interventions have been at the community and institutional level. Overall, it has proven difficult to sustain the results of SO2 interventions. With the exception of *Kenya* and *Uganda*, interventions struggled to strengthen the capacity of public authorities to address the resilience agenda, in large part because of a backdrop of recurring political, social and economic instability. Even with a more supportive context, resource constraints limit how far public authorities in *Kenya* and *Uganda* can advance the resilience agenda without recourse to external support. Yet evidence from the community level in these two countries does demonstrate that

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enhanced resilience (improved agricultural production, management of natural resources, DRM capacity and income generation/ market access) can be sustained when the right pre-conditions are in place. An estimated 30% of SO2 interventions reviewed for this evaluation covered costs for emergency and humanitarian relief efforts, also to complement efforts of humanitarian funders. Therefore, sustainability was not necessarily an expected outcome of such interventions.

Detailed response: Across the region, SO2 interventions were generally unsuccessful in sustaining results because of the fragile, and unpredictable environments within which interventions were implemented. At best, the support could avoid situations getting worse – a finding which the majority of the online-survey respondents subscribed to (see also Annex 8). Building the **capacity of public authorities** to assume greater responsibility to address resilience and social cohesion among vulnerable communities was also highly challenging. With the exception of *Uganda* and *Kenya*, preconditions for building sustainable capacities of public authorities were mostly absent, with conflict, governance challenges and insufficient public finances being the main impediments. Continued support will likely be needed in those contexts where the prospects for a return to stability, e.g. *Sudan* and *South Sudan*, remain uncertain. For *Somalia* and *Ethiopia*, more differentiated experiences were found with evidence of sustainability in certain localities and sectors, such as in relation to DRM in Somaliland where the governance situation is better compared to the rest of *Somalia*. The situation in *Ethiopia* is difficult to assess, despite more financial resources available from the government, due to the outbreak of civil war and its effects, and the impact of natural shocks that have increased demands on the limited capacity of local public authorities. *Cross-border* interventions suggest comparatively limited engagement by SO2 supported projects with public authorities, resulting in limited official uptake and continuation of resilience initiatives since project completion. In *Uganda* and *Kenya*, most of the preconditions were in place allowing for the strengthening of policy, planning and coordination frameworks. But constrained public finances have limited the ability of public authorities to expand infrastructure and service delivery without continued donor support. In terms of knowledge management systems, there is no evidence, with the exception of sporadic findings from *Uganda*, that interventions targeted the creation of systems in public institutions that would allow a closer monitoring and assessment of the status of community resilience. (JC2.1)

There is limited evidence to suggest that **vulnerable communities** will sustain practices (e.g.: climate-smart agricultural practices and improved management of natural resources) without further external support. The mainly anecdotal and field visit-generated evidence for closed projects suggests that a proportion of project participants have been able to sustain improved food production, NRM and income generating initiatives. Such impacts are mainly at a household level rather than at a community-wide level. Overall, during the period of SO2 operations, levels of food insecurity have increased across the region. Sustainability of outcomes depends on a mix of factors including a more enabling environment being in place, characterised by political, security and economic stability, individual drive and good fortune including entrepreneurial outlook and having strong support networks, and an absence of natural disasters, such as drought and floods. In *Uganda*, *Kenya*, *Ethiopia* and – to some extent in *Somalia* (mainly Somaliland) – there is evidence that SO2 support to value chains has offered improved, though still modest, access to markets and sustainable income. In Somaliland, this has enabled local public administrations to collect taxes which are used to maintain services, like the functioning of public markets. Initiatives in climate-smart agricultural and pastoral practices, in *Ethiopia* for example, have shown potential for increased income and sustainability, but encountered systemic constraints due to bad governance, or the absence of needed regulatory frameworks. In some cases, such as community-based private suppliers in the livestock sector, strengthened capacities and infrastructure have enabled sustained services and diversified income for local suppliers and entrepreneurs. (JC2.2)

SO2 interventions supported **DRM** committees at community level across most HoA countries to better manage natural disasters and shocks. To promote sustainability, DRM members were trained and supported via the construction of community centres, the supply of equipment and training on how to manage money collected from the community to ensure their continued functioning after the project terminated. This type of support was provided in *Somalia*, *South Sudan*, *Ethiopia* and *Sudan* but this has resulted only in a limited number of functioning

committees which have the potential to continue working after project termination. In *Somaliland*, for example, where a DRM system at federal state level receives resilience support via SO2 funding, so far only approximately 3 percent of municipalities and villages have a fully functioning DRM, or early warning committees. Anecdotal evidence from *South Sudan* suggests that DRM committees were active during project implementation but interviews did not indicate continued operations after the project ended. Given the overall more limited attention to the establishment, or the strengthening of conflict management systems at community level through SO2 funding, prospects for achieving sustainability have been limited. Approaches and mechanisms to deal with tensions and potential conflicts were mostly supported in the context of CRRF frameworks to manage relations between host and refugee committees, such as in *Kenya* and *Uganda,* and these mostly continue to function. (JC2.3)

4.2.1 Increased commitment and capacity of public authorities to support community-level resilience building, including social cohesion and conflict prevention: Interventions have enabled public authorities to assume greater responsibility for addressing resilience and social cohesion among vulnerable communities. (JC2.1)

Judgement summary: **Public authorities in the HoA region have recorded limited success in increasing and sustaining their capacity to support community-level resilience building, including social cohesion and conflict prevention.** The picture is nevertheless nuanced with examples of more positive outcomes. In both *Uganda* and *Kenya*, a more conducive policy and planning framework enabled SO2 interventions to engage with and contribute to strengthening the capacity of public authorities. However, both countries face systemic budgetary constraints that impact on front line service delivery, including in the areas of NRM, food production, DRM and conflict management, making it difficult to sustain SO2 interventions.

In *South Sudan* and *Sudan*, the pre-conditions for sustainable capacity strengthening of public authorities have been largely absent due to long-standing budgetary and governance constraints and have further deteriorated, since the resumption of conflict in both countries Donor projects including those funded through SO2 interventions have had to play a substitution role, providing services which government should normally be delivering, although in *Sudan* the SO2 provided support had worked to strengthen public institutions, prior to the outbreak of civil war.

Somalia and *Ethiopia* present more differentiated experiences with some evidence of sustainability in certain localities and sectors. The more stable political environment in Somaliland has given space for public authorities to build their capacity with SO2 support. In *Ethiopia*, it is difficult to assess whether public authority capacity has improved, because of an overall escalation of natural and human induced shocks that have increased demands on their limited capacity. However, in relation to DRM, SO2 interventions helped set up a more robust coordination framework running from national to local level.

Findings: Few HoA country contexts provided the opportunity for SO2 interventions to strengthen policy, planning and coordination frameworks related to resilience, social cohesion and conflict prevention. To the extent that this was possible, it mainly happened at the local government level with only a few instances of support provided at the national level. In *Ethiopia*, for example, SO2 projects helped strengthen structures to coordinate DRM responses at the sub-national level, whilst the one example of SO2 funds channelled through budget support helped revise the refugee law and support amendments to several economic policies. In *Uganda*, two projects strengthened the policy and legislative frameworks of local governments related to NRM whilst another SO2 project helped strengthen the capacity of refugee hosting district local governments to integrate refugee matters into their district development planning processes. In *Kenya*, SO2 interventions helped operationalise the Kalobeyei-Kakuma integrated socio-economic development plan (KISEDP) and worked with technical departments to strengthen physical planning and land management functions. This prompted a similar process to be launched in Garissa County. (I2.1.1)

There is no evidence of such achievements having been recorded in either *Sudan* or *South Sudan*, due to the circumstances of protracted crisis, as well as on-going governance and budgetary challenges, which have undermined the capacity and legitimacy of state institutions and their ability to deliver even rudimentary services. Prior to the onset of civil war in *Sudan* and dissolution of the

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transitional government, SO2 projects had recorded some measure of success in building the commitment and capacity of public authorities in certain programmatic areas, but these achievements have not been sustained. In *South Sudan*, while some effort was made to engage local governments and to provide capacity support during the implementation phase, there is no evidence that this could be sustained. In *Somalia*, limited state resources and priority given to addressing security and governance concerns meant there were limited opportunities and entry points for engaging public authorities on more technical issues related to resilience. However, some achievements were recorded at the national level including the formulation of a three-year strategy for the fisheries sector. (I2.1.1)

Cross-border experiences suggest comparatively limited engagement by SO2 projects with public authorities, resulting in limited official uptake and continuation of resilience initiatives since project completion. This is attributed in part to difficulties aligning *cross-border* interventions with national NRM policy and planning frameworks which do not necessarily accommodate *cross-border* dimensions. (I2.1.1)

A major constraint to public authorities' ability to exercise a strong role in addressing resilience across all HoA countries is the state of public finances. Limited budgets impact in particular local governments in terms of staffing levels, meeting operational and logistical expenses and being able to invest in infrastructure and human capital. As a result, the capacity to deliver services is severely constrained. (I2.1.2; 2.1.3)

Even with much stronger policy, planning and coordination frameworks, budgetary constraints have had a major impact on the ability of both *Kenya*n and *Uganda*n devolved/ decentralised arms of government to deliver services and invest in ways that address the needs of vulnerable communities, in particular refugees. There is reportedly a huge gap in funding resulting in limited capacity to take over and expand initiatives implemented through donor funding. With high ambitions to further integrate refugees into mainstream development planning processes, dependence on external assistance will remain high. (I2.1.2; 2.1.3)

In the much more fragile context of *South Sudan*, the funding crisis is far more acute with reportedly public servants having not been paid for the past 10 months and government business at the local level having ground to a halt. Budgetary allocations to local governments in *South Sudan* are very limited, while a large portion of the state budget is spent on security and the military. The public finance crisis in *Somalia* varies somewhat between *Somalia*, Somaliland and Puntland with some evidence of the Somaliland government being better able to raise revenues to meet the costs of basic service delivery. However available resources fall short of requirements and effectively constrain local governments to address resilience on a more structured basis. High staff turnover linked to frequent changes in political leadership present additional challenges. SO2 support may however have helped to bolster the legitimacy of local government institutions in the eyes of the citizenry. (I.2.1.2; I 2.1.3)

Although the funding situation might be less acute in *Ethiopia*, resources and technical capacity at the sub-national level remain limited and present barriers to operationalising new policies and processes. Therefore, whilst SO2 projects might have helped develop DRM related policies and processes, there is no indication of additional public resources being assigned to enable these to be operationalised. Limited resources impacting on public authority delivery capacity also affected the sustainability of *cross-border* interventions, which as earlier noted have struggled to be accommodated in policy and planning frameworks, although in the case of *Kenya*'s Mandera county, support for the maintenance of water supplies developed under the project continues to be provided. Similarly in *Sudan* with the onset of civil war and the suspension of much external funding, there is limited prospects of public authorities sustaining project outcomes initiated through SO2 support. Projects focused therefore on offering training interventions that could impact cross-cutting and transferable skills that could be potentially used in the future when conditions improve. An example of this approach is provided by the EQUIP2 project where support continued to be provided to teachers through the Teachers Training Centre. (I2.1.2; 2.1.3)

There is very limited evidence suggesting improvements having been made to knowledge management systems that support the resilience sector. Investments in strengthening such systems do not appear to have been the focus of most SO2 interventions. There are a few examples however where projects assisted in collecting data on particular topics such as in *Uganda* where one project

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funded the drafting of district level annual state of the environment reports across four districts that helped draw together critical data that is now being used for NRM sector planning, budgeting and coordination purposes. (I2.1.4)

In conclusion, in view of limited opportunities to engage substantively with public authorities in *Sudan*, *South Sudan*, and *Somalia* and given the difficult political, security and economic circumstances, characterising these countries, there is little indication of enhanced public authority capacity arising from SO2 interventions, to guide a resilience response. The picture in *Ethiopia* is more mixed with some evidence of increased capacity in specific technical areas related to DRM but obstacles to sustainability remain. In *Kenya* and *Uganda*, the situation is different because the preconditions have been in place to engage with government processes and frameworks. The narrower focus on the refugee response has also made it somewhat easier to target assistance, however budgetary constraints facing both countries mean that prospects for sustainable delivery of resilience support by public authorities without on-going donor support are limited. (I2.1.1; I2.1.2; I2.1.3)

4.2.2 Strengthened commitment and capacity of vulnerable communities – food production and natural resource management: The (strengthened) commitment and capacity of vulnerable communities to implement climate-smart agricultural and pastoral practices as well as to oversee protection of and equitable access to natural resources has been sustained. (JC2.2)

Judgement summary: The SO2 contribution to a better management and equitable access to natural resources, climate-smart agriculture and pastoral practice has been challenging to sustain. Evidence of sustainability is limited for *Somalia*, *Sudan*, and *South Sudan*, where progress has been hampered by natural shocks such as the alternating cycle of droughts and floods and conflicts. These and structural barriers increased the vulnerability of communities to food insecurity while environmental degradation prevented results from taking root and leaving populations dependent on fragile food systems. Sustainable agricultural and livestock practices have benefitted *Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, and *Uganda* with higher crop yields, improved marketing capabilities, and diversified income streams that have strengthened the livelihoods of targeted communities over time. Community structures have been critical players in natural resource management, but their sustainability depends on incentives being in place and clarity over roles and responsibilities between them and local authorities, especially in water management within conflict-affected areas. SO2 support to value chains has offered sustained and improved (but still modest) access to markets for entrepreneurs, particularly in refugee settlement areas, as well as better access to agricultural produce for host communities. Infrastructure (e.g., marketplaces) and equipment (e.g., cold storage) have empowered local suppliers to grow their businesses and diversify income streams, offering a glimpse of the potential for tailored interventions to develop and protect local food systems while preserving natural resources. As a general rule of thumb, however, prospects to achieve some type of sustainability in highly fragile contexts were higher for community-focused interventions compared to interventions that aimed at strengthening public authorities – a finding which was supported by the majority of the online-survey respondents (see also Annex 8).

Findings: Evidence on the sustainability of SO2 interventions remains limited due to ongoing project timelines and data constraints and lack of ex-post project data. With a good number of interventions still underway, evaluating their long-term impact and feasibility remains difficult. Some programmes, such as the subsequent RESET interventions in *Ethiopia*, have regularly incorporated mechanisms to capture lessons learned within their life cycles but many projects lack plans for ex-post evaluations. Furthermore, the EUTF reporting mechanism focused on monitoring results and immediate outputs, leaving gaps in assessing the sustainability of agriculture and pastoral climate-smart practices beyond their implementation period. (I2.2.1)

Households have benefitted from sustained cash income through access to downstream value chains, though the number of beneficiaries remains limited. Evaluations present interesting progress in market access in *Ethiopia* and *Somalia* but indicate that activities are not yet mature enough to sustain. For example, cooperatives developed by SO2 funding were still young, and benefits were not yet seen. Moreover, entrepreneurs from refugee communities who successfully developed businesses had limited expansion opportunities as market penetration remained confined to

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settlement areas. Examples include horticulture, livestock, and poultry in *Kenya* and tailoring, hairdressing, carpentry, and mechanics in *Uganda*. These businesses benefited refugees and host communities alike. (I2.2.3)

Initiatives in climate-smart agricultural and pastoral practices have shown potential but were hindered by systemic constraints. Many climate-smart agricultural and pastoral practices were piloted by projects, and some evidence points to good results in *Kenya*, *Uganda*, *Sudan*, and *Ethiopia*, where improved farming and livestock practices have contributed to increased income, and sustained practices. However, evaluation of the EU's cooperation with *Somalia* and evaluations of the *cross-border* BORESHA and RDPP programmes, for example, highlight the absence of regulatory frameworks for durable solutions for IDPs, structural constraints in agricultural and pastoral development, and the limited capacity of national and local authorities to sustain SO2 achievements. In the case of *Ethiopia*, very few projects have been taken up by national counterparts for continuing or scaling up successful activities implemented by the RESET Plus Innovation Fund programme. (I2.2.1)

Investing in community committees has yielded positive outcomes, though clarifying roles and responsibilities among community members and between community members and local governments is necessary to strengthen accountability. Over 135,000 hectares of land have benefited from sustainable management practices, as recorded in the EUTF monitoring database. Evaluation reports emphasise the critical role of community groups in sustaining these practices, but limited resources and skills have hindered their work, particularly in the water sector. As seen in *Kenya*, *Somalia*, and *Ethiopia*, reports and evaluations outlined the need to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities between the stakeholders involved in nature resource management. In *Ethiopia*, for example, RESET Plus is building a common understanding of water sharing between farmers, pastoralists, water operators, and regional water bureaus. (I2.2.1)

Strengthened capacities and infrastructure have enabled local suppliers and entrepreneurs to sustain services and diversify income. Community-based private suppliers, such as veterinarians in *Ethiopia* and women traders in *Somalia*, have maintained services thanks to capacity strengthening. New or rehabilitated infrastructures, such as meat markets in *Ethiopia*, *Kenya* and *Somalia* have improved market access and increased the value of goods. Across the region, market infrastructures have supported families involved in agriculture, livestock, and fishery activities by providing better platforms for selling products. (I2.2.3)

The impact of SO2 interventions on higher crop yields and livestock sales varies significantly, reflecting, as it seems, diverse contextual challenges. Sustainable agricultural and livestock practices have yielded tangible benefits in *Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, and *Uganda*, including increased crop production, improved market access, and diversified income streams in target communities. For example, the RISE project in *Kenya* contributed to better land access and use while income-generating activities targeted individuals who sought opportunities outside the agricultural sector. These achievements have contributed to stronger, more resilient livelihoods within targeted communities. However, the situation is more mixed in *Somalia*, *Sudan*, and *South Sudan*, where evidence is limited due to several compounding factors, such as prolonged conflict and instability, famine, and massive displacements, exacerbating the difficulties in scaling agricultural practices. Furthermore, recurring droughts have devastatingly undermined the potential gains from these interventions as described under Chapter 1 and JC 1.1 of this report. (I2.2.2)

Sustainability is more likely when projects are built on long-term integrated efforts but such integration was difficult to achieve notably due to the design of many interventions resulting in multiple components and activities in programmes like RESET in Ethiopia or ILED in Somalia (see JC 3.2). Transformations, such as turning farmer networks into self-reliant stakeholders, require sustained efforts spanning over a decade, as insights from field mission interviews demonstrate. In the case of *Sudan*, SO2 funding has contributed to a broader, long-term endeavour by building on foundations laid by earlier initiatives, highlighting the importance of continuity and collaboration. The need for long-term integrated support is particularly true regarding the uptake of innovative technologies. Introducing such technologies often lacked a comprehensive analysis that provided a 360-degree assessment of the sustainability prospects from a social, economic, and environmental perspective. Tools like Index-Based Livestock Insurance schemes, fuel-efficient stoves, and solar

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hybrid wells have shown promising potential but often fail to achieve sustainability due to gaps in market analysis as mentioned in the cases of *Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, and *Uganda*. The final evaluation report for the BORESHA *cross-border* support also detected gaps in understanding community perceptions and on how information for insurance schemes could be effectively disseminated. (I2.2.1)

4.2.3 Strengthened Commitment and Capacity of Vulnerable Communities – Disaster Risk Management: The strengthened commitment and capacity of vulnerable communities to manage natural and man-made disasters and shocks have been sustained. (JC2.3)

Judgement summary: **While the sustainability of SO2 DRM interventions and interventions to reduce conflict and improve social cohesion has been promising in some locations, in others sustainability remains uncertain.** Given the overall more limited attention paid by SO2 interventions on DRM and conflict management, prospects for achieving sustainability have been limited. The absence of ex-post analysis of outcomes and impacts also means that it is difficult to judge how sustainable interventions have been at the community level. With the exception of a few notable instances of sustainability, the overall picture of largely unsustainable interventions highlights the challenges associated with realising long-term structural changes in the areas of DRM and conflict management brought on by the implementation of short- or medium-term interventions in locations plagued by widespread poverty, frequent conflicts, and natural disasters.

Findings: The evidence base for judging the extent to which interventions aimed at strengthening community level capacity to address DRM and conflict have been sustained is patchy and therefore strong conclusions cannot be drawn. This is in part attributed to the absence of post-completion (ex-post) data collection and analyses as well as to the fact that many projects are still on-going. Based mainly on discussions with concerned stakeholders and through direct observation, the following findings are presented.

There is a mixed picture regarding the sustainability of community-level DRM structures that were supported by SO2 interventions to better prepare for and respond to disasters. Evidence from *Ethiopia* suggests it is too early to tell if the established structures at community level and the tools introduced for early warning can be sustained. (I2.3.1.) It is, however, noted that interventions were aligned with the government's DRM policy framework, which should guarantee some level of sustainability, provided resources are assigned (see also I1.2.4). From *South Sudan*, anecdotal evidence suggests that while committee structures remained active during the life of projects, they ceased operating as soon as the projects closed. According to interviewees, this was attributed to lack of own funds to cover operational costs such as transport, and equipment (I2.3.1). Results from *Somalia*, i.e. Somaliland, are by contrast quite promising due to stronger public authorities dealing with DRM and their regular exchange with communities. The early warning systems that were introduced helped to build local ownership for DRM and even led to instances of local resource mobilisation to ensure on-going operations. One of the communities visited had moreover established a bank account for contingency funds and, as a result, has been able to continue operating without external support. Such DRM support was closely linked to another SO2 project (SOMREP), which supported the development of Community Action and Adaptation Plans (CAAPs) (I2.3.1). *Cross-border* programmes also recorded some evidence of sustainability due to a sense of ownership for the interventions among local communities. In one project (BORESHA) SO2 support incentivised a number of communities to fund their own DRM plans and to improve their understanding of local hazards. The mindset of beneficiaries of one of the *cross-border* interventions (BORESHA) was reported to have been changed from being a passive recipient of aid to playing active roles. (I2.3.1) Another project (Omo Delta project) supported the establishment of early warning systems related to livestock health, which were subsequently linked to government systems in *Kenya* and *Ethiopia* with subsequent government responses.

A similar mixed picture emerges with respect to efforts to build community level capacity to address conflict. In both *Somalia* and *Sudan*, structures established to manage conflict as part of project safeguarding measures closed once the projects they were linked to ended. In *South Sudan*, all indications are that the conflict management committees that were active during project implementation ceased to function as soon as support came to an end, due to their dependence on external funding to cover operating costs and the absence of any kind of state funding (I2.3.2)

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Although there is strong evidence that the communities supported through SO2 *cross-border* interventions have demonstrated a greater ability to address tensions and conflicts linked to competition over scarce resources, there are concerns, expressed in evaluation reports, as to whether these achievements can be sustained (I2.3.2). In *Kenya* and *Uganda*, where conflict management was mainly addressed as a cross-cutting issue and in the framework of the CRRF, the establishment of mixed host-refugee committees responsible for the management of project assets have the potential to be sustainable when members see a direct link between their functionality and shared benefits of food production, nutrition and/ or income generation. (I2.3.2). Evidence from a closed project in *Uganda*, meanwhile points to the continued functioning of committee structures mandated to address the management of natural resources between hosts and refugees, whilst in an on-going project, similar committee structures addressing the protection of forestry are performed well to date but it remains to be seen if they will continue to function after the project closes (I2.3.2).

4.3   EQ3 – Effectiveness of design and delivery

EQ3: To what extent have EUTF SO2 interventions been designed and delivered in ways that enable results to be achieved and sustained?

Overall response: SO2 interventions have been designed and delivered in most cases with positive effect; they worked with appropriate management modalities and delivery methods, adopted appropriate implementation approaches and addressed cross-cutting issues that in combination enabled the EU to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of targeted communities. The design and delivery of interventions were geared towards sustainability though sustaining activities was only possible in a limited number of situations.

Summary response: The vast majority of SO2 interventions were delivered using either the direct or indirect management modality and by means of projects. The selection of delivery modalities reflected country contexts and took account of effectiveness, efficiency and fiduciary considerations, including the capacity of partner public authorities. SO2 interventions adopted a set of implementation approaches (multi-sector approach; HDP Nexus approach; conflict sensitivity approach) that broadly helped to achieve and, in some instances, sustain results. The localisation[42] approach was only adopted to a limited extent. SO2 interventions also addressed cross-cutting issues related to gender, rights and the environment although often without the benefit of conducting more explicit upfront diagnostic work.

Detailed response: A mix of different **management modalities** and **delivery channels** has enabled the EU to design and implement SO2 interventions that have responded to the needs of vulnerable communities. The choice for either the direct, or the indirect management modality, the use of projects, programmes or trust funds of multilateral organisations, and the channel of delivery were determined mainly by context, the scale and complexity of the intervention and the organisational capacity and experience of implementing partners. In *Sudan*, the EUTF provided an opportunity to work mainly via INGOs in the absence of a NIP 2014-2020 which did not exist for political reasons. Organisational capacity and experience, as determining factors, are best highlighted through the cases of *Uganda* and *Kenya*. In both countries, similar programmes were implemented in a developmental and mostly stable political context. In *Kenya*, however, earlier positive experiences in working with UN agencies resulted in a nearly exclusive collaboration with these partners. In *Uganda*, the SO2 support was implemented primarily by INGO consortia, because these organisations were considered to be more effective in the *Uganda*n context. In some instances, such as in *Somalia*, the scale, coverage and complexity of the support was very broad, so that only big organisations, such as UN agencies or EU member states agencies could be considered for implementation. (JC3.1)

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42   The term 'localisation' is understood more broadly here, i.e. entrusting local actors with more responsibilities to implement humanitarian, peacebuilding and developmental activities.

The project approach was the predominant, though not the only **delivery method**. The project approach allowed the EU to control risks in very fragile contexts and supported flexibility in cases where adaptations had to be made due to changing contextual situations. On the downside, the approach worked against ownership and could lead to fragmentation. Very positive comments were recorded from one programme in *Ethiopia*, where the EU supported disaster risk management via national institutions. Other positive comments – though outside the scope of this SO2 evaluation – were recorded for the EU's budget support in *Somalia* (a SO4 support) which was considered a contribution to the overall resilience of the country. SO2 support was also delivered via pooled funding, such as in the case of *South Sudan* for the UK-managed health fund or the World Bank managed trust fund covering various sectors in *Sudan*, which helped avoid fragmentation and reinforced pre-existing efforts of other partners in support of resilience. The EU worked mostly via INGO consortia, in some cases also via UN agency consortia, as a way to reduce the EU's management costs, to ensure the implementation of a multisector approach thereby bringing different fields of expertise together, and to promote harmonisation and synergies. Results in this regard have been mixed, however, as coordination was often not optimal causing delays and siloed implementation. (JC3.1)

SO2 interventions adopted a set of **implementation approaches** that broadly helped to achieve and, in some instances, sustain results. The **multi-sector approach** was a common feature of many interventions helping to address the drivers of vulnerability from interrelated angles, but at the risk of designing complex and large projects that could be challenging to implement. The respective country situation, government capacity, the complexity of tasks to be tackled and the way implementing partners interacted with each other and with country partners at different levels determined the success of this approach, as illustrated by the EUR 100 million support under the ILED programme in *Somalia*. SO2 funding was instrumental in operationalising the **HDP Nexus** both among EU services as well as more broadly, helping projects focus on sustainability issues, although this was not possible in all country contexts. Interviews and desk findings confirmed that the collaboration between the EUDs and ECHO offices significantly improved with the introduction of the EUTF. The collaboration with FPI was also strengthened, in particular in relation to the EU's stabilisation support. Many SO2 interventions have addressed, or could build on already existing, linkages between humanitarian and development interventions, whereby the SO2 support allowed to fund more developmental aspects – as in the case of *Uganda* or *Kenya* – or more resilience and humanitarian aspects as was the case in very fragile contexts. Linkages to peace-related activities, such as promoting mediation, or engaging in conflict resolution were less prominent, but not absent either. In support of the **localisation agenda**, all projects reviewed included activities, ranging from staff training, to project hand-over protocols or exit roadmaps, the strengthening of systems and processes or even in a few cases institutional reforms, all aimed at strengthening the capacities of local actors, to take over and to sustain results. In some cases, local NGOs were included in INGO-led consortia or subcontracted for specific tasks. But taking the step towards more far-reaching localisation, for example by handing over project management and implementation responsibilities into the hands of local NGOs only happened to a limited extent in *Somalia,* and in Uganda. The extent to which **conflict sensitivity** was addressed has been mixed. While many of the implementing partners have a track-record of working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, conflict sensitivity or do-no-harm approaches were often only implicitly deployed to guide the implementation of interventions. An explicit conflict sensitivity analysis was done in some cases but evidence on their further use for implementation is weak. (JC3.2)

In terms of **cross-cutting issues**, there is abundant evidence that gender aspects and **gender** empowerment were strongly integrated into most project designs and implementation, though there is little evidence of the regular use of a gender analysis which could impact on the scope and impact of the interventions. Little evidence was found on gender-related protection mechanisms and on activities to counter gender-based violence. The field visit to *Somalia* also highlighted the limits gender support could achieve due to strong cultural norms and, in this case, the dominant role men play in the fishing sector, which worked against a higher level of women empowerment. In relation to taking care of vulnerable communities**,** most projects included objectives to pay attention to marginalised groups, including refugees, IDPs, elders and people living with disabilities. The support to vulnerable groups is evident from many interventions, such

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as seen in the case of supporting youth, disabled persons or lactating mothers via social protection and cash transfer activities. **Environmental protection** considerations were part and parcel of many interventions and in some cases were treated as primary objectives of interventions whereas in others they were addressed as a more implicit cross-cutting issue. There is evidence from SO2 interventions funding natural resource management and early warning systems that these helped to protect vulnerable communities from environmental threats, such as floods and the effects of droughts. There were only a few cases where a more explicit environmental assessment was undertaken as part of project design. (JC3.3)

4.3.1 Selection of Implementation Modalities: The selection of a range of implementation modalities to deliver interventions has helped the EUTF to achieve and sustain resilience results efficiently and effectively. (JC3.1)

<u>Judgement summary</u>: **SO2 interventions were implemented through a mix of direct and indirect management modalities whereby the choice of implementation modalities across the region was mostly adequate, determined by the context and helped to achieve results with positive effects.** The choice of the modality and delivery method was primarily informed by context, the complexity and size of the project to be handled and the experience and strength of the implementing organisations. None of the findings suggest that there is a particular advantage for one, or the other modality or method as each has its advantages and disadvantages. Projects were the best alternative to channel the support to vulnerable communities because government capacity, their legitimacy or ability to address fiduciary concerns, also in *Uganda* and *Kenya*, was considered insufficient or even too weak to be considered for a different delivery method. Evidence from *Uganda* and *Ethiopia*, however, showed that donor support via projects could lead to siloed and poorly coordinated interventions, which could also have an impact on sustaining results after project closure. In some instances, SO2 funding was channelled via pooled funding which strengthened the effects of the SO2 support and in one instance there was a direct award to a local municipality.

<u>**Findings:**</u> Context and organisational capacity were the main determining factors for choosing a delivery channel. The implementation modalities chosen and used for SO2 interventions did not differ from non-EUTF funded EU engagements and could build on the experiences gained from the years before the EUTF was introduced. The principal factors to choose for an implementation modality were the context, the complexity, size and specificities of a planned intervention and the organisational capacities of an implementing partner needed to deliver. An interesting case to illustrate the relevance of context is the comparison between *Uganda* and *Kenya* where the choice of implementing partners differed despite similar tasks to be performed, i.e. supporting their respective refugee responses. For *Kenya*, working primarily via an indirect management approach, UN agencies were considered the most appropriate modality because of the established and proven working relationship between the UN system and the Government of *Kenya*. In *Uganda*, the EU's choice of direct management as the preferred management modality, whereby INGOs were mobilised via mainly Calls for Proposals, was informed by the EU's view that one could work more closely and thereby more effectively with INGOs. In practical terms this meant that the EUD could steer and supervise the direction they wished project design to take and prescribe the kinds of skill sets and expertise that would need to be mobilised. (I3.1.1)

INGOs were encouraged to team up in consortia in most countries. This allowed them to bring together different areas of specialisation and expertise. It also created an opportunity to team up with local NGOs, as was the case in *Uganda* and *Somalia*. In *South Sudan*, using consortia was believed to simplify management and to facilitate collaboration among partners. While recognising difficulties due to added workload and coordination challenges, most partners interviewed across countries found there was added value in terms of knowledge management, monitoring and learning, discussing strategic issues, and creating opportunities to expand the geographical coverage leading to a wider reach and more outputs. Interviewees from both EUD and implementing partners in *South Sudan* also found that the consortia approach contributed to create synergies and in some cases economies of scale as was the case in Ethiopia. The EUDs in *Somalia* and *South Sudan* also mobilised consortia composed of UN agencies, but with mixed results, whilst in *Kenya*, the UN consortium comprising four UN agencies proved effective. In *Somalia*, three UN agencies (UN-Habitat, UNDP and UNHCR) teamed up in relation to a durable solutions project (promoting the

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transition from emergency support to development) but unclear foci and coordination led to overlaps and duplication. No problems of overlap within NGO consortia, working in different locations, were reported from *South Sudan*. (I3.1.1)

A senior interviewee from an EUD mentioned that "in the end, the choice of implementation modality and the partner to deliver the intervention is determined by the complexity and size of the project to be handled." According to interviews conducted at EUD level, INGOs were considered the better choice to implement interventions at community level and in remote areas in fragile contexts due to their ability to work more flexibly and their better links with communities. Costs in working with them are also lower. The *Sudan* case shows that the successful intervention through NGOs could also build on a longstanding positive collaboration between an international and a local NGO. UN agencies were seen to be better placed for very complex and big-size interventions, their ability to bring in expertise for specialised tasks and their political weight when dialogue, or negotiations were necessary with a partner government. In *Ethiopia*, for example, the choice of UNICEF was considered appropriate because of its experience and the role it plays in the country's water sector. (I3.1.1)

The subcontracting of work to other implementing partners brings advantages and disadvantages. UN agencies subcontracted INGOs and in particularly difficult environments, local NGOs were subcontracted or contracted by subcontracted INGOs – a practice which supports local ownership and the transfer of knowledge but which might also become very costly. One interviewee in *Somalia* expressed the view that the subcontracting practices can result in very expensive interventions with comparatively little funding arriving at the level of beneficiaries.[43] At the same time, ROM findings show that interventions that were assessed positively for sustainability indictors, were also assessed with high levels of ownership amongst local stakeholders (see Annex 11).

Negative experiences with the choice of implementing partners were reported from the implementation of *cross-border* interventions and illustrates the challenges of achieving results for projects implemented by large agencies under an indirect management modality (see Box 6). The negative experiences were also confirmed by one project by *South Sudan* where challenges with the implementation of an indirectly managed project were reported. But the same case mentions that the contracting of pillar-assessed UN agencies resulted in advantages for a small EUD in Juba with limited staff, which generated less work due to the use of this modality. (I3.1.1)

Box 6: Challenges with indirect management and large pillar assessed agencies

The ROM of a GIZ-implemented *cross-border* intervention for *Sudan* and *Ethiopia* illustrates how indirectly managed SO2 funded interventions may result in problems. The contract was signed between the EU and the German Ministry for international cooperation (BMZ), then delegated by BMZ to GIZ which signed contracts with nine implementing organisations – a set-up which has introduced a lengthy and bureaucratic process that has affected the timeliness of decisions and actions because the mobilisation of the nine implementing partners had to be decided on by the BMZ. Moreover, the indirect management modality has given limited space for the EUD in the two implementation countries to introduce modifications to enhance effectiveness. For example, a decision to raise salaries was taken by the delegated organisation (GIZ) without involving the EUD on time.

In the case of another indirectly managed *cross-border* intervention, implemented by UNDP in the Moyale cluster, questions were raised about the implementing partner's prior presence and networks in borderland regions. Earlier evaluations and interviewees noted that UNDP faced considerable difficulties to effectively operate in hard to reach and complex contexts of this borderland region, due amongst others to security clearance issues, their difficulties to establish an active presence in the region, and work with

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43 There were no studies done on this issue in Somalia to support this view. But the observations correspond to international studies on the extent to which cooperation support arrives at the level of beneficiaries. The OECD/DAC 2011 Report on Aid Effectiveness, for example, found that a significant share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) did not reach the final beneficiaries due to administrative costs, donor-country expenses, and intermediary organizations.

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local partners and networks. The perception by local stakeholders, of lead implementing agencies being 'remote' in their management and decision-making, also emerges from ROM reporting. (I3.1.1)

The project approach is the predominant, though not the only delivery method. Across countries, the EUDs preferred the project approach to implement SO2 interventions. The advantages and disadvantages of the project approach are well known having been the subject of scrutiny under the aid effectiveness discussions over the past two decades. These include, among others, the risk of fragmentation, the undermining of ownership and the creation of hurdles to build local capacities. In the case of *Kenya*, however, it was found from interviews that the project approach provided a mix of flexibility and control that enabled technical agencies to closely accompany the strengthening of beneficiaries at community level, whilst also being able to engage collaboratively with relevant public authorities who were considered to be part of the delivery team. And discussions in *Uganda* revealed an overall satisfaction with the way implementing partners and the technical staff of local public administrations aligned and interacted on a day-to-day basis, though one district local government commented on the difficulties encountered in coordinating a myriad of INGO projects. For *Somalia*, the EU changed from a multitude of smaller resilience projects in the past, to bigger programmes under SO2 funding. The continuation of the project approach was considered most appropriate considering the weakness of government structures – in particular in the domain of food security and resilience support. In *Ethiopia*, the Decentralised Disaster Risk Management (DDRM) programme, implemented via shared management, was praised by the national counterparts interviewed because it promoted ownership and alignment with the policy framework and programming at federal, regional, and local plans.[44] (I3.1.2)

SO2 funding was also used to finance interventions in the health sector in *South Sudan* via the UK-managed Pooled Health Fund which provided additional leverage to discuss health policy issues with the Government, enhanced donor coordination and allowed for a wide geographical spread, covering seven out of ten states. In *Sudan*, SO2 funding co-financed the World Bank managed STARS Multi-Donor-Trust-Fund which allowed the EU to accompany macro-economic reforms, the provision of technical assistance and the improvement of basic services. In *Somalia*, approximately EUR 100 million was provided via an EU State and Resilience Building Contract (general budget support) to the Federal Government of *Somalia* for strengthening constitutional reform and governance, macro-economic reform and education. Considering the highly fragile situation across the country, this EUTF support – funded under the SO4 objective – was considered a contribution to strengthening the overall resilience and development of *Somalia,* albeit indirectly This support helped to stabilise the country's macroeconomic situation and was used to pay for the salaries of teachers in different regions of Somalia. This was to the benefit of very diverse communities, including the vulnerable parts of the population (I3.1.2) In *Kenya*, a portion of EUTF funds were assigned to a pooled fund managed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which aimed at incentivising private sector solutions to self-reliance and resilience building among host and refugee communities.

4.3.2 Choice of Implementation Approaches: The adoption of specific implementation approaches to support interventions helped to achieve and sustain resilience results. (JC3.2)

Judgement summary: **The different implementation approaches, i.e. multi-sector, HDP nexus, localisation and conflict sensitivity, contributed to achieve SO2 results. However, localisation was difficult to address with the exception of *Kenya* and *Uganda*.** The extent to which these approaches helped to sustain SO2 results in the fragile countries and *cross-border* interventions is limited whilst in *Kenya* and *Uganda*, they contributed to sustainable results, especially the use of multisector approaches and HDP Nexus. A multi-sector approach was chosen for a considerable number of SO2 interventions across the region. This approach was considered relevant and appropriate because it helped to address multiple intertwined factors contributing to fragility, crises

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[44] The DDRM is implemented under a Financing Agreement signed in May 2019 with the Federal Ministry of Finance, with direct grants managed by the National Disaster Risk Management Commission in collaboration with the decentralised DRM commissions in the targeted regional states.

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and conflict. The respective country situation, government capacity, the complexity of tasks to be tackled and the way implementing partners interacted with each other and with country partners at different levels determined the success of this approach. Different sources confirmed that SO2 funding played an important role in operationalising the HDP Nexus, by bringing the EUDs and ECHO together for joint SO2-related interventions with positive results in terms of linking humanitarian and development related engagements. Linkages with the peace element of the HDP nexus could be traced, for example in the case of *Somalia* and the linkages made with stabilisation support, though opportunities in this regard were not fully exploited according to stakeholders interviewed. The main reason given is related to the different funding arrangements and processes whereby the provision of humanitarian support, due to its short timeframe and the way funding decisions are taken, is not harmonised with the provision of longer-term resilience support (or vice versa). Attempts to strengthen the capacity and participation of country stakeholders were made at micro, meso and macro level but there is considerable room for improving the localisation of interventions, i.e. putting the management and execution of SO2 project activities more in the hands of local stakeholders. Findings concerning the promotion of conflict sensitive engagements are mixed, mainly because the do-no-harm approach was often only implicitly deployed. All findings confirm that the four approaches were relevant for achieving the SO2 objectives but the extent to which they supported sustainability differed considerably between the four fragile countries on the one hand and the two relative stable economies, *Kenya* and *Uganda*, on the other, where positive efforts were made to embed the resilience support into country-owned frameworks and institutional structures.

Findings: The **multi-sector approach** was promoted across the SO2 interventions. It was considered appropriate and helped address resilience challenges in a mutually reinforcing way but with varying results. The appropriateness of the approach was also strongly confirmed by the online-survey respondents but finding the right balance between depth and breadth of the engagement was not always easy to find and was at times underestimated according to statements made (see Annex 8.) Many SO2 interventions throughout the HoA were designed from a multi-sector perspective whereby in some countries, such as *Somalia* and *Ethiopia*, interventions built on programmes which had been designed and implemented as of the start of the NIP 2014-2020. Across the region, interventions designed from a multi-sector approach perspective were considered an appropriate response to counter the various factors contributing to fragility and crises. Evidence from *Uganda* and *Kenya* show that the support was undertaken from a holistic view of resilience building at different scales in a refugee and host context which included an appreciation that actions at the micro level to promote community level resilience had to be complemented by actions taken at the meso and macro levels. Because SO2 interventions were focused on the same target groups (refugees and host communities) and operated in the same geographical areas, i.e. in the specific parts of the two countries where refugee camps/ settlements were located, opportunities were created to build synergy and complementarity between the different SO2 interventions. Mutually reinforcing effects were also promoted in the other countries, but were only partially realised due to the wide geographical spread of support (as in *Somalia*'s case), low government capacity, natural and man-made disasters and crises occurring throughout the region. In *Ethiopia*, projects contributing to the different RESET programmes worked through multiple pathways with the intention to complement each other to address livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, food, nutrition and WASH issues. But this often led to extensive lists of activities without creating synergy and complementarity. Similar findings were obtained from the support under the *Cross-Border* interventions. Studies found that coordination and complementarity between different implementing partners, while strongly formulated during the design, did not unfold in practice. Project evaluations and ROM reports noted that complementarities and synergies, to integrate conflict prevention activities with socio-economic development and resilience activities in *cross-border* areas, did not materialise. In *Somalia*, the large scale and complexity of the ILED programme[45], combining multiple administrative levels, sectors and stakeholders under a territorial programming approach, made it difficult to create synergetic effects. The difficulty to create such effects were mainly due to the big number of implementing organisations,

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[45] ILED stands for Inclusive Local and Economic Development and aimed to contribute to stability in *Somalia* by extending state authority and services, promoting local reconciliation and peacebuilding, creating inclusive economic opportunities and protecting the most vulnerable.

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each having their own ways of working, and the different administrative levels of implementation (national, federal state level, municipal and other local government levels) which required an intense coordination with different local public administration structures working at these different levels (I3.2.1)

The SO2 support helped to promote the whereby linkages between humanitarian and development initiatives were often successfully implemented, also in situations of insecurity and in peacebuilding contexts. EUDs and ECHO offices in several countries collaborated closely and strengthened relationships by promoting linkages between humanitarian support and SO2 development-oriented interventions. The HDP nexus thereby served as an orientation for linking humanitarian and development activities with positive effects. This was noted from interviews and documented in studies on *Sudan*, *Somalia*, *Ethiopia*, *Kenya* and *Uganda* and confirmed by the majority of statements made in the online-survey (see Annex 8). In the latter two countries, the approach was used to create a bridge between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development support which was in line with the respective government's CRRF policy, which has adopted the HD (P) Nexus as an underlying way of working, i.e. to help refugees to find a pathway to settle and to build up their new life. The peace element across SO2 interventions was less articulated but not absent in so far as most interventions addressed the need to strengthen social cohesion (some also provided local conflict management support) at community level among refugee and IDP communities and between refugee and host communities. But there is space to stress the peace element more, as mentioned in reports from *Sudan* and *Somalia*. In the latter country, there is evidence of a very positive EUD/ECHO HDP nexus experience from the former joint social protection support (SAGAL I). However, under SAGAL II, which will be funded via NDICI-GE, there will no longer be a shock response mechanism funded by ECHO because of reduced budgets and pressure on ECHO to focus on those districts with critical humanitarian needs. Positive experiences were also recorded from linking shorter-term FPI funded stabilisation interventions with longer-term resilience and development funded partially via SO2 support.[46] Implementing partners mentioned that the approach allowed for flexibility (see also JC4.1) and helped to shift predominant humanitarian/emergency ways of thinking towards a more developmental one, as reported from *Kenya* and *Somalia* and supported by relevant EU studies on the HDP Nexus (see also Annex 12). A case in this regard is also reported from a study on the implementation of the HDP Nexus, as highlighted in Box 7. But SO2 funding also allowed to adapt programmes whereby a former stronger development-oriented support was oriented towards more humanitarian needs, as found in the highly volatile *South Sudan* context and war-afflicted *Sudan* and *Ethiopia* situations. Interviews on *cross-border* interventions also confirmed that SO2 development-oriented support, informed by an HD nexus perspective, was quickly adapted to respond to external shocks, i.e. droughts and floods. In *Ethiopia*, the HD nexus was practiced already in many projects before the start of the EUTF and widened towards a more concretely formulated HDP nexus country framework (2023) which spans from immediate humanitarian relief and protection to durable solutions and social integration. The complementary crisis modifier funding[47] for *Ethiopia* (see also JC4.2), formulated in response to the evolving civil war context, helped to operationalise this framework. (I3.2.2).

Box 7: HDP in practice – Linking ECHO and EUTF education support in Uganda

As part of its support to addressing the educational needs of refugees, ECHO has financed the construction and operations of education facilities in refugee settlements that offer accelerated progression through primary school grades for refugee children and youth (Accelerated Education Programme). The Norwegian Refugee Council, a primarily humanitarian organisation, which also works on developmental issues was one of the providers of such services.

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[46] Reference is made to T05-EUTF-HoA-SO-57-02 – ILED – Stabilisation and Peace Dividends, implemented by NIS Foundation.

[47] This is a flexible financial mechanism integrated into development programs that allows for the rapid allocation of (additional) resources to respond to emerging crises without disrupting ongoing long-term projects.

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The challenge has always remained, what next? How to ensure continuity for graduates of this education opportunity. In practice, it has been something of a lottery as to which project or agency might pick up the responsibility. In Uganda, as a result of closer collaboration between ECHO and the EU Delegation, it was possible to ensure that students would be accommodated in post-primary education and training schemes funded through the EUTF via interventions implemented by the Belgian agency Enabel and the German GIZ. The OCEA TVET school in Rhino camp provides one such example. Beyond training on-site, the projects offered start up kits and mentorship to trainees seeking to set up their own businesses. It also offered training and financial support to existing TVET establishments in the region so that they could also absorb some of the refugee student intake.

What is noteworthy is that the youths who opted to continue to secondary school were able to cover part of their schooling expenses through the cash transfer allowance provided to them by humanitarian agencies, illustrating the dynamic link between humanitarian and developmental processes in the context of the refugee response. The EUTF funding was provided via T05-EUTF-HOA-UG-07-01 & T05-EUTF-HOA-UG-39-01).

Opportunities to promote the **localisation agenda** remained mostly limited but a multitude of actions was undertaken to strengthen local ownership and capacities at different levels. The localisation agenda through which local organisations and communities are enabled to execute activities on their own has only been partially promoted across countries. This finding was confirmed through the online survey where respondents mentioned that the inclusion of local NGO's, for example, was practiced under a certain number of contracts, but the promotion of the localisation agenda remained low – also because there was no generic requirement under EUTF operations to do so (see also Annex 8). While there are examples of local NGOs in *Somalia* and *Uganda* responding successfully to EUD Calls for Proposals (in one case leading to an all-*Uganda* consortium) these are few and rather the exception. A couple of local NGOs are part of INGO managed consortia, as also found in *Somalia* and *Uganda*. Interviews with the *Uganda*n CRRF secretariat also revealed that localisation – broadly understood to include the participation and strengthening of partner country institutions – is now being advocated by the *Uganda*n government as it impacts directly on sustainability. A similar line is taken by the *Kenya*n government. In the highly fragile countries, the ability to promote the localisation agenda through public institutions and via local NGOs is much more limited due to capacity constraints. The *South Sudan* case reports that under the lead of UN-OCHA a strategy for localisation was developed in 2023 which is laudable, but only a first step. INGOs also pointed out during interviews that project proposals submitted to the EU in response to Calls for Proposals in all countries are now required to include the participation of local NGOs. Both examples show that efforts are made to address this issue seriously.

So far, however, interventions in the fragile countries (with some exceptions as mentioned above in the case of *Somalia*) deployed a multitude of efforts to strengthen local ownership, capacity development and participation in the context of SO2 interventions. This comprised the subcontracting of targeted activities to local NGOs and community-based organisations, the training of local stakeholders, specific efforts to incorporate local knowledge, designing activities that build on existing structures and mechanisms (such as functioning peace or disaster response/early warning committees or networks) or the support given to formulate local strategies and policies so as to shape the preconditions for handing over at a later stage. Interviews with INGO staff in *Somalia* also reveal that in the implementation of activities at the lowest levels, in particular in areas which are difficult to access due to the security situation, working without locally embedded organisations would be impossible. In *Sudan*, various projects undertook efforts to closely consult with, and to empower local actors (including local leaders and communities, farmers associations, community-based organisations etc.). They also built on existing structures and mechanisms (e.g. existing networks/ farmers' groups) and, in other instances, created new structures when those were missing. Here, as a by-product of the overall project logic while not formulated explicitly in the design, there is evidence that forms of localisation are promoted. Overall, the inclusion and participation of communities, local authorities and state governments in project planning and implementation are

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core aspects of interventions, but – as findings from *Ethiopia* show – there is space to enhance coordination and the integration of local authorities in SO2 interventions. (I3.2.3)

Conflict sensitive approaches are followed often implicitly but several cases show that dedicated conflict analyses were undertaken as part of project design and in the context of project implementation. Conflict sensitivity varied across projects in the region and was mostly implicitly taken into account. Implementing partners stated that they have been present since many years in the HoA, built significant experience working in humanitarian and conflict contexts and are sensitive to crises and conflicts. Implementing partners have – in theory – to do a conflict analysis as part of project design, but there is limited evidence to suggest that conflict analyses were a strong guiding element during project implementation. In *Uganda* and *Kenya*, conflict analysis studies were generally not carried out as stand-alone activities, largely because the topics of conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm were enshrined in the principles guiding the CRRF approach, and which informed the overall design of SO2 interventions. Research commissioned by Irish Aid (2023) found that in the case of the social protection intervention SAGAL in *Somalia*, a SO2 intervention, conflict sensitivity was not a prominent consideration at the design stage. This is in line with non-EUTF funded actions, such as in the FAO cash programming action in *Somalia* (2022) where the evaluation found that conflict sensitive approaches were not sufficiently integrated into programming despite the Description of Action stipulating that conflict assessments were to be carried out. A summary of third-party monitoring reports from *Somalia*, covering also SO2 interventions, found that only a few implementing partners embedded conflict analysis more explicitly in project design and implementation. Findings from *Sudan* also display a mixed picture in as far as only in selected cases, formal conflict assessments were conducted. In the cases of *South Sudan*, the EUD provided support to the *South Sudan* Conflict Sensitive Resource Facility, which undertakes studies and training on conflict sensitivity, but an interviewee stressed that could not be seen as a viable alternative to a dedicated project specific conflict analysis. Moreover, staff turnover in *South Sudan* is high which risks that valuable conflict related knowledge gets lost with the change of personnel. For *cross-border* interventions, findings show that conflict sensitivity was more explicitly taken into account, but the situation differs between projects and implementing partners. A case was found where a conflict analysis was explicitly undertaken to inform the project implementation but not used according to a project evaluation. In other cases, one project strongly integrated a conflict sensitivity component into their management system and trained staff members on conflict sensitivity, and another project included a stand-alone objective to promote conflict sensitive development support. (I3.2.4)

4.3.3 Incorporation of Cross-cutting Issues: Cross-cutting issues have been integrated into the design of interventions in order to ensure the achievement of resilience results. (JC3.3)

<u>Judgement summary</u>: **There is strong evidence that gender aspects were strongly taken into account during project design and implementation. Interventions also promoted a human rights-based approach by taking account of the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups. And environmental protection considerations were part and parcel of many interventions.** The overall finding indicates that interventions have made a conscious effort to address various aspects of gender in all countries and as part of the *cross-border* interventions, though these efforts are not always based on a systematic gender context analysis**.** In relation to gender equality and the rights of women and girls, a more systematic upfront gender analysis could have helped ensure a more purposeful and strategic approach to promoting gender transformative approaches. In *Kenya* and *Uganda*, projects scored well in terms of creating opportunities for women to improve food security, enhance the nutritional status of infants and children and engage in income generation activities. In *Ethiopia*, *Somalia* and the *cross-border* interventions, projects achieved good results by presenting successful initiatives, such as promoting women's economic groups. Women also played key roles in livestock value chains, such as dairy, vaccines, and hydroponic fodder production and the fisheries value chain. Lack of systematic gender analysis, limited funding, and the absence of GBV considerations in project design contributed to weak gender integration and

protection mechanisms, with GBV often treated as a protection issue rather than a prevention or a resilience-building priority.

Projects in *Sudan* achieved positive gender-equality outcomes, such as increased incomes for female farmers (GIZ IMPROVE) and greater empowerment with shifts in traditional roles (SD WHH), but challenges such as limited gender mainstreaming and reactive approaches highlight the need for more systematic analysis and inclusive planning.

Attention for vulnerable groups is evident from several countries, including from an intersectional perspective, with attention for vulnerable groups in environmental protection measures; or attention for specific groups of women (e.g. lactating mothers). Environmental protection, rehabilitation and refurbishment were part of several SO2 funded projects implemented in *Sudan*, but also in the Mandera Triangle (under BORESHA, *cross-border* intervention). For several projects, the risks of droughts and floods as fast onset climate change were in fact the primary reason for project interventions. In *Somalia*, NRM and Early Warning Committees promoted environmental protection and helped communities adapt to climate shocks, improving food and water security. NRM committees implemented activities such as road rehabilitation, waste management, and construction of solar-powered water systems. The Early Warning Committees also provided social support, helping families affected by floods, offering financial aid to farmers and orphans in need, and the construction of gabions to prevent flooding. NRM interventions in *Uganda* have addressed forest resource management and tensions through energy-saving stoves, alternative fuels, and eco-friendly businesses.

Findings: In relation to most SO2 programmes reviewed, there is evidence across interventions that **gender** aspects were taken into account, including a focus on the equitable participation of women. The reviewed programmes explicitly focused on support to women though gender analyses were not always conducted prior to implementation. ROM reviews noted that 23% of interventions were identified with inadequate provisions for mainstreaming gender within the design and having an explicit gender action plan that was implemented in practice. While ROM findings note that most interventions did well in terms of beneficiary selection and participation, interventions fell short in terms of having actual systemised strategies for the advancement of women in terms of achieved outcomes (see Annex 11).

It is clear, however, that activities throughout the countries reviewed were designed with the promotion of women's economic empowerment in mind. For instance, in *Somalia*, support to Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) was predominantly targeted towards vulnerable women, including women in IDP camps and through this support, many women were able to access money to invest in their businesses and have a social fund which they could tap into in case of personal emergencies like illnesses and deaths of family members and relatives. Women were involved in committees and consulted in prioritising and location of community projects. (I3.3.1)

Similarly, most participants in the VSLAs in *Uganda* and those supported by BORESHA (implemented in the Mandera Triangle, Mandera Triangle between *Kenya*, *Ethiopia* and *Somalia*) were women. In *South Sudan*, interviewees from implementing partners highlighted the SO2 projects' commitment to gender inclusivity, emphasising that involving all community members improves effectiveness. Examples included female leadership in VSLAs, women entrepreneurs, and various trained beneficiaries across sectors like baking, agriculture, and trade. Similar findings can be extracted from the case of Sudan, as highlighted in greater detail in Box 8 below.

Box 8: Women empowerment through EUTF SO2 support in Sudan

In Sudan, one implementing partner invested considerable time in building trust with women and their communities. According to a final project evaluation, this significantly improved the uptake and sustainability of activities—women felt more empowered, and their new roles were recognized and appreciated by their husbands and community members. They diversified their income and became increasingly integrated into the fisheries value chain, engaging in fishmeal production and net repair. This

shift in gender roles was particularly striking given the region's strong traditional norms. Beyond fisheries, long-term trust-building efforts continued to strengthen women's economic participation, expanding their access to resources and decision-making opportunities. Women played key roles in various livelihood initiatives, benefiting from interventions that provided financial support and skills training to grow their businesses. Environmental protection was also a priority, with projects tackling drought resilience, flood risk management, and sustainable resource use to help communities adapt to climate shocks.

In *Kenya*, certain activities attracted women's participation more than others – examples include trading, food preparation and baking, backyard/ kitchen gardening, whilst others attracted women and men in more equal numbers – larger scale horticultural production, apiary, poultry raising. In *Somalia*, however, despite the active support of vulnerable women, field findings show many challenges facing women cooperatives and individual businesswomen. Men in the fishing sector in Somaliland, for example, have been opposed to the support of women in the fishing value chain, seeing this as a threat to their business. Men still dominate the fishing sector in all sections of the value chain, and this has made it difficult for women beneficiaries to feel any remarkable improvements in their incomes as they are confined to the marketing section of the value chain. (I3.3.1)

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a significant issue, particularly in conflict-affected areas. This was also noted as particularly relevant for women living in border regions in the project designed under the *cross-border* intervention (for example for BORESHA II). Reports highlight the role of humanitarian crises in exacerbating gender inequalities and increasing vulnerabilities. In *Ethiopia* the MIP 2024-2027 stresses the need for protection mechanisms and cultural changes to address the root causes of GBV, but little evidence of SO2 interventions has been found to have specifically addressed this issue. The Omo Delta Project, adopted an explicit Do-No-Harm approach, combined with gender sensitive and participatory approaches in order to better understand and implement decisions in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner. In *Kenya*, interviews with community members found that women remain exposed to GBV which may be triggered by different factors. A key risk factor is firewood collection where incidences of rape perpetrated against women and girls often occur. One of the *cross-border* programmes applied its Safeguards Gender management system, and conducted a dedicated gender analysis to inform its planned interventions. They also designed a special intervention following a demand from local women's groups, including following a high increase in GBV during Covid-19. Despite this, the programme was found to miss gender specific indicators and measurement approaches to measure achievements. (I3.3.1)

Documentary evidence on the inclusion of **vulnerable groups** is evident in the design and implementation of the Social Transfer for Vulnerable People (SAGAL) in *Somalia* project which provided long-term and predictable cash transfer to the most vulnerable groups. The target groups were pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and persons living with disabilities and youth. Unfortunately, differences exist between the EU's approach in support of these beneficiaries (supporting categories of vulnerable people (categorical targeting) and the World Bank's social protection approach (supporting the most economically vulnerable individuals based on proxy means testing) - an issue which is not specific to Somalia or the HoA. In *Ethiopia*, the final evaluation of the RDPP addressed protection issues through judiciary training, legal aid support, and peace committees. Local universities played a key role in raising awareness about refugee rights, and protection measures included specialised training for workers on women's rights in marriage-related issues. The targeting of pregnant and lactating mothers as well as of orphaned children and child-headed households in the agro-nutrition interventions in *Kenya* suggest a deliberate attention to addressing vulnerabilities. (I3.3.2)

There is evidence that some interventions considered **environmental protection** and considerations to help vulnerable communities. Environmental assessments were for example undertaken under the *cross-border* programme BORESHA, in the Mandera Triangle. In *Somalia*, NRM committees implemented activities such as waste management (collection of rubbish), road rehabilitation (roads were damaged by floods), construction of multi-use water systems with solar power tanks and clearing of prosopis (an invasive plant). Early Warning Committees implemented

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flood protection measures and provided social support, including cash-for-work schemes, farm rehabilitation, and aid to vulnerable community members. In *Uganda*, agriculture projects in West Nile adapted to erratic rainfall by promoting early soil preparation, drought-tolerant crops, and soil moisture retention, with some projects incorporating enhanced NRM practices. A number of projects directly addressed forest destruction caused by indiscriminate cutting of trees for fuelwood and production of charcoal. In *Kenya* interventions in Turkana and Garissa addressed environmental challenges through water management, climate-resilient agriculture, and alternative livelihoods, even though challenges such as the impact of the drought continue to affect the implementation of projects. The Final Impact Study of BORESHA II found it contributed to environmental sustainability by, on the one hand reducing environmental degradation through better rangeland management and rangeland rehabilitation and on the other hand by improving community consultation, improved access to natural resources and supporting conflict mitigation mechanisms. (I3.3.3)

4.4   EQ4 – Efficiency of delivery

EQ4: To what extent were EUTF SO2 interventions designed and delivered in a timely and flexible manner to enable results to be achieved?

Overall response: SO2 interventions were considered flexible and, in as far as the EU's work processes are concerned, timely in most cases thereby contributing to the attainment of resilience results.

Summary response: SO2 interventions were mostly able to respond to needs in a timely manner and when required, however some of the benefits of smooth approval processes were lost by factors beyond the control of the EUTF, such as delays caused by financial regulations and a range of external factors, e.g., civil strife or natural shock events, the Covid-19 pandemic in particular. SO2 projects generally provided sufficient flexibility to adapt to and respond to evolving contexts and needs across most HoA countries. Flexibility was in part made possible by the instrument's streamlined decision-making processes, but equally important were other factors such as having crisis declarations and crises modifiers built into project designs, the close and facilitating working relationships between EUD staff and implementing partners and the decentralised set-up of the EUTF which gave a key role to EUDs to identify and follow up on priorities in line with the requirements of the country context.

Detailed response: Most SO2 interventions were implemented in a **timely** manner and without incurring long delays. EU internal processes and procedures facilitated a comparatively streamlined identification and decision-making process, but approvals could be delayed due to EU financial rules and procedural requirements beyond the control of the EUTF. In some instances, the delays were considered too long, though implementing partners were generally satisfied with the turn-around time for launching projects. Interviews with EUD staff in countries, which benefited from the EU's crisis declaration, acknowledged that the EUTF brought along a couple of benefits with respect to timeliness, but they did not find that it facilitated more speedy approvals compared to the support provided through other instruments, but stressed its relevance in terms of flexibility (see further details below). SO2 support in *Kenya* and *Uganda* was primarily developmental and aligned with country-led coordination and planning frameworks which did not put timeliness and responsiveness under a particular test. External factors were often at the origin of delays, which could include coordination problems among implementing partners, the missing approval of partner authorities, land disputes or the effects of natural shocks or political crises. Here Covid-19 stands out having had an impact across all country and *cross-border* interventions. From the point of view of timeliness, the pandemic meant that the start-up of new projects had to be delayed whilst on-going projects were forced to slow down. Consequently, a large number of projects had to request no-cost extensions. (JC4.1)

Findings confirm that SO2 interventions were sufficiently **flexible** to adapt and respond to unforeseen developments in the projects' environment, to evolving contexts and to new needs. Project flexibility was particularly, and positively, tested during Covid-19. But, also in other cases

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of natural shocks (across most countries in the region) and the outbreak of civil war (*Sudan* and *Ethiopia*), interventions could be flexibly adapted. As various interviews confirmed, the observed flexibility was not so much facilitated through EUTF design or procedures alone, but through the interplay of several factors. The EUTF's comparatively streamlined decision-making process avoided lengthy "comitology" approval procedures, but the instrument was still bound by the financial rules of the EU which could reduce the actual level of flexibility. In the case of *Ethiopia* and *cross-border* programmes, a crisis modifier provision was built into projects enhancing the flexibility of implementation. In other countries in the region, operations were supported in terms of their flexibility through a crisis declaration. Another factor was the perceived attitude and willingness of EUD staff to work flexibly and to explore together with implementing partners ways forward. This was supported by a close working relationship between EUTF management at HQ and the staff tasked with managing EUTF interventions at the EUD level (see also JC5.1). Another factor stressed during interviews was the decentralised set-up in terms of decision-making arrangements of the EUTF which gave a lead role to EUDs for identifying, designing and adapting interventions in line with the requirements of the country context. (JC4.2)

4.4.1 Timeliness of Interventions: Interventions have been able to respond to the resilience needs of vulnerable communities in a timely manner. (JC4.1)

__Judgement summary__: **Most SO2 interventions were implemented in a timely manner and without incurring significant delays, whereby "timely" refers to the planning of interventions from the EU's side and to timely action in response to shocks and crises.** There were few criticisms made of this aspect by project beneficiaries or public authorities and generally implementing partners were satisfied with the turn-around time for launching projects. Timeliness was facilitated by a comparatively streamlined identification and approval process, which allowed for a certain responsiveness to emerging needs. This was attributed to fewer approval and review steps and fewer demands for upfront diagnostic work, it was also facilitated by the EUTF's decentralised decision-making arrangements which gave a key role to EUDs for identifying project opportunities. Fast approvals were, however, undermined by sometimes protracted contract negotiation and project launch periods. This was largely attributed to EU financial rules and procedural requirements beyond the control of the EUTF. There were some instances whereby contracted parties, working in consortia, experienced delays in mobilisation, due to management and coordination challenges. Implementation could also be held up due to contractors failing to satisfy compliance requirements that would then delay disbursements and timely implementation of activities. External factors could also impact on project timeliness. The most obvious example was Covid-19, especially during periods of lock-down, which resulted in some project start-ups being delayed, and on-going projects having to be slowed down or put on hold. Other external factors included natural shock events, the onset of civil strife or conflict, or delays in receiving required approvals from partner authorities.

__Findings:__ Most countries confirm that SO2 projects were identified and approved in a timely manner. While this allowed projects to respond to emerging shocks and hazards at the right time, as in the case of both *Somalia* and *Sudan*, it was also noted by the EUD *Somalia* staff that the procedure for approvals was not faster and therefore not considered to differ substantially from support provided through the EDF and now NDICI-GE instruments. *South Sudan* also confirms a swift approval process but notes that this could be at the expense of design quality with omissions in terms of conducting needed upfront diagnostic studies such as on gender and conflict, but with assurances that these would be done at a later date. (I.4.1.1) EUTF HQ staff noted that there was pressure to launch projects as quickly as possible following the launch of the EUTF, and where possible to support projects that could build on on-going initiatives which would demand less preparatory work.

SO2 support in *Kenya* and *Uganda* was primarily development-oriented and aligned with country-led coordination and planning frameworks. As such issues of timeliness and responsiveness to fast onset crises and emergencies that characterised other countries was less apparent and as a result, the EUTF's internal delivery systems and processes were not put to the test to the same degree as in other countries.

The time saved through quick approval processes was in part attributed to the responsibility given to EUDs to determine how best to use EUTF funds for SO2 purposes. In this regard, HQ played a

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comparatively hands off role compared to some of the other more politically sensitive SOs, allowing for a more bottom-up approach to emerge. However, in the first years, their role was more directive (see also I.5.1.1). The hands-on role played by EUDs was mentioned favourably by implementing partners in *Kenya*, *Uganda* and *Sudan* who noted the close and collegial working relationship they developed with EUD staff, and which allowed for open exchanges and joint identification of solutions to problems that might arise (I4.1.1; I4.2.2) The avoidance of the Commission's usual comitology procedures as well as the fact that proposals did not have to be negotiated with partner countries, also meant that EUTF approvals could be realised far more quickly, whilst provisions to apply negotiated procedures rather than open call for proposals, in the context of direct management, also helped to speed up processes. (I4.1.1)

The advantages of a faster identification and approval process could however be undermined by lengthy contract negotiation processes with implementing partners. And on occasions delays in project mobilisation were experienced due to internal issues facing implementing partners' management capacity, as illustrated in Box 9 below.

Box 9: Project delays caused by inadequate consortium management arrangements

On a number of occasions, project start-ups were delayed, or implementation progressed slowly because of inadequacies in management arrangements put in place by consortium leads. Thus, in Uganda an inexperienced consortium lead had not adequately briefed other members of the consortium of the impending start of the project and had to hastily arrange a kick-off workshop to bring all consortium members up to speed on expected roles and responsibilities. In another project, delays arose in implementation because of difficulties encountered among consortium members in aligning their respective financial and procurement procedures. In Ethiopia, a project was delayed because implementing partners had also not put in place adequate management and coordination structures, whilst in South Sudan, delays due to the non-performance of an implementing partner impacted on the overall scheduling of activities with the result that most activity took place at the end of the contract period. This is confirmed by consolidated ROM reporting, which found that the lack of human resources (number and physical location) led to delays and more general projected management issues. Small, dedicated teams within the implementing agencies or project management units (based in HQ or regional hubs) were remote from project implementation; while sometimes missing specific expertise, and having to deal with a multitude of partners and complex issues over large geographic areas; especially in complex settings such as border areas (see Annex 11).

The launch of projects was on occasions delayed by factors external to the control of either the EU or implementing partners and, overall, these were considered by HQ staff to have a greater impact on project timeliness. In *Ethiopia*, the start-up of several projects was delayed by what was described as an "unconducive" policy environment, whilst in *Somalia*, a project was delayed because of an impasse between Mogadishu and Somaliland over land issues. *Cross-border* interventions were affected by sudden political flare-ups between countries such as between *Sudan* and *Ethiopia* over disputes associated with the Grand *Ethiopia*n Renaissance Dam. By comparison, the comparatively favourable and structured policy, planning and coordination frameworks for refugee management in both *Kenya* and *Uganda* meant that it was a relatively straightforward exercise to start up projects on time, although the threatened closure of camps by the *Kenya*n government in the early part of 2021, could have undermined the very basis for EUTF support to the country. (I4.1.1; I1.3.1)

Covid-19 had an impact across all country and *cross-border* programmes. From the point of view of timeliness, the pandemic meant that the start-up of new projects had to be delayed whilst on-going projects were required to slow down and to defer activities. *Cross-border* interventions, which brought communities together from different border areas were particularly affected by lock-down rules which prevented any *cross-border* movement, including for project teams. This included ad-hoc border closures due to armed group activities and disagreements between various security services, in particular in *Kenya*. As a result, a large number of projects had to subsequently request no-cost project extensions to allow them to fulfil their contractual commitments. However, there are also examples of projects that were able to catch up on lost time caused by delayed implementation

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as reported in a number of examples from *Sudan* and *Uganda*. This is also reflected in the consolidated ROM reporting, which found that overall, only 9% of interventions scored well ('green') under the four monitoring questions. The most problematic area concerned delays, not surprising given the COVID-19 pandemic. This was not a specific feature of EUTF projects, but many interventions were characterised as having unrealistic expectations with regard to completing the inception phase. These delays had knock-on effects on effectiveness, with a reported 62% of EUTF interventions experiencing some issues in terms of achieving their stated outcomes, at least within the initial foreseen timeframe (see Annex 11). (I4.1.1; I4.1.2)

4.4.2 Flexibility of Interventions: Programming and implementation of interventions were sufficiently flexible to adapt/ respond to evolving contexts and emerging needs. (JC4.2)

Judgement summary: SO2 projects generally provided sufficient flexibility to adapt to and respond to evolving contexts and needs across most HoA countries. Project flexibility was tested during the Covid-19 pandemic, which demanded a re-assignment of budgets to attend to emerging needs as well as an adjustment of project timelines including granting of no-cost extensions. Other external events such as conflict, outbreak of civil war as well as natural shocks prompted adjustments to priorities, geographical coverage and beneficiary selection. It could also lead to budget increases. It is difficult to claim that the observed flexibility was due to features of the EUTF design alone and seems more likely to have been the result of an interplay of factors. The instrument's streamlined decision-making processes did mean that requests to adjust projects could be dealt with more quickly, although this opportunity was not always used. Various implementing partners noted their close working relationship with the EUD, making it easier to discuss adjustments on an on-going basis. The attitude and willingness of EUD staff to work flexibly and explore ways forward was relevant here. The importance of having crisis modifiers in place to facilitate adjustments was noted in the *Ethiopia* case, and for *cross-border* programmes studied, but this seems to have been the exception rather than the rule across the region and adjustments could still be made even without this provision. In the case of the Covid-19 response, the urgency and scale of the pandemic meant, however, that adaptations were authorised across all instruments.

Findings: SO2 projects were sufficiently flexible to enable adaptation to and responsiveness to evolving contexts and needs. The extent to which this flexibility was drawn upon varied from country to country across the region. Its use was most apparent in *Ethiopia*, *Sudan* and *Somalia* and was also reported in the *cross-border* programmes, whilst its use in *South Sudan*, *Kenya* and *Uganda* was mentioned far less. In the case of the latter two countries, this could be attributed to the comparative stability and predictability of the operating environment and the fact that EUTF was mainly oriented towards programmed developmental work rather than to tackling emergent crises. (I4.2.1)

Project flexibility was on display during the Covid-19 pandemic, as illustrated in Box 10, below.

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Box 10: Adjusting project designs to take account of COVID-19

Across all HoA countries including *cross-border* interventions, the advent of the COVID pandemic demanded a re-assignment of project budgets to attend to emerging needs. Such needs included the provision of PPE, and the introduction of various hygiene and preventive measures in the project's working environment. Budgets were also set aside to support training of local authority staff and community focal points on preventive measures, and to cover the costs of awareness raising events and public education campaigns.

Covid-19 also resulted in various delays in project implementation brought about by social distancing rules and lockdown. This impacted particularly on activities that required close interaction among beneficiaries and between beneficiaries and project staff, such as training and on-the-job mentoring. As a consequence, there was need to adjust project timelines and to grant no-cost extensions, so that projects could catch up post-COVID. All indications are that these measures were implemented with comparative ease.

Other external events such as conflict and outbreak of civil war as well as on-set of natural disasters prompted adjustments (and in some cases, repurposing) of project designs including priorities, activities, geographical coverage and beneficiary selection. It also led to instances of budget top-ups. Perhaps the most acute example of this kind of adjustment was in *Sudan* where the military coup and the onset of civil war obliged the EU to introduce elements that were not foreseen in the beginning, such as a stronger orientation towards a humanitarian response in order to address immediate needs (e.g. cash transfers). However, in many instances, projects in *Sudan* had to be temporarily suspended following the outbreak of conflict. (I4.2.1)

It is difficult to conclude whether the reported flexibility was due to features of EUTFs institutional set up and/ or decision-making procedures, or the result of an interplay of different factors:

First, the EUTF's comparatively streamlined decision-making processes, which avoided the usual "comitology" did mean that requests to adjust projects could generally be dealt with more quickly. This did not however necessarily lead to a flurry of requests for change as indeed was the case in *South Sudan* where few requests for project adjustments were actually submitted. HQ also noted that whilst having a more streamlined decision-making process, the EUTF was still bound by financial rules which could reduce the actual level of flexibility. (I4.2.1)

Second, various implementing partners in different HoA countries, working under indirect and direct management arrangements, noted their close working relationship with EUD staff. As pointed out in *Uganda*, this made it easier to discuss the needs for project adjustments on an on-going basis. An important observation raised was the perceived attitude and willingness of EUD staff to work flexibly and to explore ways forward. Whilst one consortium representative regarded the EUTF's flexibility to be one its main value-additions, making use of that flexibility also required adaptiveness among implementing partners. In this regard, in one project in *Kenya*, criticism was levelled in an evaluation report at implementing partners for failing to find alternative ways to deliver project activities in the wake of Covid-19 restrictions. (I4.2.2)

Third, the importance of having a crisis modifier provision built into projects to facilitate adjustments was noted in *Ethiopia*, *South Sudan* and *cross-border* programmes. In *Ethiopia*, having this provision within the RESET II programme (amounting to Euro 8 million) allowed implementing partners to distribute agricultural inputs, conduct vaccination campaigns and introduce cash transfer schemes that were not initially foreseen. Several *cross-border* interventions note that being able to make adjustments to respond to emergent needs (e.g. Cholera outbreak, locust infestation etc.) helped projects to gain credibility among the local population, which might not have been the case if projects stuck to their original design parameters. Several interlocutors highlighted the role of EUD operational managers in facilitating close communication on, and the quick approval of, these adjustments (I4.2.1). The use of crisis modifiers, however, seems to have been the exception rather than the rule and adjustments could still be made even when this provision was not available. For example, in *Somalia*, funds set aside for community development were reassigned to support a cash for work intervention during the 2021-2022 drought, whilst in another project, activities were re-

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aligned to take account of a surge in IDPs arriving in urban areas. In *Sudan*, most projects either received budget top-ups or not-cost extensions, without recourse to a crisis modifier. (I4.2.1)

It is also not possible to say whether the observed flexibility of the EUTF instrument differed significantly from the flexibility offered by non-EUTF instruments. Most online-survey respondents suggested that EUTF rules, procedures and processes allowed for a degree of flexibility that distinguished it from other EU funding instruments, but views on the significance on the ground in terms of allowing interventions to be more responsive to changing needs and contexts were less clear. Though the majority of respondents agreed that comparatively fast project design and approval times at EU HQ and EUD level allowed the EUTF in principle to respond also more flexibly to identified needs (see Annex 8). The former EDF and now the NDICI-GE both offer some provisions for flexibility. In the case of the EDF, a Crisis Declaration would trigger more flexible procedures allowing for easier adjustment of budgets, as reported in *Somalia*, while the fund's "B" envelope meant that a certain portion of the country allocation could be assigned for humanitarian actions. In the case of NDICI-GE, the Rapid Response Pillar offers a mechanism to respond to emerging crises, while possibilities exist to mobilise additional funds from the regional envelope (under certain conditions) to respond to new demands, as noted in *Kenya* and *Uganda*. While a Crisis Declaration can offer some flexibility under NDICI-GE, the time required to have such a Declaration approved can be considerable, and in this regard, the EUTF is considered by some implementing partners to have been quicker at adapting to crisis situations. (I4.2.1)

The following qualifications to the EUTFs perceived flexibility are also noted: First, the observed flexibility of the EUTF during Covid-19 was *not* exceptional and similar flexibility was displayed by projects funded under other EU instruments. The political attention to and global significance of the pandemic meant that the re-purposing of projects, and re-assignment of budgets to attend to the pandemic was unavoidable. Second, the *Sudan* study notes that the EUTF proved less flexible than other instruments in terms of its ability to have unspent funds channelled to other purposes at country level, with the risk that the money would then have to be returned to the EU budget[48]. This insight, emanating from a comparatively high figure of unspent funds arising from the on-going civil war situation, was however not observed in the other countries. (I 4.2.1)

4.5 EQ5 – EUTF added value

EQ5: What has been the added value of EUTF's SO2 support in promoting community resilience in the HoA?	

Overall response: SO2 interventions in terms of their institutional set-up, the way they were connected with the work of other partners and the diverse contexts they covered, were able to promote resilience to a substantial number of vulnerable communities across the HoA and are considered to have demonstrated added value in support of SO2 objectives.

Summary response: Looking at the EUTF's SO2 added value from four perspectives, i.e. its institutional set-up; its ability to support resilience in highly fragile and poor governance contexts; its strengths vis-à-vis other donors; and its added value for *cross-border* regions, the funding – on balance – provided highly valued assistance to a substantial number of IDPs, refugees and (host) vulnerable communities. The institutional set-up was of added value for managing the implementation of SO2 projects; the support to situations of illegitimate and/or weak and/or absent public authorities, or stateless situations was not unique, but precious; it had an added value vis-à-vis EU member states and other donors; and it was a trend-setter with substantial funding in supporting vulnerable communities in *cross-border* regions.

Detailed response: Delivery of SO2 interventions was supported by a dedicated **institutional set-up** at HQ and country levels that proved helpful in accompanying SO2 interventions in the

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[48] The evaluation team was advised that this issue could arise because the EUTF has an end date for implementation of 31-12-2025. Unspent money has to be returned to three different sources: i) EDF ii) general budget and iii) member states. In principle money returned to the EDF can be returned back to the country EUD to be assigned to other projects.

field (as already noted in EQ 4). The appointment of staff at EUD level helped ensure adequate oversight and influence over project implementation, while in several country contexts the presence of staff facilitated horizontal interactions with other EUD services, EU member states and other international partners. This proved instrumental in promoting the HDP Nexus while facilitating EU engagement in policy dialogue processes, thereby making the EU a relevant player in support of resilience across the HoA. The HQ set-up had the character of an integrated "task team" (geo and thematic desks were co-opted by EUTF units to work together horizontally on EUTF assignments) overseeing country level activities and ensuring open lines of communication and exchange with geographic and thematic desks. The outbreak of civil war In *Sudan* and *Ethiopia*, caused disruptions at the EUD level resulting in more siloed approaches and limited cross-fertilisation across EU interventions at the level of EU services. Coordination between EU services in support of *cross-border* interventions was not optimal because these interventions oriented their engagements along country lines. The EU developed – though fairly late in the process - an impressive EUTF knowledge management system comprising an MLS and REF, which in combination generated considerable data and knowledge. However, while this helped HQ to "tell the story" and account for results, the potential of both the MLS to shape the design of interventions, was not fully explored at the country level. It was noted that the MLS had too many output indicators and insufficient outcome indicators, which reduced its utility as a decision-making and learning tool, and in fact greater attention was given to reporting rather than monitoring and learning. The REF, on the contrary, produced detailed studies which were used by some EUDs to shape project designs. (JC5.1)

SO2 interventions were able to provide resilience support in **situations of illegitimate and/or weak and/or absent public authorities**, in a number of country contexts where other funders were less willing or less able to engage. The engagement via SO2 funding was not unique but the EU's support, compared to other international partners, was of added value because of the amount and the duration of funding mobilised. It was also able to complement other EU support for stabilisation actions, as in the case of *Somalia*. The support to such highly fragile situations included working directly with local communities with the assistance of local actors in contexts of illegitimate states as well as helping to restore basic services and to provide social infrastructure in areas where state authority remained weak or had only recently been (re)established. In its *cross-border* intervention, SO2 support was also able to reach historically neglected border regions where public authority attention has been limited and where few donors have invested. SO2 funds also served to complement EU country funding (in the past via the EDF, today via NDICI-GE) by venturing into peripheral areas beyond the scope of core stabilisation programmes. In the absence of an agreement with the *Sudan*ese government during the time of the Bashir regime, the EUTF could support vulnerable communities in *Sudan* directly without seeking a formal agreement under the Cotonou Agreement. This constituted an added value for the EU's cooperation with *Sudan* and was relevant in support of vulnerable communities from 2016, but today counts for much less due to the introduction of the NDICI-GE which does not function along a similar formal framing. (JC5.2)

The SO2 funding was also of added value vis-à-vis the support provided by **EU member states and other international partners**. Noteworthy is that the EU was not the only international partner able to support vulnerable communities across the HOA. But the SO2 support was doing so in a timely and responsive way, whereby the size and duration of SO2 funding, and the multi-sector character of the support provided, stood out as defining features – also labelled a "game changer" in support of the HDP Nexus in *Somalia*. These features moreover enabled the EU to connect with a variety of international partners (World Bank, USAID, UN agencies, UK) both EU member states and other donors, working on complementarity themes in support of resilience. The collaboration with the UK in *South Sudan* in the health sector, for example, was seen as a very valuable form of collaboration to ensure a wide coverage of support. The SO2 funding allowed projects that built upon completed interventions funded from other sources or served as a platform for other funders to pick up from completed SO2 funded initiatives. *Cross-border* interventions are an example of the latter, where SO2 helped to kick-start attention to vulnerable communities and motivated other donors to follow. Such complementarity of action contributed to intensifying and broadening coverage and reach and in some instances facilitated a continuation of support, potentially leading

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to the sustainability of results. This worked well where donors were seeing eye to eye and where there was a stronger degree of country led coordination but was less obvious in contexts of conflict and civil war where there might be different viewpoints on how best to engage. The latter was the case in *Ethiopia* where, due to the conflict in Tigray, the EU family – composed of the EUDs and representations of EU member states – was fragmented because of different viewpoints on whether or not to cooperate with the government in Addis Ababa. Collaboration with other EU member states and international partners started well in *Sudan* but was disrupted by the outbreak of the civil war. (JC5.3)

As mentioned before, the SO2 support stood out for its funding of **regional and in particular *cross-border* interventions** which had been generally under-served by governments and other development partners. *Cross-border* programming, along the targeted borders of *Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia* and *Somalia*, helped to address specific *cross-border* vulnerabilities and direct much-needed resources into these communities. Regional programming was not new as this took place under the EDF already, but *cross-border* programming was seen as a step further by addressing vulnerabilities in a *cross-border* context. As such the interventions proved complementary to country-specific interventions, however, they struggled to receive the required level of attention and support from national governments which undermined some of the achievements realised at the local level. Moreover, the impact of the *cross-border* interventions on state-related initiatives was very limited because of the very local focus of the interventions which separated it from political processes at the national and regional levels. In terms of coordination with EU member states, in addition to what has already been mentioned above, *cross-border* interventions helped to increase the influx of complementary funding post-*cross-border* intervention, as in the case of Denmark and the BORESHA project. To a lesser extent, but still important, regional programmes under the EUTF allowed the EU to support inter-governmental *cross-border* processes in the region aimed at improving the climate for peace and cooperation, through dialogue initiatives. (JC5.4)

4.5.1 Added-Value in terms of its institutional set-up: EUTF's particular institutional set-up, resourcing and MLS enabled it to achieve its SO2 objectives in a way other instruments could not. (JC5.1)

Judgement summary: The EUTFs institutional set-up and resourcing helped to achieve SO2 objectives because the EUTF HoA was given extra financial resources which allowed for a comprehensive operationalisation of the SO2 support. Funds allowed to mobilise additional staff at HQ and EUD level, to enhance coordination and logistics (for travel in particular) and for setting up a knowledge management system which was unique at INTPA. The latter consisted of a Monitoring and Learning System (MLS) which produced an impressive amount of data, reports and lessons learnt documents. The MLS focussed initially mainly on outputs, stored in a rich database and then, during the recent years, looked in more detail at the outcomes via learning events and dedicated studies. A Research and Evidence Facility (REF) for commissioning detailed country and theme-specific studies constituted the second element of the EUTF knowledge management system. The opportunities of the MLS were, however, not fully exploited due to its late operationalisation and its insufficient use for decisions, design and adaptation of interventions. It was used at HQ for reporting and accountability purposes while EUDs made little use of the data collected. Another bottleneck of the MLS was the unclear design of its indicators and the processing of its data which did not result in a coherent and fully reliable set of output data. However, MLS results were good enough to obtain a generic picture about SO2 results achieved in different thematic areas and to identify common trends and differences between the countries covered by the EUTF HoA. The REF, in contrast to the MLS, was used and rated positively among some EUDs. The additional staff helped to position the EUDs in their respective country as a relevant player in the domain of resilience, to promote policy dialogue and for supporting interventions in line with the HDP nexus approach in a protracted crisis context. At the EUDs in *Ethiopia* and *Sudan*, despite initial positive momentum in terms of supporting vulnerable communities, the work got disrupted by the effects of the respective civil wars. Dedicated resources for logistics helped in particular EUDs with the coordination of *cross-border* interventions.

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Findings: The implementation of the EUTF was supported by the mobilisation of additional staff to work at HQ and EUD levels. The recruitment of these EUTF focal points allowed for a higher level of attention to project design, monitoring and follow-up, as reported from *Kenya*, *Uganda* and the *cross-border* case. It also allowed for a widening of networks, enhanced outreach and helped to position the EUD as an important policy and operational actor in the field of resilience as highlighted in *Somalia*. EUD staff handling EUTF interventions were mostly described as being supportive, flexible and transparent. In *South Sudan*, the contracting of an external service provider to assist the EUD with the management of the SO2 funding was highly valued due to the support this facility could give to implementing partners. The situation differed to some extent at the EUD in *Ethiopia* where initially flourishing exchanges on the programming of resilience-related support were disrupted by the conflict in the northern regions resulting, among others, in uncertainties around staff contracting and in ineffective coordination mechanisms. This disruption continued until 2023 and resulted in siloed approaches and limited cross-fertilisation across EU interventions. *Sudan* operations were severely disrupted by the outbreak of civil war and the later evacuation of the EUD, which had a profound negative effect on the management of SO2 interventions. (I5.1.1)

There is strong evidence from field interviews in *Uganda*, *Somalia* and *Sudan* that the EUTF helped to strengthen the collaboration between the EUDs and ECHO and thereby promoted the HDP nexus (see also JC3.2). This was also the case for *Ethiopia*'s EUD where a specific focal person was appointed to work with ECHO and FPI in late 2023. Another illustration comes from *Uganda*, where EUTF staff and their counterparts in ECHO organised joint monitoring missions. In *Somalia*, collaboration was also successful with FPI in relation to stabilisation-related interventions which were partially SO2 funded. Despite some less positive findings from the *cross-border* case (see below), it is safe to say the EU's intra-service collaboration and cooperation between HQ, the EUDs, ECHO and FPI offices generally improved after the introduction of the EUTF. This finding matches with similar findings from the evaluation of the EU's cooperation with *Somalia* (2014-2021). (I5.1.2)

In the case of *cross-border* interventions, the coordination between the EUDs, ECHO and FPI was not considered optimal. According to interviews and evaluations, this relates to the fact that operations by all EU services remained primarily organised, and in policy terms oriented, along country lines. The design and choice of implementation modalities was taken at HQ level, with EUDs not very closely involved at the time. Earlier evaluations on the EU's *cross-border* intervention noted critically that the EU and EUDs lacked a regional perspective to manage the overall portfolio, and were able to leverage higher-level political attention from the partner governments in *Kenya*, *Ethiopia* and *Somalia*. Interviews with the concerned EUDs, however, underlined that the *cross-border* interventions helped to strengthen the coordination among EUDs and – because of the EUTF's specific travel budget – allowed for reinforced exchanges among colleagues. Interviewees however noted that the overall set-up and portfolio of the *cross-border* intervention, including the large number of implementing partners and varying end and start dates, did pose a considerable challenge for the EUDs in *Kenya* and *Ethiopia* to create synergies among the projects, despite efforts to overcome silos. (I5.1.2)

In several countries, the SO2 funding gave the respective EUD a seat at the policy table and in higher level coordination meetings linked to resilience, social protection and migration management, together with government and other donors. In *Uganda*, the HDP Nexus Plan, aligned with the government's CRRF planning framework, also created a forum through which the EUD engaged more directly with EU member states on refugee-related matters. In *Somalia*, the SO2 support played a major role in positioning the EU as a leader in support of resilience and steering the policy dialogue (see Box 11). A bleaker picture is reported from *Ethiopia* where the EUD and EU member states had difficulty in aligning their respective resilience support. (I5.1.3)

Box 11: Promoting resilience related policy dialogue and support in Somalia

Resilience was one of the three pillars of *Somalia*'s NIP 2014-2020. This facilitated the coordination of EUTF interventions with EU member states, other international partners and public authorities at the national and federal levels. Policy dialogue at national level and in selected sectors relevant to the promotion of resilience, e.g. in relation to *Somalia*'s National Development Plan, was strong. The EUD also co-chaired the resilience pillar working group, promoting dialogue between the government and international organisations. Policy dialogue and coordination was stronger during the earlier years of EUTF implementation (until 2018/2019) and got stalled when relationships with the former Farmajo regime broke down (as of 2020). Following strained relations during the 2022 elections, the relationship improved with the new Somali administration.

The EUTF management at the HQ level, set up, with the assistance of external service providers, an elaborate knowledge management and learning system (MLS) to support HQ and EUDs with relevant monitoring data and knowledge products on the implementation of the EUTF. These included monitoring briefs, in-depth (case) studies, lesson learnt documents, semestrial and annual reports, evaluations as well as the development and maintenance of a central data monitoring dashboard. The number of outputs produced and shared with the public on the EUTF's website and on the websites of the respective projects is impressive and easy to access. Monitoring of the resilience-related support in the HoA is based on 10 output indicators (see also Annex 7) which are systematically reported on, to the extent of data availability. The system is valued according to interviews at HQ level, but it also has a number of downsides as explained below and highlighted in Box 12, below. Internal EU documents mention that the reliability of monitoring results is not 100% accurate[49] but the errors were acceptable because the data were transparently reported on in the MLS report annexes so that the broader trends of the EUTF's implementation could be monitored and understood. Interviewees also explained that the MLS service provider can ask implementing partners to clarify the monitoring reports, but in the case of pillar-assessed UN and EU member state technical agencies, mobilised via indirect managed contracts, this was not so easy to do. Another bottleneck is the absence of MLS outcome indicators, a gap which the EUTF is trying to fill from different entry points such as field missions, meetings with colleagues and partners, targeted lessons learnt studies, project outcome analyses (produced for the EUTF HoA MLS Annual Reports as of 2020) and this evaluation. A further bottleneck of the MLS is that it exclusively focuses on the EUTF-related engagements while complementary country-related knowledge produced by the EU was not linked to nor incorporated, such as the wealth of information generated by the Third-Party Monitoring System in *Somalia*. HQ interviewees stated that available resources would not have allowed to widen the scope and coverage of the MLS. (I5.1.4)

While the MLS provided broader information about the realisation of outputs, trends and insights, the extent to which it helped to inform the decisions and design of SO2 interventions was limited (see particularly JC 1.1). This is because the system was only fully operational by the time the last few SO2 programming decisions were taken in 2020. At EUD level, the MLS did not play a relevant role and remained as such a tool mainly used by HQ for overall monitoring, reporting and accountability purposes towards higher management and the EU member states. HQ interviewees confirmed that the opportunities created by the system were not fully exploited.

The REF was another element of the EUTF's knowledge management system. Nearly 60 studies were produced for the HoA and EUDs made good use of these studies to get better insights on particular issues.[50] In the case of *Somalia* for example, the EUD engaged closely with the REF for a study on local authorities. The *Ethiopia*n case reports that the MLS and REF databases were consulted but did not significantly influence activities or decision making at the EUD level. (I5.1.4)

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49 The reasons are that the data from implementing partners is not fully accurate and, second, the MLS did not have the mandate, nor the resources to execute spot-checks and to verify the results of the data provided.
50 8 country specific studies were produced on Ethiopia, 7 on *Kenya*, 3 for *Somalia*, 4 for *South Sudan*, 1 for *Sudan* and 3 for *Uganda*. The other studies were *cross-border* covering two or more countries. 17 studies covered the Horn of Africa.

Box 12: MLS indicator set-up for food security in Ethiopia creating mixed results

The challenge for obtaining reliable cumulative resilience outputs in terms of food security can be illustrated from the case of *Ethiopia*. An analysis of the log-frames of contracts shows that the indicators that were used are widely different per intervention, which makes it very difficult to obtain a coherent picture of outputs across the different projects. In the case of registering food security results, the monitoring system designed one of the ten resilience indicators to cover food security, i.e. "2.4 - Number of people receiving food security-related assistance". This framing, however, does not reflect the multi-sectoral dimension of food security stemming from the combination of better access to social infrastructures (indicator 2.1bis), water and sanitation services (indicators 2.2 and 2.9), rehabilitated land (indicator 2.6), etc. To do justice to this multi-sectoral dimension, and in the absence of a clear guidance or criteria on what to collect, implementing partners used a steadily increasing number of indicators over the years for which results are collected at the intervention level. Using 20 projects for this analysis, one can find today approximately 150 indicators[51] for these projects with registered outputs, which were then clustered and registered by the MLS service provider under the ten different resilience indicators (see Annex 7). In the case of food security, which is the core of vulnerable communities' resilience, the statistical data presented in the MLS Annual Reports display at best some indications about the achievements in a number of support areas that relate to food security. As such, food security results at outcome level cannot be fully analysed. – Source: Evaluation team's analysis

4.5.2 Added-Value in terms of being able to address resilience in situations of illegitimate and/ or weak and/ or absent public authorities/ stateless situations: Interventions have been able to provide critical support to actors that were able to address community resilience needs in situations of illegitimate or absent national and local public authorities or in stateless situations. (JC5.2)

Judgement summary: Although the evidence is limited, it suggests the EUTF, in a few countries and contexts, provided an added value in supporting resilience in situations of illegitimate and/or weak and/or absent public authorities. Through SO2 interventions, in certain cases, the EU was able to support communities which were harder to reach by working with some INGOs and international (including European) cooperation agencies, especially where it was able to work with local organisations and actors. But the picture is mixed given the wide variety of country contexts in which SO2 measures were implemented. For the *cross-border* programmes implemented by UNDP in the Moyale cluster, an earlier evaluation noted the inability of UNDP to develop sufficient local presence to create synergies with other activities in their area. Also, GIZ was not considered the best choice to work in these contexts (see Box 6, under JC3.1). In *South Sudan* for example, several other donors were also supporting similar interventions. In *Sudan*, the EUTF played a key role in gradually engaging with the Bashir regime from 2016 onwards given the absence of a NIP (though no direct cooperation was envisaged with the government). In the cases of *Ethiopia*, but also *Somalia*, SO2's added value lay in its support for maintaining or restoring the provision of basic social services and infrastructures especially in areas suffering from limited and weak government presence such as newly liberated areas in *Somalia* and in areas affected by the war in Tigray and regions of *Ethiopia* where federal and regional public authorities aimed to address instability issues and consequences. Under the *cross-border* intervention, the EUTF funding, including its support to resilience, in particular at the time of the launch of the EUTF, exceeded that of most other technical and financial partners. In *Somalia*, the SO2 support, which contributed to the EU's continued stabilisation efforts, was able to reach out to areas where not many other partners were present; including with funding levels exceeding that of other partners.

Findings: Several findings confirm that the EUTF was effective in reaching areas and communities in settings with overall weak presence of government authorities, weak capacity of local authorities, or illegitimate governments/authorities (see also Box 13, below). In *Ethiopia* the SO2 interventions were found to reach underserved areas suffering from limited and weak government presence and

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[51] EUTF Horn of Africa Annual Report 2023. Outcome analysis Food security and nutrition.

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insecurity, including regions where EU Member States had more limited presence. The instrument also allowed the EU to reach vulnerable communities facing severe cyclical natural disasters and related constrained access to natural resources. Only a limited number of SO2 interventions addressed conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues directly, as they focused on the provision of basic social service, livelihoods and infrastructure. Engagements informed by the CRRF approach in Tigray also suffered from short-term disruptions caused by the conflict in addition to internal issues, such as siloed programming and challenges with internal coordination. Despite temporary disruptions due to insecurity, SO2 interventions in these remote areas contributed to continued delivery of EUTF support when the MIP was suspended – adding support, for example, to the EU's individual measures. (I5.2.1)

In *Sudan*, most of the projects provided direct support to the population (health, education and food security). In the absence of a NIP for *Sudan*, all were signed with third party implementing partners, mainly NGOs, UN organisations, and in some cases European technical agencies. As such, it became the most important funding instrument to sustain the implementation of EU cooperation in *Sudan*. Following the coup d'état and the outbreak of war, most programmes were temporarily suspended to allow implementing partners to adapt and regroup, after which they continued with changes and adaptations. If they had been with the government directly it would have possibly meant suspending them altogether. There were few institutional strengthening projects to begin with, though there was one PFM project which had to be suspended. This situation allowed for shifting towards more humanitarian-related activities in response to the conflict situation. According to one interviewee, SO2 interventions provided the EU with an option to support vulnerable groups flexibly and possibly more independently of the otherwise usual bilateral development support mechanisms and funding. (I5.2.1; I5.2.2)

In *Somalia*, interventions in situations of weak public authority had already been addressed via various EU stabilisation projects under the EDF, and were continued through the EUTF, and today, under the NDICI-GE. This indicates that the EUTF's specific rules and procedures did not make a difference in certain circumstances. But in many cases, the EU was the first responder, and SO2 funding helped sustain the EU's engagement in such areas over a longer time. This also included newly liberated areas. Important to note is that in *Somalia*, the stabilisation support never operated in areas without the presence of – at least – an interim administration/local authority and local/international forces. (I5.2.1)

Findings from *South Sudan* show that most of the support was delivered in difficult to reach areas, given the limited infrastructure, frequent flooding, and recurring conflicts. Mobilising the support via EDF funding would have been extremely complicated which explains the added value of the EUTF instrument. Documents and interviews did not show that the EUTF support was more far reaching in this country compared to the support which other partners could provide. However, SO2 support was praised by implementing partners for being delivered with a longer timeframe as compared to that of other funding available to partners, which was an advantage in facilitating access to hard-to-reach areas. Other donors supported similar interventions, e.g. the UK's Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience (HARISS) programme in Greater Upper Nile (*South Sudan*). These were the same states where the EUTF implemented some of its SO2 projects. The total value of the UK support was more than EUR 900 million. A similar remark, about the EU's ability to provide longer-term financial support compared to other donors, in particular in hard to reach and complex contexts, was flagged for SO2 interventions under the *cross-border* intervention, under the three iterations of the BORESHA programme implemented in the Mandera triangle, *Somalia* and to a certain extent *Sudan*. Overall, findings from different countries show that implementing partners who are used to work with contracts of between one and two years regarded the EUTF as offering longer-term support. (I5.2.1)

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Box 13: EUTF SO2 provided support to remote areas

Several findings confirm that the EUTF was effective in reaching areas and communities in settings with overall weak presence of government authorities, weak capacity of local authorities, or illegitimate governments/authorities. This was the case both for countries with overall greater stability (such as Ethiopia) as those facing protracted and acute conflict (such as Somalia and Sudan). In particular under the *cross-border* programme, the EUTF SO2 interventions were able to reach areas that have been critically underserved and remain overall neglected politically by national governments. Under the *cross-border* programme, different consortia set up local offices in towns across border regions, which helped create a visibility and presence for local communities, and further anchored their strategy of proximity – INGOs were found to be better placed to do so than larger development agencies such as GIZ and UNDP. This also emerges from consolidated analysis of ROM services, showing that, where interventions have greater local presence and engagement with local organisations, such as local administrations, traditional and religious and other local formal or informal institutions, effectiveness and sustainability and therefore relevance are enhanced (see Annex 11). The combination of this local presence on the ground with the proactive, timely and strong communication with and from the responsible EU delegation further improved the proximity, flexibility and flow of information between the EU and implementing partners. This was also the case in times of crisis or emergencies (such as floods), when programmatic and budgetary adaptations had to be made. The inclusion and use of crisis modifiers within budgets of implementing partners formed another factor supporting the responsiveness to meet communities' urgent needs in remote and underserved areas.

There is some (limited) evidence on whether the level of funding and duration of interventions that could be programmed through SO2 interventions and which were not channelled through partner country public authorities, exceeded that of other technical and financial partners working in similar contexts. For example, in *Somalia*, the EU's stabilisation support was able to reach out to areas where not many other partners were able to go and engaged with amounts of funding which exceeded that of other partners. In such situations other partners often shy away from supporting infrastructure, like road construction or boreholes, which take longer to implement. Some other donors engage through shorter interventions with, for example, a focus on peace and governance. (I5.2.1; I5.2.2) Interviews with implementing partners also suggested that the *cross-border* programme functioned somehow as a trailblazer and created a foundation and incubator for further innovation and similar *cross-border* funding and programming in various border regions identified in the clusters of the *cross-border* interventions. The *cross-border* programme was found to direct much needed funding and mobilisation of (international and local) expertise to historically underfunded and neglected areas, in most cases marked by weak capacity and presence of local authorities. There are some limited examples of continued support for interventions under the *cross-border* programme, under today's NDIDI-GE Regional Programme. After the termination of the SO2 support, some of the activities under the three iterations of BORESHA were continued under the NDICI-GE Regional Programme and budget – jointly with funding from DANIDA. It is interesting to note is that implementing partners did not mention many noticeable changes in terms of project management or flexibility when compared with the EUTF programming. (I5.2.2)

4.5.3 Added-Value with respect to the interventions of EU member states (and non-EU partners who are not funded by the EU) in these contexts: Interventions were of added-value relative to resilience-related interventions of EU member states and other donors who are not funded by the EU in these contexts (JC5.3)

Judgement summary: Findings confirm that the SO2 interventions were of added value relative to a number of other international funding partners, including EU member states. The EU was clearly not the only donor able to support vulnerable communities and to serve these urgently, but the size and duration of the funding, and the multi-sector character of the support provided, which allowed the EU to connect with diverse international partners working on complementarity themes, was highly valued by country partners. Implementing partners actively

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sought to fund their portfolio and work plans by making use of resilience funding from the EU, the World Bank, USAID, EU member states and non-EU funding partners. SO2 interventions served in this regard to kick start engagements, most notably found in the cases of *cross-border* programmes targeting neglected borderland areas, or to follow up on terminated interventions funded by other donors. The extent to which the SO2 support helped to sustain interventions, also discussed under EQ2, was limited. But evidence from *Kenya* and *Uganda* where the support fits with wider government-led frameworks to integrate refugees and to promote developmental activities, showed that SO2 investments led to sustainability of results. While there is evidence from *Somalia*, *Uganda*, *Kenya*, *cross-border* programmes and to some extent *South Sudan* that EU and EU member states teamed up and complemented each other around SO2 support, the situation in *Sudan* and *Ethiopia* appeared to be more fragmented due to the civil war and, as in the case of *Ethiopia*, different views within the EU family on how to deal with the *Ethiopia*n government when the war broke out.

Findings: From all country and *cross-border* findings, there is evidence that the SO2 funding was highly valued for the level of funding, the duration of interventions and the ability to connect to different sectors via the multi-sector approach, as earlier noted in JC3.2. A study on operationalising the HDP Nexus (2022), for example, described the EUTF as a "game changer" in *Somalia*, as it offered an opportunity to provide long-term support for communities in a way that had never been done before. A substantial part of this resilience support as of 2018 was provided via SO2 funding, building on provisions for resilience which started pre-EUTF. But there is no evidence across the HoA interventions which would indicate that the SO2 support was able to urgently support vulnerable communities, in a way that EU member states and non-EU partners were unable to do. The EU was certainly an important resilience supporter via the EUTF and in some country contexts helped to be recognised as a key player in support of vulnerable communities according to the online-survey (see Annex 8) but in most countries the EU was not the only prominent funding partner. Examples of the EUTF's added value in relation to the collaboration with other funding and implementing partners are highlighted in Box 14 below.

Box 14: EUTF collaboration with EU member states and other partners

The EUTF showed added value in working with a range of international partners, including EU member states and their agencies. SO2 interventions were of added value as they helped to open doors for EU member states as well as non-EU funders to join forces, or to follow up with their funding once the EU terminated its support. Several examples highlight that collaboration took place in sub-regions and around specific EUTF SO2 interventions. The German GIZ and the Belgian Enabel, for example, were both active in Uganda in support of refugee hosting districts. GIZ on public administration at local level, energy, employment and Enabel on TVET and income generation. There were also different types of cooperation and co-funding arrangements. Evidence from Kenya reports that the SO2 funding for the innovative Kalobeyei refugee settlement, had a catalytic effect, attracting EU member states and non-EU partners to increase their funding for developmental aspects of the refugee response. In Somalia, Sweden joined its funding with SO2 resources in support of vulnerable communities, combining basic service provision and livelihood interventions while Denmark and Sweden supported SO2 funded social protection/ cash transfer support (SAGAL). The German KfW now provides complementary funding along SAGAL's approach. The case of the SO2 *cross-border* support provides similar type of evidence. Interviewees mentioned that the innovation brought about by SO2 interventions, i.e. its focus on *r* areas which was partially neglected by other donors, prompted EU member states and non-EU countries to adopt a similar stance. Motivated by the HoA Initiative established in 2019 by the EU, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, international partners like the UK, FAO and some EU member states (Austria, Germany, The Netherlands) started their own programming for border areas. In the case of South Sudan, the UK implemented a programme similar to the EUTF through its programme called HARISS (Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience in South Sudan). EU member states and non-EU member states, notwithstanding their smaller funding, were able to provide assistance of a similar nature and with similar urgency. A somewhat different situation was reported from Ethiopia. SO2 interventions could address gaps via NGOs in regions where EU member states agencies had a more limited presence. USAID, which was considered by interviewees to be a "resilience champion" in Ethiopia, was implementing a programme along a similar approach as the SO interventions worth US$ 122 for 2022

alone. However, for the period 2024-2027, four EU member states, i.e. Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and France, contribute to implementing the Green Growth portfolio. (I5.3.1; I5.3.2)

There is also evidence from different countries reviewed that SO2 interventions were able to build on and, in some instances, sustain development results made through EU member states and non-EU partners. In *Sudan*, the EU was one of the top donors strengthening resilience and was valued for its support to social sectors, education and health in particular, and for its support to IDPs and refugees. Here, in one instance, SO2 support complemented and widened an ongoing German initiative in support of small-scale farmers but the extent to which it could help to sustain the activities is unknown in view of the civil war raging the country. In *South Sudan*, SO2 funding was used to continue previous non-EUTF geographically funded interventions. In the case of *Uganda*, SO2 interventions were able to build upon and help sustain development results made through EU member states and non-EU partner interventions. One case is the RED project in the field of NRM where other projects have already been active and where SO2 funding has allowed interventions to follow up on a particular theme. (I5.3.3)

There are also cases, where implementing partners through their contacts with different donors, were able to attract and leverage co-funding from EU member states and non-EU partners. This was the case for a WFP implemented programme in *Sudan* and in *Kenya*, where UN-Habitat SO2 funded activities have since been financed by other partners. In such cases, however, it is difficult to see to what extent the SO2 support had an added value, in part because of the complexity of the respective intervention area where many different funders were present, linking their support and complementing their respective activities. Synergies between SO2 funding in *cross-border* contexts were sought with UN agencies and World Bank funded initiatives but there was no evidence found on sustained results from those *cross-border* programmes. The case is somewhat different in *Ethiopia*, where partnerships between the EU and EU member states have been limited since the outbreak of civil war in 2020-21 because of different interpretations within the EU family on how to respond to the crisis. This incoherence is gradually being overcome with Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and France joining hands with the EU to contribute to the implementation of the EU Green Growth portfolio implemented by their respective implementing agencies. (I5.3.2; I5.3.3)

4.5.4 Added-Value in terms of regional and *cross-border* interventions: Regional and *cross-border* interventions have been of added value in promoting resilience among vulnerable communities at country level. (JC5.4)

Judgement summary: Overall, the evidence collected shows that SO2 interventions under the EUTF *cross-border* programme have been innovative and unique, in their ability to offer opportunities to address *cross-border* resilience measures which were not (as extensively) addressed by other EU or EU member state interventions. These interventions were also generally found to be complementary to country-specific interventions addressing dimensions of fragility and vulnerability of border regions and communities. This programme gave comparatively more weight and visibility to (the challenges of strengthening resilience for) vulnerable populations and communities along the targeted borders (*Sudan*, *Kenya*, *Ethiopia* and *Somalia*). Regional programming as such was not new, and regional programming took place, for example under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). But *cross-border* programming was seen as going further by addressing specific *cross-border* vulnerabilities and directing much-needed resources into these communities. This shift also stimulated innovation among implementing partners, who re-organised their methods and operations to better respond to borderland realities.

Capturing more political attention from national governments was not always successful, as interventions were strongly locally embedded, but also as national governments remained hesitant to fully commit to *cross-border* initiatives. Beyond the national level, the *cross-border* programme further helped EU and EUDs' efforts to provide political support to ongoing *cross-border* initiatives and strategies (especially those promoted by IGAD). As the *cross-border* programme progressed, this support and political engagement, including through non-spending initiatives by the EUD to support regional political *cross-border* initiatives, intensified.

Findings: The EUTF's ***cross-border*** programme responded to a well-known need to better support and strengthen the resilience of marginalised geographic areas and societies in borderlands. Prior to the launch of the *cross-border* programme, a funding gap existed in the HoA's border regions, with only a handful of technical and financial partners active in these regions. Regional programming had taken place earlier under the 11th EDF, but *cross-border* programming allowed for attention to structurally neglected and underfunded regions in a way the regional programmes did not. Overall, the *cross-border* approach in supporting resilience was deemed relevant, with valuable lessons for future efforts. A comprehensive evaluation on the EUTF's engagement in cross-border areas considers the EUTF *cross-border* programme successful in giving the right value, weight and visibility to usually marginalised geographic areas. (I5.4.1)

Overall, see also Box 14 under JC5.3, the evidence collected, including from past evaluations, shows that the *cross-border* programme effectively aimed at contributing to peace, stability, and resilience in ways country-specific interventions by the EU or EU member states could not. The positive results, especially in the Moyale (Cluster II) and Mandera clusters (Cluster IV) have led to an increased flow of funding and interventions post-*cross-border* programme. For example, a follow-up project to BORESHA III has been launched in Cluster IV, funded by Denmark, including clear activities and approaches have been applied in it to ensure the sustainability of benefits from BORESHA III. A key feature of the programme was the integration of local economic development with peacebuilding. Resilience activities, such as income generation and livelihood diversification, were conflict-sensitive, considering natural resource use and conflicts. By engaging local networks and community structures, most projects (except UNDP Moyale, which faced criticism in this regard) made tangible improvements. (I.5.4.1) The actions supported by SO2 interventions, including improved food security, market systems, and the promotion of peaceful interactions and intercommunal coexistence, enhanced community resilience and ability to resolve conflicts. For example, through the Omo Delta project, the fish value chain expanded, leading to increased trade between Nyangatom and Turkana traders across the *Kenya-Ethiopia* borders. On the flipside, some projects were found to operate almost 'too locally' leading to a disconnect from national and regional initiatives (see below). (I5.4.1; I5.4.2)

Some evidence shows that SO2 *cross-border* interventions were at least intended to be complementary to and enhanced the value of country specific interventions. For example, partners and beneficiaries involved in various programmes received complementary support or training from *cross-border* programmes. In particular, it was felt that marginalised communities received more weight and attention in *cross-border* programmes, more so than supposedly in national level EUTF programmes, given the marginalisation of borderland regions. (I5.4.2)

Evidence shows that interventions under the *cross-border* programme were able to build complementarity with other EU funded programmes focusing on livelihood resilience. In several cases this was done on the basis of a context analysis conducted by the Implementing partners. In Cluster I, the six organisations funded through the Omo Delta Project were funded by various other donor initiatives in the same region particularly in Turkana and Marsabit, including Resilience Building and Creation of Economic Opportunities in *Ethiopia* (RESET), SEEK, and Resilience Pastoral Livelihood Programmes (RPLRP), which had *cross-border* approaches and set foundations for the intervention by the Omo Delta Project. In Cluster III (*Sudan–Ethiopia*) the conflict transformation component of the project was seen as complementary with the work of the *Ethiopia-Sudan* Joint Border Commission, the State Peace Council in Ed Damazin of Blue Nile State, and the Peace Councils. (I5.4.2)

Despite these efforts to ensure complementarity, some critical remarks were flagged too. Some interviewees pointed to a geographical gap in the *cross-border* programme, in particular with *South Sudan* not being included in the geographical coverage of Cluster I.[52] This was made clear when *South Sudan*ese communities, moving across *Ethiopia*n and *Kenya*n borders, were not aware of the local agreements developed and supported through the Omo Delta Project under Cluster 1, and (unintentionally) destroyed rehabilitated rangelands and spread livestock infectious diseases - undermining projects results and achievements. For some projects, like BORESHA, the ROM report

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[52] As *South Sudan* was not part of Cluster I, there were challenges with integrating the activities in Cluster I with the country-level programming.

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(*cross-border* BORESHA II-ROM report, 2021) noted that existing structures in place were ignored, with a consequent risk of duplication/oversight. Altai's final evaluation noted that more involvement of national counterparts and regional organisations would be critical to sustain the impact on *cross-border* resilience and stability; especially since security, customs, and migration fall within the remit of national governments authority.

The EUDs responsible for the **cross-border** programme made dedicated efforts to identify synergies with national level programming but this remained a challenge. As noted above, regional programming was not new, and synergies were found with different activities in Ethiopia and Sudan. But despite earlier EU regional programming also by other actors, such as the World Bank, very few partners provided funding for projects and activities in these *cross-border* regions. While synergies were sought with other programmes at national level, there was in fact very little programming in these regions to further build on. In addition, the generally low involvement of national counterparts further weakened the uptake. In this regard, Altai's final evaluation noted that the impact of the *cross-border* programmes on state-related initiatives was limited, as a result of the very local focus of the programme, which separated it from political and regional processes and initiatives. According to the online-survey (see Annex 8), most respondents found that the relevance of EUTF *cross-border* interventions was generally undervalued and stated that the potential to generate synergies with country-focused projects and to contribute to overall resilience outcomes was therefore not fully exploited. Findings from the consolidated analysis of ROM services also show that existing local mechanisms or structures were neglected, meaning that they are not taken advantage of (especially in border areas) for the improvement of efficiencies, and ultimately, effectiveness and sustainability. *Cross-border* programming also raised particular challenges related to coordination, with interventions engaging local actors and entities on eithers sides of the border but in isolation (see Annex 11). This was a challenge flagged with the GIZ-led *cross-border* intervention in *Ethiopia* and *Sudan.* (I5.4.2)

At the same time, the EU, through this programme, aligned itself with various regional initiatives, policy commitments and agreements in the region, in particular those adopted by IGAD. This includes the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI), and the World Bank-funded Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project (RPLRP). IGAD has also advanced *cross-border* policies, including the 2018 framework on Informal Cross-Border Trade and Security Governance. Already in 2024, the EU had supported the launch of the HoA Initiative, together with the UN, the World Bank, the African and Islamic Development Bank, the African Union and IGAD. Despite these initiatives, earlier analysis showed that national governments remained hesitant to fully commit to *cross-border* initiatives, as these clashed with government priorities and perceptions, including the fact that border areas fall outside of the national leader' voting base, and a misperception held by central governments around informal *cross-border* exchanges and movements. This points to the overall challenging political and operational context within which *cross-border* interventions were launched.

The design of designated 'cluster areas' by IGAD, comprising several focus border regions, was taken as a point of departure to define the interventions under the *cross-border* programme. In doing so, the *cross-border* programme also showed its innovation by programming based on a geographical (rather than a purely thematic) point of view. Despite the innovation of the *cross-border* programme, challenges did emerge with regards to oversight, portfolio management, and monitoring and evaluation, which were found to be very complex. Following the design of the *cross-border* programme at HQ, project implementation was delegated to two EUDs; who were faced with a sizable programme and a wide range of different implementing partners. The EUD staff responsible for the *cross-border* programme harnessed a constructive working relationship with most implementing partners, but also between EU delegations in the region, with EU member states and with regional partners. Despite these efforts, maintaining a full overview of the country-focused programming of many partners as well as the EU, and identifying concrete opportunities for synergies with the interventions under the *cross-border* programme, remained a daunting (and well-known) challenge. (I5.4.2)

Despite this challenging environment, the *cross-border* programme realised a number of innovations, supported by EUD staff which harnessed strong working relations with implementing

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and regional partners, but also supporting a range of political regional initiatives, notably the HoA Initiative. The *cross-border* programme had trickle down effects, stimulating innovation and a different way of thinking across implementing partners too; including in order to better seek complementarities. For example, a *cross-border* working group is currently led by DRC, the leading implementation partners for the BORESHA project. This working group brings together all *cross-border* programmes and offers ways to continuously identify complementarities. (I5.4.2)

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5 Overall assessment and conclusions

5.1 Overall assessment

The EUTF for Africa, established in 2015, aimed to address the root causes of irregular migration, instability, and displacement across Africa. Within the HoA region, various root causes of instability were tackled, such as marginalization, economic exclusion, weak governance, food insecurity, conflict, and natural disasters. This was achieved through a range of interventions to combat food insecurity, improve access to natural resources, and address related governance, and development challenges. This evaluation has focused on the EUTF's second strategic objective (SO2) entitled: "Strengthening resilience of communities and the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and displaced people", which aims to address the resilience-related root causes referred to above .

Assessing SO2 interventions across the HoA region in *Ethiopia*, *Kenya*, *Uganda*, *South Sudan*, *Somalia*, *Sudan* and *cross-border* situations, the evaluation found that the above root causes of instability were all addressed. The impact of interventions was influenced by the specific country context as well by the underlying instability of the region driven by natural and man-made disasters including – as in the case of *Sudan* and *Ethiopia* – civil war.

The overall assessment is that SO2 interventions helped reduce vulnerability among selected host communities, refugees, and IDPs, in particular at household level and in surrounding communities. All stakeholders agree, however, that it would have been unrealistic to expect that the support would be sufficient to contribute to a substantial reduction of vulnerability across the region. Factors that contributed to positive project results included the quality of overall design, including the identification of needs, the selection of particular delivery modalities and implementation approaches, and the performance of the selected implementing partners. The EU's institutional set-up for managing and accompanying the funding, the collaboration with a range of EU services and non-EU partners, and the quantum of funding available further contributed to realisation of results.

The primary beneficiaries of SO2 support were vulnerable households located in rural or urban settings who were either members of host communities, IDPs or refugees. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of public authorities to address resilience saw positive results in relatively stable contexts such as *Kenya* and *Uganda*, but were limited in *Somalia*, Ethiopia, *South Sudan*, and *Sudan*. Key resilience gains at the level of vulnerable communities included improved food security, better NRM, higher incomes, and enhanced basic services. DRM was addressed to a lesser extent but results were achieved in terms of strengthened community-level early warning systems and the DRM capacity of public authorities in some contexts. Conflict risk management was not given so much attention, in part because this was taken up by projects funded through SO4. However, SO2 interventions promoted social cohesion between host communities and refugees through actions informed by the CRRF. One needs to note, however, that the implementation of CRRF objectives was more explicit in *Kenya* and *Uganda* than in the other countries.

In terms of sustainability, it has proven difficult to uphold the results of SO2 interventions beyond the lifetime of individual projects. With the exception of *Kenya* and *Uganda*, interventions struggled to strengthen the capacity of public authorities to address the resilience agenda, in large part because of a backdrop of recurring political, social and economic instability, including public finance constraints. Evidence from the community level demonstrates that enhanced resilience (improved agricultural production, management of natural resources, DRM capacity and income generation/ market access) can be sustained when the right pre-conditions are in place, as demonstrated in *Kenya* and *Uganda* and from a number of cases from other parts of the region. Where interventions were focused on providing short term humanitarian relief sustainability was not necessarily an expected outcome.

SO2 interventions were generally well-identified, designed, and implemented, with management approaches adopted that were suited to each context. Indirect management via pillar assessed organizations and direct management through international NGO-led consortia were common. Although projects often fragmented efforts and could limit ownership, they were generally suitable for tackling vulnerability and strengthening community resilience. The use of multi-sector approaches

as well as working with a HDP nexus perspective facilitated the achievement of tangible results. This also helped to remain responsive to emerging needs. Conflict sensitivity was implicitly considered, while the promotion of the localization agenda received generally less attention. Efforts to mainstream cross-cutting issues notably gender, support for marginalized groups and environmental protection contributed positively to recorded results, but their specific contribution to the project results was sometimes difficult to trace.

The collaboration with different EU services, EU member states and non-EU partners, was generally positive. The EUTF allowed for the mobilisation of additional staff which enhanced possibilities to better prepare and accompany SO2 interventions, to connect with other partners and to establish the EU as one of the leading international actors in support of resilience in the HoA. Partners also valued the multi-year and substantial funding of resilience needs for areas which were difficult to access due to illegitimate governance situations or very weak public authorities. The SO2 funding for regional and *cross-border* interventions is overall positively assessed, though there is some room for improvement in relation to the institutional set-up of the regional support which was managed between different EUDs and at HQ. Resources also allowed to set up a dedicated and elaborate monitoring and learning system, though with mixed results. Opportunities to make use of collected data and lessons learned for decision making at EUD level, in particular, were not optimally used.

Decisions regarding SO2 support were quickly and flexibility taken through a combination of decentralised priority setting at EUD level and exchanges with HQ. However, as noted in the European Court of Auditors Report, and also observed during this evaluation, SO2 support was generally spread too thinly with insufficient geographic focus and stakeholder targeting. This may be attributed to an inadequate strategic steering and guidance from HQ on the purpose, breadth and scope of SO2.

5.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions draw on the findings of the five EQs and focus on the EUTF's resilience-related support in line with the SO2 objectives of the EUTF. The evaluation team was asked to focus on this specific funding, but undertook the evaluation with an understanding that some of the support provided built on earlier EDF support for the HoA and is today, in a number of instances, has been continued with NDICI-GE funding. The EU has supported the resilience of vulnerable communities also via other funding, i.e., to some extent humanitarian assistance via ECHO, also to some extent via FPI's crisis response funding. The evaluation also takes note that resilience has been funded from other sources but these have not been evaluated.

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.**

A majority of SO2 interventions were set up to respond to high levels of reported food insecurity across the HoA region, which have contributed to increasing vulnerability among populations and pressures to migrate. The inability of households to satisfy their food security needs is driven by multiple factors, the most significant being insecurity brought about by localised conflict and state-level instability, slow and fast onset natural disasters, notably drought and flooding, and poor overall levels of economic and public sector performance. Global events, including Covid-19 and growing food prices have moreover interrupted the supply and distribution of food and resulted in a cost-of-living crisis.

Against this background, SO2 interventions sought to improve household food security either by addressing immediate needs in situations of crisis, or by promoting ways to build greater household self-reliance where opportunities allowed. Projects mostly adopted a multi-pronged/ sector approach in recognition of the differentiated needs of vulnerable communities and the different factors contributing to food insecurity across the region.

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In most situations, SO2 interventions aimed at improving the ability of households to become more self-reliant in food production through adoption of climate-smart agricultural methods. In some situations, food security was addressed by SO2 interventions as an emergency response with funding of humanitarian organisations to distribute food rations and/ or to operate cash transfer/social protection initiatives. Interventions also supported producers to sell their surplus as a way to raise incomes that could also contribute to their food security. In some contexts, food security could be best addressed by promoting income generation outside the agricultural sector. This was done via training and mentorship, bursaries for TVET training, and small business start-up kits, which were among the ways SO2 projects empowered household members - particularly women and youth - to become income earners and providers for their families.

Many of the interventions addressing food security were linked to actions to address NRM (see conclusion 2 below) and were to a greater or lesser extent linked to DRM and conflict management interventions. Another notable feature was that interventions worked directly with households either individually or collectively via producer groups and committees. Where it was possible, interventions also worked with the relevant technical departments of (mainly) local governments and where opportunities arose, also worked to strengthen the capacities of such entities.

Overall SO2 interventions were successful in improving the food security of vulnerable households who participated in the interventions and thereby helped to prevent a worse situation for the beneficiaries. In addition, there is evidence that projects had a demonstration effect, and many non-participants within the targeted communities went on to adopt practices introduced by the projects, so the potential impact was broader. However, even with the substantial resources available, SO2 could only respond to the needs of a small proportion of the entire vulnerable population of the HoA region and therefore its impact at the regional level was limited. This inability to have a wider reach highlights the depth and extent of vulnerability in the region, exacerbated during the period of EUTF implementation by Covid-19, the longest drought recorded in 40 years, protracted episodes of civil strife and global conflict.

Absence of monitoring data at instrument level beyond the project outputs has made it difficult to draw firmer conclusions on SO2 impact on food security. In particular, there were no common indicators set up at outcome level to record the extent to which project results have improved household food security.

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.**

Actions aimed at addressing the protection of and equal access to natural resources has been a key feature of SO2 interventions across the HoA region. This is because of the close and complex interrelationship that exists between NRM and food security, DRM and conflict prevention. In a region increasingly affected by climate change and extreme weather events, NRM is of particular importance.

As a result, attention to NRM was woven into most project designs as a cross-cutting rather than primary objective. The most obvious example of this relates to actions aimed at improving water supplies and access to water. This was done for different reasons including to improve food production (installation of irrigation systems for crop and horticultural production and/or installation of water points to water livestock), and to improve domestic water consumption for mainly drinking and hygiene/ public health purposes). Other interventions were initiated to mitigate the potential devastating effects of too much water by erecting flood defence systems, tree planting and adoption of farming methods that protect soil and vegetation (permaculture, limited till planting, intercropping etc.).

Several SO2 projects focused squarely on tackling NRM issues where risks of conflict and inter-communal disputes existed between mainly refugee and host communities. This included projects dedicated to forest protection that addressed ways to reduce the indiscriminate cutting of trees for fuelwood and charcoal production. Other projects that were motivated by concerns to manage

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conflict, included land reclamation that could free up more land for food production, land management and land rights aimed at reducing disputes over access to land, promotion of fodder crop production to reduce competition over scarce grazing land and construction of water points to reduce conflicts between nomadic and sedentary communities.

Notwithstanding these positive achievements, evidence suggests that environmental impact assessments were not routinely carried out as part of project design and that the necessary environmental safeguards were not necessarily incorporated. This could provoke negative consequences but the number of reported incidences are few. Moreover, a mostly implicit "Do No Harm" approach, which included considerations of environmental protection, characterised the majority of interventions sampled for this evaluation.

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.**

In comparison to the attention paid to food security and NRM, DRM received less attention by SO2 interventions across the region. This is something of a surprising finding in view of disaster-proneness of the region to both slow and fast on-set natural shocks. It is also not entirely clear as to why this was so, but evidence points to the fact that in terms of urgency, attending to food security and NRM was regarded as the more important priority for SO2 attention.

Interventions that directly addressed DRM could nevertheless be found across a number of HoA countries, such as *Ethiopia*, and included both efforts to strengthen the capacity of communities as well as public authorities at the sub-national level to address disasters. Those focused at the community level included familiar DRM initiatives including the setting up of DRM committee structures like early warning committees, including training of committee members and helping with operational costs. Early warning systems were set up and DRM response plans drafted to help such committees become fully functional. At the public authority level, several SO2 interventions worked with both national and sub-national government structures to strengthen coordination arrangements and bolster selected systems and processes that also connected with community level structures.

At both levels, challenges to sustainability were encountered due mainly to limited finances and there was concern therefore as to the viability of structures, systems and processes developed post-project completion, and to the ability to respond to a disaster event at all levels. While a number of positive indications of sustainability were noted (see also Conclusion 9), the absence again of post project completion data (e.g. tracer studies) which could have followed the performance of DRM structures means that it is difficult to judge with certainty the effectiveness of these interventions.

A closer analysis of SO2 projects also reveals that DRM was addressed in indirect ways through actions that introduced climate-smart agricultural practices (see conclusion 1) and that tackled NRM challenges (see conclusion 2). Such actions are considered as indirect because they did not seek to strengthen dedicated DRM structures, systems and processes, but rather introduced practices among vulnerable communities that could mitigate against the risks or effects of shock events (such as drought or flooding), thereby helping to reduce the impact of shocks.

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.**

As already noted under conclusion 1, SO2 interventions could either address vulnerability - and in particular food insecurity - as part of an emergency response aimed at tackling an immediate crisis or as part of a developmental effort aimed at empowering households to graduate from a

dependency on safety nets and become more self-reliant. The context often determined the suitability of the chosen approach.

By having the ability to respond flexibly and differentially to the situation on the ground, SO2 interventions were able to operationalise some of the key principles of the HDP Nexus - most notably being able to work across the humanitarian - development divide. This ability to work in the grey zone linking humanitarian and developmental efforts, is regarded as one of the main value additions of the EUTF, allowing in particular INTPA and EUDs to assign cooperation resources to the humanitarian and refugee management space.

At the institutional level, a number of positive consequences can be identified. First, SO2 funding could help link migration and refugee management related resilience challenges to other EU funded developmental programmes at country level, such as the development of shock sensitive social protection programmes, or funding of roads and water supply infrastructure. Second, the EUTF was able to catalyse a closer working relationship between the EUD and ECHO enabling a better alignment and complementarity of funding between the two, although obstacles remain. Third, SO2 funding could be used to mobilise dual mandated INGOs and UN agencies to more easily work in an adaptive way across humanitarian and development fields. Fourth, SO2 funding was able to draw in traditionally development-oriented technical agencies (e.g. GIZ and FAO) to work in partnership with traditionally humanitarian-oriented organisations. In *Kenya* and *Uganda*, the implementation of the CRRF meant that the EU could more easily align its support to country level strategies aimed at refugee integration by working across the humanitarian-development divide.

Key enablers for working in this way included the reported flexibility and responsiveness of decision-making related to SO2 interventions, which allowed for some adaptation of project designs according to emerging needs, as well as the presence of additional staff at EUD level to maintain close engagement with other services, implementing partners, and partner governments (see also conclusion 7 below). Specific contingency funds or contingency budgets allowed for a quick response to unexpected events though such contingency provisions were only found in a limited number of cases.

The peace element of the HDP Nexus generally received less attention across the region under the SO2-focused interventions because the EUTF targeted the peace dimension mainly via SO-4 related engagements. To the extent that it was addressed, it was mainly in relation to promoting social cohesion between host communities and IDPs/ refugees (see also Conclusion 5) and by working in a conflict sensitive/ "do no harm" way. Doing so ensured that the peace dimension of the Nexus was not overlooked and featured as an integral part of project designs, but the extent to which the peace element of the HDP Nexus was addressed remained modest (for the reasons explained above) and focused very much on the community level.

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.**

While the CRRF helped to guide SO2 engagements with refugees and IDPs across the region, experiences in working with the CRRF differed significantly between *Uganda* and *Kenya* and the other countries and also the *cross-border* interventions reviewed. In the two refugee hosting countries, the domestication of the CRRF into national policy and planning and coordination frameworks helped guide the respective governments and their international cooperation partners' response to the influx of refugees into the two countries. Aligned with the respective government's policy commitment to refugee integration and self-reliance, SO2 support contributed to realising this policy objective through its various interventions that targeted refugee and host communities in the main areas of refugee settlement.

In most of the other countries, the SO2 support sought to promote social cohesion between host communities and IDPs and/ or refugees whereby the CRRF provided important guidance in

allocating an appropriate ratio of the EUTF support to the respective vulnerable communities. The extent to which this was done more explicitly and aligned with the partner country's policy, depended on the respective country's level of domestication of the CRRF into local policy frameworks. In *Ethiopia*, this was stronger than in *Somalia*, for example, despite the fact that both countries had formally signed up to apply the CRRF. There was no specific targeting of IDPs/refugees in *South Sudan* under the EUTF, because they were funded via other EU, EU member states and international donor funding. The CRRF also played a useful guiding role in the case of *Sudan* but its objectives were only followed at project level in the absence of any cooperation with the government following the outbreak of civil war in 2022-23.

The extent to which the SO2 funding helped to contribute to social cohesion and conflict reduction between these communities differed from country to country. Findings for *Uganda* and *Kenya* report that the SO2 funding played a positive role, thereby contributing to the promotion of the peace element of the HDP nexus at community level. In *Somalia*, a country with many IDPs and comparatively few refugees, the displaced population lived together with host vulnerable communities without major tensions, or even conflict being noted. Endogenous and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms at community level were used, suggesting that the CRRF-informed allocation of SO2 funding in promoting social cohesion might not have played a major role.

For most of the countries reviewed, the degree of political instability and public authority capacity constraints determined the extent to which the CRRF could be operationalised across different levels of government. This is also the case to a certain extent for *Kenya* and *Uganda* where funding constraints facing sub-national governments has limited their ability to manage the refugee response.

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.**

The vast majority of SO2 interventions were delivered using either the direct or indirect management modality and by means of projects. Key determinants in making a choice were the capacity of partner governments and other national project partners, and the track-record, experience and capacity of implementing organisations to deliver the support efficiently and effectively. This resulted in most cases in a choice of either indirectly managed and implemented interventions via pillar assessed organisations, or directly managed interventions via INGO-led consortia. During the initial phase of the EUTF's implementation, HQ played a stronger role in the selection of implementation modality and delivery channel but over time, decision-making was progressively devolved to the EUD level with positive effects. Less positive examples found with the selection of implementing partners related to a few cases where HQ played a stronger role.

While pillar-assessed organisations implemented the majority of SO2 interventions, findings indicate that INGOs were in most countries comparatively better placed to serve the needs of vulnerable communities because of their track-record and existing networks of working at this level. UN agencies showed other advantages, such as their ability to mobilise a wider spectrum of expertise or the implementation of more complex interventions, such as infrastructure, but their level of agility and responsiveness compared less well to most INGOs. Exceptions concerning the choice of a direct/indirect management approach were reported from *Uganda* (management of support by Koboko municipality) and from *Ethiopia*, where SO2 funding was implemented under the umbrella of the national DRM programme harvesting positive effects in terms of national ownership and commitment.

Overall, SO2 interventions were better suited to address community level resilience challenges compared to addressing structural problems, policy reforms and public authority capacity strengthening. The use of projects risked fragmentation of effort and demanded a higher level of coordination to ensure a coherent approach but, in most cases, was found to be the best possible

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option to serve the vulnerable communities. In some cases, however, pooled funding approaches were followed with positive effects, such as with the World Bank and the UK, which helped to widen the reach of the interventions and contributed to harmonisation.

Context, capacity, experience and the track-record of organisations in areas relevant for SO2 interventions also determined the extent to which the EU partnered with other EU services and funding institutions. Collaboration with ECHO was particularly relevant and effective in relation to SO2 interventions situated in a humanitarian-development nexus. In a number of cases linkages were made to projects funded via FPI. It was also found that the level of collaboration between EUDs and the field offices of ECHO and FPI (as well as their HQ teams) increased with the introduction of the EUTF. Although the Team Europe approach did not formally exist when the EUTF actions were designed, successful collaboration and harmonization efforts with the EU and selected member states in specific sectors, complementary themes, and geographic areas within the Horn of Africa were reported.

Decisions on whether or not to work via pooled funding were also taken by using the same criteria mentioned above, i.e. track-record, experience and capacity of implementing organisations to deliver the support efficiently and effectively, plus the donor willingness to work with each other in this way. These collaborative approaches to funding allowed SO2 interventions to initiate projects that built upon completed interventions funded from other sources, or they served as a platform for other funders to pick up from completed SO2 funded initiatives. Such complementarity of action contributed to intensifying and broadening coverage and reach and in some instances facilitated sustainability (see also Conclusion 9). This worked well where donors saw eye to eye and where there was a stronger degree of country led coordination but was less obvious in contexts of conflict and civil war where there might be different viewpoints on how best to engage (see the reference to the *Ethiopia* situation, highlighted under Conclusion 7). In other cases, an effective collaboration with other international partners was difficult due to a different priority setting or due to conceptual differences. A case in point is the EU's approach to social protection and the provision of cash transfer support, as found in the case of Somalia, which differs substantially from the World Bank's approach.

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.**

Delivery of EUTF interventions was supported by a dedicated institutional set up at HQ and country levels that proved helpful in identifying, programming and accompanying SO2 interventions in the field, including via missions for which operational budgets were available. The HQ set-up had the character of a "task team", as described by senior EUTF management, overseeing country level activities and ensuring open lines of communication and exchange with geo and thematic desks. The mobilisation of additional EUD staff to help with the operationalisation of the EUTF was particularly relevant as it allowed to more closely follow country dynamics, identify the right partners and monitor progress for the implementation of SO2 interventions which, as mentioned under Conclusion 1, were in most cases implemented via a large number of projects at community level. The influence of EUTF-tasked EU staff over projects implemented via INGOs was greater compared to those interventions under the lead of pillar assessed agencies. But regular exchanges at EUD and field level with both types of organisations helped to ensure that projects were mostly implemented according to the planned, or no-cost extended timelines. If delays occurred, the relative proximity of EUTF staff to the field helped them understand the reasons for the delays and to explain problems to HQ. Despite this positive assessment on the management of the SO2 project portfolio, a better strategic guidance from HQ on the purpose, breadth and scope of these interventions would have been helpful as further presented under Conclusion 10.

In most country contexts, the presence of additional EUD staff facilitated horizontal interactions with other EUD sections, EU services - as mentioned under Conclusion 6 – EU member state agencies and other international donors. Exceptions were *Sudan* and *Ethiopia* where the outbreak of civil war,

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disrupted interactions and led, in the case of *Ethiopia*, to a divergence of views between the EU and several EU member states over the extent to which SO2-related collaboration with the government (as part of the EU's wider support) should be taken up again in view of the government's role in the civil war. Positive effects of the additional EUD staff in relation to the promotion and coordination of SO2-related policy issues were reported from *Somalia* where the EU was seen as one of the most important funders in support of vulnerable communities across the country.

The EUTF developed an impressive knowledge management system comprising the MLS and the REF. The MLS comprised an elaborate monitoring system, but showed deficiencies, as highlighted under Conclusion 1. The system generated and stored considerable data and information about the results of the EUTF, including its SO2-related support, for the HoA and the Sahel. While this helped HQ to "tell the story", and to account for results, the potential of both the MLS and REF to shape the design of interventions and to take decisions on revisions, was not fully explored at HQ level. Even more disappointingly, there is no evidence to suggest that the potential of the MLS was taken up in any way at EUD level to inform decisions about the future course of a country portfolio or the programming of interventions. The REF produced a number of knowledge and learning products which were considered useful to inform EUDs on a number of more specific issues relevant to the understanding of the regional context, country situations or particular sectors. The major reason underpinning this conclusion relates to the rather sudden start and push to get interventions implemented at the beginning of the EUTF, without having a monitoring system in place at HQ as well as EUD level. It was only later on, that the MLS system was created. A factor limiting the optimal use of the MLS included its late development, as well as limited time during the early years of the EUTF to formulate outcome indicators and to conduct baseline studies. Another challenge was to collect data from the field in a timely manner and to prioritise its analysis against the backdrop of other priorities which required attention. In terms of broader learning about the effects of the EUTF in countering the factors underpinning displacements and vulnerabilities in the HoA, including the outcomes of SO2 interventions, dedicated efforts are being made today by DG INTPA via several studies, workshops and evaluations. The lessons and insights to emerge from these initiatives will be used to inform future engagements.

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**.

SO2 interventions were able to provide resilience support in situations of illegitimate and/or weak and/or absent public authorities, in a number of country contexts where other funders were less willing or less able to engage. This included working directly with local communities with the assistance of local actors in contexts of illegitimate or insecure state contexts (helping also to promote more local ownership and agency) and it helped to restore basic services and to provide social infrastructure in areas where state authority remained weak or had only recently been (re)established. In such contexts, SO2 support has demonstrated greater flexibility because these areas were often less prioritised by national authorities, allowing interventions to be more informed by the requirements and needs of the local context.

While the EU, by way of its SO2 support, was not the only international partner working in such contexts, its added value was particularly defined in terms of the duration of assistance, the EU's responsiveness and comparative flexibility, the adoption of a multi-sector approach (as described under Conclusion 1) and the substantial funding it could make available for such interventions. Moreover, SO2 support helped to test new ways of engaging in such contexts and to bridge the humanitarian-development divide in the framework of the HDP Nexus. Its ability to craft such interventions was much valued.

The EU's SO2 support also stands out for its investments in regional, and in particular *cross-border* projects which had been generally under-served by governments, and by other development partners, whose support was usually provided via smaller projects of limited duration and funding. Cross-border programming helped address specific *cross-border* vulnerabilities and directed much-

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needed resources into these communities. As such, the interventions proved complementary to country-specific interventions, however, they struggled to receive the required level of support from national governments which undermines some of the achievements realised at the local level. To a lesser extent, but still important, SO2 *cross-border* initiatives allowed the EU to promote inter-governmental *cross-border* processes in the region aimed at improving the climate for peace and cooperation, through dialogue initiatives.

The additional staffing, as mentioned under Conclusion 7, helped to better connect between EUDs in the region but *cross-border* interventions were managed by different EUDs which created hiccups in terms of coordination with HQs and the teaming up with other EU services and the respective government institutions responsible for the engagement of international funders in border areas. In some instances, this reduced the overall effectiveness of such interventions.

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.**

SO2 interventions were generally designed with an ambition towards generating results that could be sustained after project closure. These included a wide range of activities, such as different forms of training, the deployment of participatory project planning and assessment approaches to shape ownership, or setting up of community structures to better manage disasters or improve NRM. This was indeed true for those projects that had a mostly developmental focus. However, for projects that addressed short-term humanitarian needs, it was recognised that sustainability was not necessarily a relevant consideration. Specific efforts to promote a "localisation agenda", understood as efforts to hand over responsibilities and project implementation activities to local NGOs was at times left to the discretion of the project implementing organisations. The EUD's guidance in this regard was limited.

The true extent of SO2 sustainability has been difficult to measure, in part because closed projects have not generally been subjected to ex-post evaluation. Project monitoring as noted earlier has also only measured results at the output level of the results chain. However, on the basis of anecdotal findings related to closed projects and discussions with project stakeholders on the likelihood of sustainability of on-going projects, the evaluation has concluded that sustainability has generally not been achieved except in the case of some components of interventions implemented in *Kenya* and *Uganda*, and to a lesser extent in other countries. This overall picture of largely unsustainable interventions highlights the challenges of sustaining resilience support in locations plagued by widespread poverty, frequent conflicts, natural disasters, which frequently result in displacements, all of which is compounded by weak governance systems in most countries across the region.

At the community level, there is anecdotal evidence from SO2 funded interventions that household resilience could be sustained. This means that farmers continue to produce more with some graduating from subsistence to commercial production, and households have been able to diversify their incomes through various income generating activities that allow them to meet their food security and other out of pocket expenses related to health and education. Anecdotal evidence also shows that community level committees continue to address DRM and NRM related issues whilst many village and savings loans committees have proven to be self-sustaining. Such achievements can be attributed to local energies and commitments but by and large have depended on an enabling environment that gives space and opportunity for vulnerable households to grow. *Kenya* and *Uganda* were best able to provide such an enabling environment and this is where sustainable results are easier to find. However, even in some of the less propitious contexts, some sustainability has been achieved, though to a far lesser extent.

Given the overall more limited attention paid by SO2 interventions to conflict management, i.e. mainly in the context of the CRRF-related support provided (see Conclusion 5), prospects for achieving sustainability, for example in the form of functioning community-based conflict management committees, have been limited. One should recognise, however, that forms of sustainability might have been realised via SO4-related interventions in relation to conflict management, peace and security which falls outside the scope of this evaluation.

Capacity strengthening support to public authorities at different levels was also funded, whereby *Uganda* and *Kenya* provided the most conducive environment for strengthening structures, systems and processes at different institutional levels that would enable public authorities to take over the resilience-related support in the longer term. In some instances, as one finding from SO2 support in *Somalia* informs, municipalities started to generate income which helped to sustain activities in a number of project catchment areas. In a few cases, SO2 support was implemented through government structures, such as the DRM programme in *Ethiopia*, or through local NGOs – as found in *Somalia* and *Uganda* – which went some way to build ownership and strengthen local capacities, thereby contributing to sustainability.

Data collected also confirmed the findings of multiple studies and evaluations which state that sustainability of outcomes depends on a mix of factors including a more enabling environment being in place, e.g. political and economic stability; individual drive and good fortune, including entrepreneurial outlook; and having strong support networks. The intensity and increasing number of natural and man-made disasters in the HoA - droughts, floods and violent conflict/ civil war – also worked against the ability of beneficiaries to sustain the results of the SO2 interventions. Overall, during the period of EUTF operations, levels of food insecurity have increased across the region.

As a last point, it is important to acknowledge the comparatively longer time frames of SO2 interventions compared to what other donors provide in support of resilience which offered some prospect for (behavioural) change processes to take root. The importance of this aspect of project design should not be under-estimated (notwithstanding that ideally an even longer project timeframes would be desirable) and distinguished SO2 interventions from many other EU and non-EU funded projects which had much shorter time frames and therefore less prospects for sustainability. On the other hand, a criticism levelled at SO2 projects was the abruptness with which projects came to a close and insufficient attention paid to exit strategies.

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 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.

SO2 interventions in the HoA were overall successful in targeting the poor, the marginalised and those most in need, and made a deliberate effort to address the needs of women and children, youth, elderly and disabled. In so doing interventions incorporated gender considerations and dimensions of inclusiveness and protection of the most vulnerable into their designs.

The poor and marginalised included in particular refugees, internally displaced persons and their host communities which were confronted with the burden of absorbing the influx of IDPs/ refugees into their mostly resource-poor environments.

Across the HoA region, SO2 support helped to strengthen the resilience of targeted households as well as the wider communities falling under the catchment areas of the respective interventions.

SO2 support also served the multifaceted resilience needs of vulnerable communities, including food security, NRM or DRM. Due to the multi-sector approach of SO2 interventions (as mentioned under Conclusion 1), the resilience support in a number of instances also served SO1-related objectives, i.e. promoting greater economic and employment opportunities, and SO4-related objectives, i.e. to strengthen governance aspects and, but in a more limited way, conflict prevention.

This multi-sector approach was to the advantage of vulnerable communities though benefits were mostly enjoyed during the period of project implementation with limited prospects for sustainability, as explained under Conclusion 9.

The delivery of the SO2 support was in most cases done in the right way, as presented under Conclusions 4, 6 and 7 (HDP nexus; implementation modalities and implementation modalities, and institutional set-up). Of added value was the allocation of earmarked SO2 funding for countries and regional interventions to counter vulnerabilities and — the EUDs strong role in determining the priorities to be addressed.

As per the above findings, one can safely conclude that the "why" and the "what" questions, in terms of the right issues to be addressed, and the "how" question, in terms of the design and delivery of interventions, were appropriately framed, promoted and operationalised. A less positive conclusion unfolds with regard to the targeting of interventions, i.e. the "where" question. Findings show that in most countries, with the exception of *Kenya* and *Uganda*, SO2 interventions were too widely spread, thereby resulting in more limited benefits per household in the communities served with the risk of achieving results that are less impactful.

This also limited the extent to which support could be provided to areas affected by internal displacement and migration, such as regional corridors, for which a more targeted support could have been beneficial – in particular to the geographical areas affected by the routes which displaced and migrating people take. Achieving a more geographically targeted support can be difficult to realise, as findings from the governance-fragmented *Somalia* highlight. But findings also lead to the conclusion that this issue of targeting was not sufficiently considered in relation to the SO2 support provided.

The insufficient targeting of SO2 interventions can in part be attributed to the inadequate steering and guidance from HQ on the purpose, breadth and scope of SO2. The balance between strong central policy direction and strategic priority setting on one side, and a more bottom-up decentralised approach driven by EUDs on the other side led to a situation that decisions were too open ended, interventions being a bit everywhere and without sufficient boundaries set to ensure an adequate geographic/spatial targeting. The bottom-up approach resulted in very context-specific deployments of the SO2 funding, with positive results in even highly volatile contexts, and it responded effectively to disbursement pressures from HQ and the political imperative to be seen to be getting things done. But possibly this could have been done better with some more steering and boundary setting from the centre.

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6   Lessons learned

This compilation of lessons learned is drawn from the experiences of SO2 interventions in the HoA, reviewed during the course of this evaluation. These lessons offer generic insights that may be applied to the design and implementation of future resilience interventions funded by the EU in complex and fragile contexts.

Lesson 1: **Multiple pathways to achieving food security**	Households seek different pathways to achieve food security. Whilst food production for own consumption remains an important way to achieve subsistence, many vulnerable households also look for ways to engage in income generation activities that puts cash in their hands so that they can purchase the food items they cannot produce themselves. Working outside the agriculture sector to generate income to meet livelihoods needs is increasingly attractive among the youth.
Lesson 2: **Access to water - a key enabler of resilience interventions**	Interventions aimed at building community resilience have typically included actions to improve equitable access to water either for domestic consumption, agricultural production (crops, horticulture, livestock) or for public health reasons (disease vector control). Whilst the development of water resources may only count as one component of multi-sector interventions, they are often a key enabler for achieving wider resilience outcomes.
Lesson 3: **CRRF - a unifying framework for building resilience among refugee and host communities**	Experiences from Kenya and Uganda demonstrate the value of the CRRF for harmonising and aligning international assistance around country-led processes aimed at finding durable solutions for refugees including transitioning from short term humanitarian assistance to longer term developmental solutions. The CRRF also promotes social cohesion among refugee and host communities by encouraging equitable access to social services and livelihood opportunities.
Lesson 4: **Strengthening public authority capacity is important in all contexts**	Public authority capacity at national as well as sub-national level is key to ensuring sustainable resilience outcomes. Appropriate measures need therefore to be taken that help build that capacity. Conducting capacity assessments upfront can help determine what is feasible and what should be prioritised especially in challenging environments where pre-conditions for building sustainable capacity may appear to be absent.
Lesson 5: **Investing in localisation pays off**	Although there are fewer examples of efforts to promote the localisation agenda, where it took place, there have been clear payoffs. Working directly with public authorities helps strengthen ownership and therefore sustainability. Creating opportunities for national/ local NGOs and CSOs to be contracted as implementing partners can help broaden ownership of the resilience agenda and provides a way to mobilise local knowledge and expertise.
Lesson 6: **Pay close attention to incentives, and potential barriers to change.**	When introducing innovative practices among vulnerable communities, such as the introduction of new ways to manage water resources, close attention should be paid to the role of incentives - both financial and non-financial - and to the identification of potential barriers to change. It is also important to understand how roles and responsibilities are assigned among different role players such as local governments and community groups, and how these might be affected by any proposed intervention. A good point of departure is understanding why things are the way they are, and how previous attempts to introduce innovation have fared. This can avoid coming up with project proposals that are based on incorrect assumptions or that are over-ambitious. It can also ensure that interventions are built upon a credible change process that builds trust and confidence among parties involved.

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Lesson 7: **Striking the balance between diagnostics and local knowledge**	Working on sensitive socio-economic and cultural issues, such as gender, rights and avoiding doing harm requires an intimate understanding of local context. The correct balance needs to be struck between relying on the insights, and experiences of implementing partners who may display good local knowledge, and stepping back to conduct formal diagnostic exercises, such as gender and conflict analysis, the results of which may challenge assumptions, reveal knowledge gaps and create new insights. Studies conducted through dedicated and operational research facilities can also contribute to more informed design decisions.
Lesson 8: **Cross-border initiatives and operations in remote areas require public authority engagement and local presence**	Experiences from cross-border interventions and operations in remote areas highlight - more so than in more stable contexts - the importance of engaging national and local public authorities from the very outset in order to build ownership and the commitment to sustain local level results. However, where such authorities are absent, or illegitimate, it becomes important for implementing partners to engage with existing (informal) structures, maintain or expand a presence on the ground, or maintain very close and trusted links with local stakeholders to ensure continuity of support and responsiveness to evolving situations.
Lesson 9: **Choice of delivery channel and management modality should be informed by local context**	The choice of delivery channel and management modality to support resilience interventions is mainly informed by contextual considerations and a good understanding of local change dynamics including – among others - the organisational capacity of proposed implementing partners or the political economy of an intervention area (including conflict and gender sensitivity), as well as by the characteristics of the proposed intervention including its complexity, size and sector/ thematic features. As such there should be no *a priori* preference of one approach over another.
Lesson 10: **Management capacity of implementing partners cannot be taken for granted**	Project delivery can be delayed by poor management on the part of implementing partners. Moreover, opportunities to create synergies among closely collaborating partners are not always exploited. This is especially the case where consortia arrangements are used and where greater attention to coordination and harmonisation of systems is required. Experiences point to the need to pay careful attention to the management capacity of consortia leads and to ensure adequate resources are assigned to support this function.
Lesson 11: **Resilience interventions in fragile contexts require flexible budgets**	A common feature of resilience interventions is the need to adapt to (rapidly) changing situations by adjusting designs and reassigning budgets. Projects that include a flexible funding provision – e.g., a crisis modifier or contingency budget line - can adapt more easily and in a manner that ensures on-going relevance and responsiveness to emerging needs. In some cases, this can help sustain the ownership among beneficiary groups who observe interventions responding timeously to their changing circumstances.
Lesson 12: **EU expertise and management oversight is needed close to the ground**	Resilience interventions require the support of sufficient, well-informed staff that are assigned at Delegation level. The nature of resilience interventions confirms the need for a hands-on approach to facilitate navigation of complex environments that demand local knowledge and readiness to adapt and adjust interventions. Country-level presence also facilitates the needed engagement and interactions with partner authorities, EU member states, international cooperation agencies and implementing partners, especially when an HDP Nexus approach is pursued.

7 Recommendations

The evaluation team formulated 15 recommendations based on the conclusions and findings of this evaluation. To follow the logic in the build-up from EQs to the recommendations, the linkages between the EQs, the evaluation dimensions, conclusions and recommendations are highlighted in Figure 6, below. In line with the EU's evaluation guidance, the evaluation team formulated recommendations which are unfolding from the respective conclusions.

The recommendations relate to the evaluation of the EUTF's second objective, with a specific focus on how this support has unfolded in the HoA context. This objective aims to "strengthen the resilience of communities and the most vulnerable, as well as refugees and displaced people" across the HoA region. The region is characterised by extreme poverty and various man-made crises and natural disasters resulting in many people and entire communities being displaced within their own country, some by force, others seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Migration from this region takes place mainly towards the Gulf states and only to a limited extent towards Europe.

In view of this focus, the recommendations are formulated in response to this second objective of the EUTF and not in relation to the irregular migration from Africa to Europe, which is in the official title of the EUTF.[53]

Considering the focus of this evaluation, the recommendations should also be read as a contribution to translating the Council Conclusions on Stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition, 16 December 2024.

Figure 6: Linkages between EQs, conclusions and recommendations
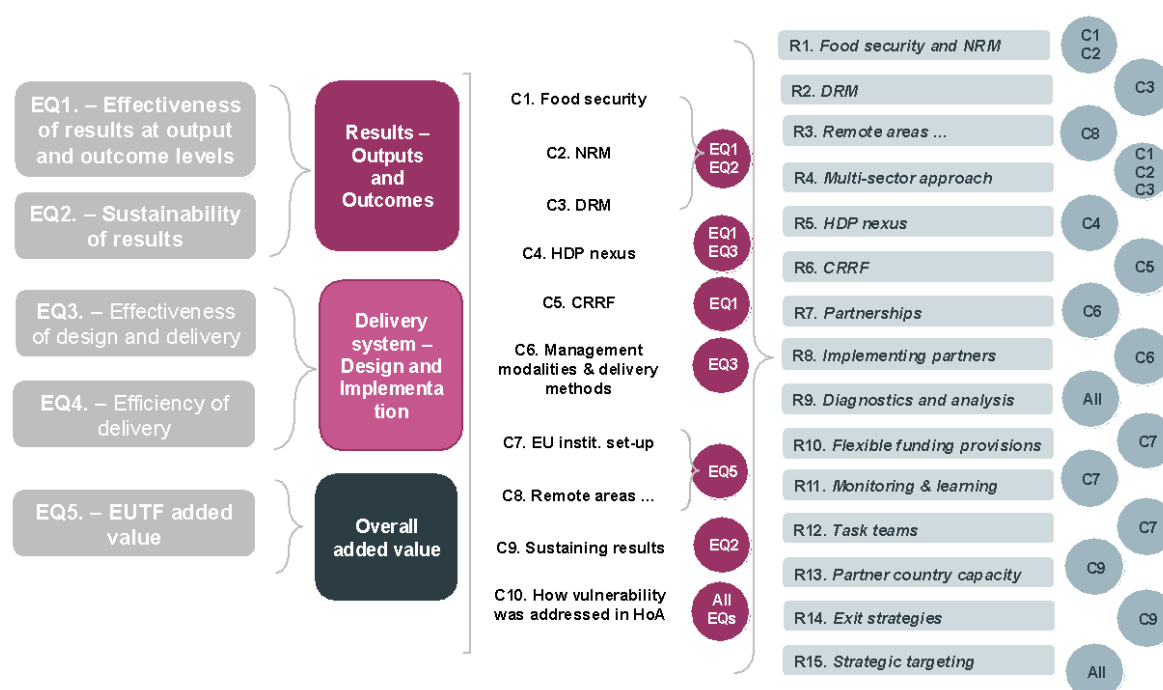
Source: Evaluation team.

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[53] Title: European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa.

7.1 Strengthening resilience via thematic and geographic entry points

Recommendation 1: Food security and NRM

> **Food security and NRM should remain key thematic entry points for strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities.**
>
> *This recommendation is linked to conclusion: 1 and 2.*
>
> *Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs, EU Council (in particular those EU member states with programmes in support of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities in the HoA), ECHO*

- Food security is the primary concern of vulnerable communities in the HoA. High levels of poverty, and exposure to repeated natural and man-made shocks resulting in a high incidence of forced displacement makes it challenging for households to meet their food security needs.
- The evaluation has shown that prioritising resilience assistance on the promotion of food security at household and community levels was therefore the right choice and should remain a priority. Evidence however also points to the importance of creating income generating opportunities both within and outside the agriculture sector in order to provide alternative pathways for vulnerable households to meet their food security needs.
- Key to better and more sustainable food production is the management of natural resources, including availability of and access to land, water and forestry resources. Across the countries reviewed, water proved to be a key enabler for livestock and arable crop production and should therefore feature as a key supporting measure in the design of food security interventions.

Recommendation 2: DRM

> **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.**
>
> *This recommendation is linked to conclusion 3.*
>
> *Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs, EU Council (in particular those EU member states with programmes in support of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities in the HoA), ECHO, FPI*

- In the light of the growing number of climate change induced shocks in the HoA, it is recommended to give greater priority to DRM when supporting vulnerable communities.
- The level of attention required will vary from context to context and need to be well understood during identification and design in particular, but as a general principle should be part and parcel of interventions that address food security and NRM.
- As found during the evaluation, prevention, early warning and management of possible disasters is closely linked to NRM, especially at the community level, where often water management committees and disaster management/ early warning committees work closely together.
- Findings from the evaluation also highlight the importance of engaging with and supporting public authorities with mandated responsibilities for disaster management as these provide the frameworks and technical resources that support community level actions. These should therefore be included in planned DRM assistance and encouraged also to engage with agencies responsible for food security, NRM and related measures such as social protection.

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Recommendation 3: Remote areas and cross-border regions

Make better use 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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusion 8.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs, EU Council (in particular those EU member states with programmes in support of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities in the HoA), ECHO, FPI

- The EU was able to play a relevant role in supporting vulnerable communities in geographical areas that are difficult to reach due to security and/or political reasons, as well as in remote and cross-border areas where national governments are absent or only have a very limited presence. This applied to all countries reviewed with the exception of Uganda and Kenya.
- In some countries, the EU was able to combine its support in difficult to reach areas with complementary stabilisation funding, something that was appreciated for its comparatively longer-term commitment and engagement.
- Due to its presence across the HoA, the EU also had a comparative advantage vis-à-vis EU member states and other international funding partners in terms of its ability to support vulnerable communities on either side of border regions.
- For the above reasons, the EU is encouraged to reinforce its engagement in such areas especially as these are often the places where refugees and/or internally displaced populations settle, and where risks of instability, including tensions with host communities are high. With growing instability due to man-made and natural disasters, one can moreover expect that vulnerable communities in these border regions will increase in number.
- To effectively address these challenges and build on past achievements, the EU should explore ways to strengthen management and coordination mechanisms that facilitate engagement between the different EUDs present in the region, the different implementing partners involved and that facilitate the participation of public authorities responsible for border areas in the respective countries.

7.2   Effective approaches underpinning support to resilience

Recommendation 4: Multi-sector approach

Continue applying a multi-sector approach when addressing the different dimensions of vulnerability while ensuring coherence in the scope and breadth of interventions.

This recommendation is linked to conclusion 1.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs

- The EU's approach to supporting resilience via multiple entry points should be continued because the causes of vulnerability are multi-dimensional and intertwined. While certain sectors can be expected to be at the core of most interventions, as suggested in – recommendation #1– vulnerability can rarely be addressed by focusing on a single sector alone.
- It is equally important to ensure a well-balanced approach that addresses relevant policy, institutional and capacity issues at the national and sub-national levels but also working directly with vulnerable communities.
- The evaluation has however shown that overly complex multi-sectoral engagements, that demand a high level of coordinated action across multiple actors and stakeholders can lead to dysfunctions and loss of effectiveness. It is therefore recommended to carefully assess how broad the scope of the support should be framed and funded. Too large funding packages might therefore result in poorer performing interventions.

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Recommendation 5: HDP nexus

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 4 and 5.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs, ECHO, FPI

- The HDP Nexus approach has demonstrated its usefulness as a way to guide support to vulnerable communities.
- As confirmed by this evaluation, the HDP Nexus approach can help to better link interventions at the interface of a humanitarian situation and the need to provide longer-term resilience and development assistance. It has also helped to better coordinate resilience interventions across different EU services, notably the EUDs and ECHO as well as to mobilise expertise and resources from both humanitarian and development communities. In this regard, the flexibility of the EUTF proved instrumental in operationalising the HDP Nexus approach.
- The HDP Nexus also demonstrated its applicability in vastly different settings and at very different moments in time, ranging from the management of refugees and host communities in Kenya and Uganda to protracted crises situations in parts of Ethiopia or Somalia. Less so in the more emergency-prone countries like South Sudan and Sudan.
- The EU is therefore encouraged to promote the HDP Nexus as an overarching approach for guiding the design and implementation of future resilience strategies, programmes and projects. Principles underpinning the HDP Nexus as well as lessons of experience from different contexts can support the identification, design and the implementation of interventions.
- This includes that EUDs should ensure that implementing organisations pay more explicit attention to the promotion of social cohesion and conflict reduction at the local level, the peace-element, informed by regularly updated baseline information and conflict analyses, which to date has received less attention.
- The EU is therefore also encouraged to ensure that lessons of experience are captured, stored and disseminated to relevant services as further elaborated in recommendation 11 below.

Recommendation 6: CRRF

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 5.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3, G5 and G6 in particular), EUDs, ECHO, FPI

- Findings from Uganda and Kenya highlight the usefulness of the CRRF as a framework to guide national policies and approaches in support of refugee/IDP management as well as coordination of international assistance.
- Moreover, it has demonstrated its value regarding the transitioning from short-term humanitarian assistance to longer-term development support, including the promotion of social cohesion and integration at the community level.
- While the opportunities to promote the CRRF depends on country context, including political dynamics, public finances and the capacity of public institutions, it is recommended to promote the CRRF more systematically, even in contexts where the pre-conditions do not appear to be in place.
- Incremental support can help to open pathways towards country-owned policies, frameworks and interventions, as well as achieve results at the community level, to address the needs of vulnerable refugee and IDP communities on a more sustainable basis. As such, the EU's interventions across the region should be more aligned with, and supportive of the CRRF, or similar partner country initiatives and frameworks (e.g. country pledges at the Global Refugee Forum), and in their absence should be ready to promote their formulation and implementation.

Recommendation 7: Partnerships

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 6.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3, G5 and G6 in particular), EUDs

- Partnerships between the EU and various international funding institutions and implementing partners – multilateral organisations and NGOs – were indispensable for addressing the needs of vulnerable communities across the region.
- While the EUTF facilitated successful collaboration with various partners, there is room to further encourage partnerships, and to explore options for different forms of collaboration with a particular focus on promoting Team Europe Initiatives.
- This would include adopting common conceptual approaches, addressing timing and alignment issues, identifying the most appropriate division of labour among partners, exploring ways to engage in joint operations and/ or the setting up pooled funding mechanisms.
- As crises caused by natural disasters and violent conflicts can be expected to grow in the region, and with the decline of public funding for humanitarian assistance and international cooperation on the decline, more effective forms of partnering are needed more than ever.

Recommendation 8: Implementing partners

Carefully assess implementation partners' capacity and their suitability to be contracted for assignments in different contexts.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 6.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3, G5 and G6 in particular), EUDs

- The evaluation has shown the varied experiences of working with different types of implementing partners. These have differed from country to country and – within countries – from region to region.
- Decisions on the use of a particular type of implementing partner were informed by the credentials of the respective partners in terms of their track record and experiences in working within certain fragile contexts and their relations with partner country's stakeholders, including public authorities. Consideration was also given to the demonstrated management capabilities of different implementing partners and the availability of personnel with requisite skills and experience.
- The evaluation observed that for the implementation of support at the community level in protracted crises contexts, local and international NGOs with a long track-record of work on the ground were generally better placed compared to agencies from multilateral organisations or EU member states. This was because their management systems are generally lighter and more agile than those governing larger public entities especially in the UN system.
- However, such public entities (UN organisations and EU member states agencies) may have a comparative advantage over NGOs regarding engagements at lower as well as higher institutional levels. Accessing policy makers and dealing with issues to be discussed among national government and international funding partners which are of a more strategic nature, are generally better dealt with via bigger agencies.
- The evaluation recommends that these perspectives, such as cost-effectiveness, good knowledge of the context, ability to quickly deliver, ability to negotiate at the national as well as local level, are taken into account in the assessment of suitable implementing partners, though these should not be read as something cast in stone.

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7.3 Institutional set-up and operational provisions for resilience-related support

Recommendation 9: Diagnostics and analysis

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 7 and 10.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs

- The EU has developed different diagnostic tools to prepare the design of resilience interventions including those that examine the capacity of partners, that assess gender-related needs, that analyse the nature of conflict or that map the political economy of particular contexts.
- Whilst such diagnostic work was mostly carried out at HQ and EUD level ahead of the design of resilience interventions - as well as by some implementing partners - it was not necessarily done so systematically and as thoroughly as required. Whilst this lighter touch approach could help to speed up the design process, it could lead to difficulties during project implementation.
- It is therefore recommended that a more stringent approach to diagnosis is carried out in the design of interventions to ensure that interventions respond accurately to identified opportunities and challenges for engagement.
- At the same time a careful balance needs to be struck between insisting on such exercises and leaving space for implementing partners to shape designs and structure interventions according to their own insights and locally collected knowledge and experiences.
- In this regard, the evaluation has found that most implementing partners and their staff have worked for a long time in a given context, several of these for more than 10 years, allowing for an on-going assessment of the environment and changing situations on the ground. Yet even where this is the case, implementing partners should be required to conduct periodic assessments/ reviews and/or organise reflection moments as a way to pinpoint challenges impacting on progress as well as contributing to overall lesson learning and accountability.

Recommendation 10: Flexible funding provisions

Continue to include flexible funding provisions across all interventions in support of vulnerable communities and provide implementing partners sufficient discretion to react timeously to ergencies and rapidly changing situations on the ground.

This recommendation is linked to conclusion 4.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs

- The evaluation revealed a considerable number of instances when adaptations to project design were required due to changing circumstances on the ground. The EUTF generally provided the needed flexibility via flexible funding arrangements (contingency funding options or, in one case, via a crises modifier provision) to make needed changes including in some cases shifting from a more developmental focus to a more humanitarian focus.. Such flexibility needs to be retained in future resilience interventions funded through NDICI-GE.
- In line with good practices of various international development partners, discretionary decision-making powers should be assigned to implementing partners for the use of such contingency funding in the case of emergencies and rapidly changing situations and to include such provisions in the budget of a programme or a project. Such a devolved decision-making arrangement should be guided by clear criteria on how such authority can be used.

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Recommendation 11: Monitoring and learning

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusion 7.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units – D4 in particular), EUDs

- The EUTF's system to commission operational research and monitor the achievement of results and learn from experiences for the HoA, the Sahel and the Lake Chad region was unique to DG DEVCO, at the time, and still is for DG INTPA today. Investments in research studies and collecting output data and to a lesser extent outcome data, resulted in a huge dataset and a wealth of insights on how to address resilience in complex settings. This wealth of knowledge and data must remain accessible to inform the design of future resilience support, and could be facilitated through continued funding of research initiatives as well as organising learning events.
- As part of such follow up, further investments should be made to strengthen the scope and robustness of the indicator framework for capturing resilience results including enhancing the collection of outcome indicators. It will also be important to determine where the current monitoring and learning system should be institutionally stored once the EUTF ends.

Recommendation 12: Task teams

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusion 7.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units), EUDs, ECHO, FPI

- In view of the growing need to address resilience in protracted crises countries across the globe, ensure that knowledgeable and motivated EU staff - at both HQ and the EUD level - is retained after the termination of the EUTF to support the design, implementation and monitoring of future SO2-type interventions. The presence of well-informed EU staff at EUDs should be maintained because the support to vulnerability requires a close contact with the field and implementation level to understand the often rapidly evolving realities and changes on the ground.
- The EUTF built up a modus operandi that featured drawing staff from across different HQ geographic and thematic units, from HQ and EUD levels and from other services (FPI, ECHO) to work as a de facto task team in support of designing and accompanying resilience interventions.
- It is recommended that this way of working is not lost and will continue as a good practice for addressing future resilience interventions, – despite the termination of the EUTF.

7.4   Sustainability of resilience interventions

Recommendation 13: Partner Country Capacity

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 5 and 9.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs

- This evaluation has confirmed that the sustainability of resilience-related support to vulnerable communities, including refugees and IDPs in partner countries can only be realised if national institutional structures, including public authorities at the national and sub-national levels, local NGOs and CBOs, associations and private sector organisations participate fully in interventions funded by the Commission.

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- In some contexts, the inclusion of national partners in the delivery of support to vulnerable communities may appear to be a far-away goal, especially in countries with weak governments or where there is an on-going conflict. Evaluation findings have also shown that even in relatively stable and better functioning countries, where such involvement could be considered, limited delivery capacity and inadequate public finances can bring the sustainability of interventions funded by the EU into question.

- It is therefore recommended that programme and project design makes explicit how interventions will engage with, mobilise and strengthen public authorities and relevant national NGOs, CBOs and other community-based structures. Those designs should also explore options for sustainable resilience building that look beyond public sector interventions by exploring ways and means through which local private actors – in those countries that offer a conducive environment – can contribute to wider efforts to build resilience. The CRRF, see recommendation # 6, forms an important framework to guide the development of more sustainable approaches in support of strengthening resilience.

- To facilitate a realistic approach to strengthening the capacity of partner institutions, a thorough capacity diagnostic exercise should be undertaken that can help pinpoint potential entry points and areas for priority attention.

Recommendation 14: Exit strategies

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 5 and 9.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs

- Resilience interventions should include an exit strategy developed as part of the initial design that considers options for eventual withdrawal and handover to public authorities, local NGOs/ CBOs or other international organisations. Such an exit strategy should set out the preconditions for exit and the processes through which an exit could take place, albeit cognisant of the level of uncertainty and unpredictability that characterises complex and protracted crisis environments.

- Based on an ongoing learning process, see recommendation # 11, implementing partners should also review and update during the course of the implementation the originally formulated exit strategy and formulate recommendations in the final report on the way forward.

- Despite the fact that certain engagements will require a very long-term support commitment by the EU, thinking about an exit can help to formulate in the design phase already which actors need to be strengthened via capacity development support, which gaps in legal frameworks, strategies or operational processes need to be addressed and how to phase the external support accordingly.

- An exit strategy should also spell out measures to address the risks and assumptions identified in the intervention logic/ theory of change and/ or logframe, and should draw on lessons learnt from past interventions. To this end, ex-post impact assessments should be commissioned of selected interventions to further draw insights on the factors supporting or hindering sustainability.

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7.5   Strategic targeting of the support

Recommendation 15: A more strategic engagement

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.

This recommendation is linked to conclusions 10.

Follow-up by: DG INTPA (Management; geographic & thematic units - D4, F2, F3 and G5 in particular), EUDs, ECHO, FPI, EEAS

- With the ending of the EUTF, and with considerable knowledge and experience gained and many lessons learned from the implementation of resilience-strengthening interventions, it is recommended to reflect how such support can be integrated into a wider EU strategic engagement in the HoA region.
- This should include how to go about promoting concrete steps that take into account i) thematic and sectoral priorities, including the identification of strategic entry points, ii) the approaches that need to be deployed, iii) the institutional provisions that need to be in place to make such a more strategic support successful, iv) the partners the EU should work with across different types of interventions, and iv) the need to further shape EU added value in this domain.
- Concerning partnerships, see also Recommendation # 7, the EU and EU member states should use their comparative advantages to explore options for enhanced collaboration and joint action on resilience-related engagements through Team Europe Initiatives.
- Any decisions to be taken should be based on a thorough broad diagnostic exercise that, among others, takes account of the local political economy, gender and exclusion, conflict assessment and available data on vulnerabilities associated with natural and human-induced shocks. This diagnostic exercise should then lead to decisions about the target areas and the entry points for change to be addressed from a strategic perspective – for example, specific corridors which are in the focus from a Global Gateway perspective; or geographical areas which are in the geopolitical focus; or specific population groups which are at risk of being undermined by radical groups, or vulnerable communities for which the drivers of forced displacement are most acute, potentially leading to a broader destabilisation in the region.
- This analysis should also identify the strengths and comparative advantages of the EU for engagement, but also the limitations the EU is facing in view of shrinking budgets. A recognition is needed that not everything can prevail, as well as an awareness that only so much can be done with fewer resources.

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