

Support programme to the refugee settlements and host communities in Northern Uganda (SPRS-NU)



EU Trust Fund for Africa – Horn of Africa



EUTF PARTNER:
Enabel



COUNTRY:
Uganda



BUDGET:
EUR 8M



From **07/2016**
to **11/2024**

Objective of the programme

To enhance livelihoods and labour market-relevant skills for refugee and host communities in Northern Uganda, through vocational training and entrepreneurship support

Key successes

- > The proportion of regular¹ vocational trainees who secured employment or developed income-generating activities (IGAs) increased by 28 percentage points after the training
- > 86% of private sector employers are satisfied with the quality and relevance of trainings offered by the project

Uganda has experienced a significant influx of refugees and migration flows along its border with Sudan and South Sudan, most notably in districts of the Northern Region. This surge has heightened the strain on both national and refugee populations, exacerbating risks to natural resources, contributing to food insecurity, deepening poverty, and posing challenges to the delivery of basic services. Through the SPRS-NU Enabel project,² vulnerable communities in Northern Uganda (particularly youths, women, and girls) from both refugee and host communities now benefit from increased access to quality skills development (including training, entrepreneurial skills and start-up kits), livelihood empowerment and increased self-reliance.

The project targeted 4,400 youths and women in Northern Uganda (Adjumani, Arua and Yumbe Districts) as well as Kiryandongo District in Western Uganda. It aimed to sustainably improve livelihoods and income generation by training women through a skills training scheme that provides short-term vocational training and entrepreneurship training to develop labour market-relevant skills among refugee youths, women and girls.

'I have learnt everything I need to build a house. When I graduate, the first thing I am going to do is build a brick house for my parents. Besides this skill, I have been equipped with entrepreneurship and life skills. This helped me build confidence as a young lady, to set goals and work towards them, and to manage my business and income in an efficient and economical way. I believe it will improve my standard of living,' says a 22-year-old female refugee.



Members of the Manjoora women's group during a training session at Lokopio Vocational Institute in the Bidi-Bidi refugee settlement, Uganda. © Enabel

'The skills project has restored my hope,' says Jimmy, a 25-year-old male refugee. 'At least I can now earn money, buy clothes, buy food at home and save some money on a weekly basis because of the skills I have acquired. I have earned over 1,800,000 UGX (approximately € 440) since December from this youth skills development training. My plan is to save some money up to the end of this year and open a carpentry shop of my own since this skills training workshop has exposed me to many clients.'

How did the EUTF help?

The programme supported both short- and medium-term training activities by upgrading existing Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTNET) institutions and establishing new ones.

Targeted beneficiaries also received entrepreneurial skills training, as well as coaching and start-up kits in various sectors, such as bricklaying, carpentry, hairdressing, masonry, mechanics, soap making and welding.



South Sudanese refugees receiving an ‘instant’ skills training in maintaining water and sanitation installations in the Bidi-Bidi refugee settlement, Uganda © Enabel

The BTVET activities significantly enhanced beneficiaries’ income, economic opportunities and employment prospects by equipping them with locally relevant skills tailored to labour market needs. These initiatives also promoted self-employment and increased women’s participation in the labour market, which has traditionally been low in these areas. Surveys conducted by the project found that 90% of respondents considered that the trainings were relevant to local skills and labour market needs, and were therefore likely to improve beneficiaries’ employment prospects.³ Additionally, 86% of private sector employers in the project areas reported being satisfied with the quality and relevance of trainings provided.⁴ According to tracer studies,⁵ among the 1,200 project trainees who graduated between 2018 and 2019, there was an increase in employment of 28 percentage points (from 37% before the training to 65% post-training). Furthermore, 78% of beneficiaries in wage or self-employment reported improved income after graduation from the trainings, while 56% of ‘instant’ trainees⁶ established new IGAs or improved their existing IGAs after the training.⁷

¹ ‘Regular’ training lasts six to nine months.
² SPRS-NU Enabel ‘Description of action’.
³ SPRS-NU Enabel ‘Action Research Infographic Final’, n.d.
⁴ SPRS NU Enabel, ‘Tracer Studies Infographic Final’, July 2020.
⁵ A tracer study involves repeated data collection and analysis on the same individuals over time in order to track changes following a development intervention.
⁶ ‘Instant’ training lasts one to two weeks (10-100 hours).
⁷ SPRS NU Enabel, ‘Tracer Studies Infographic Final’, July 2020; The RDPP endline evaluation noted that COVID-19 lockdown could have limited the beneficiaries’ participation in apprenticeships and livelihood opportunities at the time of the tracer studies (2020) explaining the relatively low proportions reported.
⁸ RDPP, ‘The RDPP in Uganda Endline Assessment’, 30 April 2021.
⁹ SPRS NU Enabel, ‘Tracer Studies Infographic Final’, July 2020.
¹⁰ SPRS Nu Enabel, ‘Skiing Strategy Uganda’ Evaluation Report’, November 2020.

Disclaimer

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The research for this success story was conducted from March to June 2023, was based on project documentation, and presents the situation at that moment.

The trainings were particularly effective in empowering women and promoting their economic participation, with 68% of female participants in the project’s BTVET trainings securing employment or engaging in IGAs post-training.

Keys to success

Private sector involvement in skills training: The project systematically engaged BTVET training institutions and private sector employers in the provision of training, apprenticeships and business coaching to the beneficiaries to ensure the applicability of the trainings to the local labour market.

Action informed through relevant studies: The trainings offered by the project were informed by labour market assessments and stakeholder mappings conducted in the areas of project implementation, which positively contributed to the results reported.⁸

Mutually reinforcing interventions: The BTVET graduates were either linked to the private sector for apprenticeships after the training or provided with start-up kits to ensure that they applied the skills learned to generate income. 79% of the beneficiary graduates who received start-up kits have either found employment or are engaged in IGAs.⁹

A limitation of the successes noted above is that although ‘instant’ trainings of 10-100 hours are offered within the refugee settlements, TVET institutions offering ‘regular’ trainings of six to nine months are not easily accessible due to their distance from the settlements. The project’s evaluation in 2020 recommended that, in the future, some of these institutions could be established within and around the settlements to increase beneficiary access.¹⁰

Building on success

Looking ahead, new EU funding presents a promising opportunity to build on the project’s successes by integrating refugee support as a key component of future projects. The €24.9M Green and Decent Jobs for Youth programme, funded by the EU and set to be implemented by Enabel in Eastern Uganda, Kampala, and Northern Uganda, is just one example of the relevant initiatives in the pipeline.



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