CASE STUDY

ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF THE EUTF'S PILOT ACTION IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KOBOKO

Prepared by Altai Consulting for the European Union | August 2024

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Cover photos (clockwise from the top):

1) An eight-classroom storey block at Nyaliro Primary School, Koboko Municipality; 2) Mental health unit at Koboko District Hospital, Koboko Municipality; 3) A modern abattoir at Lomutu Cell, Koboko Municipality, 4) Market sheds at Ombaci Market, Koboko Municipality. All constructed with EU funding under the EUTF pilot action.

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EUTF MONITORING AND LEARNING SYSTEM (MLS)

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

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CONTENT

ABBREVIATIONS

ACAV	*Associazione Centro Aiuti Volontari*
AU	*African Union*
CRRF	*Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*
CBOs	*Community Based Organisations*
CECI	*Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation*
CERID	*Community Empowerment and Rehabilitation Initiative for Development*
CORA	*Congolese Refugees Association*
DRC	*Democratic Republic of the Congo*
EU	*European Union*
EUTF	*European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa*
FGD	*Focus group discussion*
HoA	*Horn of Africa*
IGA	*Income generating activity*
INGO	*International non-governmental organisation*
JICA	*Japan International Cooperation Agency*
JLOS	*Justice, Law and Order Sector*
K	*Thousand*
KII	*Key informant interview*
KMC	*Koboko Municipal Council*
KOCISONET	*Koboko Civil Society Network*
M	*Million*
MLS	*Monitoring and Learning System*
NDP III	*Third National Development Plan*
OPM	*Office of the Prime Minister*
PICOT	*Partners in Community Transformation*
PROCEED	*Project for strengthening refugee hosting and refugee affected districts of West Nile*
REF	*Refugee Engagement Forum*
ReHoPe	*Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (programme)*
SDGs	*Sustainable Development Goals*
SGBV	*Sexual and Gender Based Violence*
SPEDP	*Support for Peace, Education and Development Programme*
STA	*Settlement Transformation Agenda*
STAD	*Support Trust for Africa Development*
SUIDAC	*Sustainable Urban Integration of Displacement-Affected Communities (programme)*
SSURA	*South Sudan Refugees Association*
TVET	*Technical and Vocational Education and Training*
UCMID	*Uganda Cities and Municipalities Infrastructure Development (programme)*
UN	*United Nations*
UNHCR	*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*
WASH	*Water, sanitation and hygiene*
WENDA	*West Nile Development Association*
UREA	*Umoja Rescue Agency*
VNG International	*International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line with the European Union's (EU) strategy for urban displacement in the HoA, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa, hereafter referred to as the EUTF) piloted an intervention in the municipality of Koboko through which the EU directly funded the municipality to plan and implement its own refugee response. The EUTF-funded Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility in the Municipality of Koboko project (hereafter referred to as the CRRF project, 'the pilot action' or 'the EUTF action in Koboko') is the only instance in which a local government was directly funded through the EUTF to implement its activities. The project was implemented under a unique arrangement involving Koboko Municipal Council, *Associazione Centro Aiuti Volontari* (ACAV), and eight sub-granted local community-based organisations (CBOs).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

This study aims to assess the contributions of the EUTF action in Koboko to improving the municipality's ability to deliver services, and to plan and coordinate its efforts effectively and sustainably. It also highlights some best practices that could be replicated by other donors seeking to provide 'direct support' to municipalities or local governments. The study draws on a desk review of project documents and secondary sources, as well as an analysis of primary data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a wide range of stakeholders. These interviews and discussions were conducted remotely and during field visits to Arua city, Koboko municipality, and the Bidibidi and Lobule refugee settlements in northern Uganda.

KEY FINDINGS

I.   Contributions of the pilot action

Finding 1. The project contributed to improvements in access to, and the quality of, education and health services in Koboko. The project's outcome data on education shows a decrease in the average ratio of pupils per classroom and school dropout rates. Education stakeholders interviewed for this study also reported improvements in students' performance throughout the pilot action timeline. Regarding health, the proportion of the population reporting having access to quality services increased by the end of the project, and improvements were reported on the number of women accessing antenatal care. However, there are still critical infrastructural and human resource gaps in the education and health sectors, as well as a risk of population demand exceeding service capacity as neighbouring populations seek what they perceive to be superior services in Koboko.

Finding 2. The EUTF action created beneficial livelihood and employment opportunities for targeted youths and women. Positive outcomes were recorded in the proportion of households self-reporting increased household income, thanks to previously unemployed youth and women beneficiaries engaging in wage or self-employment by the end of the action. Overall, findings suggest that the livelihood interventions were extremely successful and beneficial for the participants. However, some challenges were reported around support to specific trades (notably agricultural activities), as well

as possible tensions between women beneficiaries and their spouses driven by traditional gender dynamics in the management of household finances.

Finding 3. Sector working groups, development forums and coordination committees strengthened Koboko Municipal Council's coordination with stakeholders and promoted inclusive development planning. Various stakeholders confirmed that the project had a positive influence on how Koboko Municipal Council engages with them. The establishment of sector working groups, municipal development forums and an NGO coordination committee was praised as a best practice that brought together all the relevant stakeholders such as the political leadership, relevant national government line ministries, law enforcement agencies, local CBOs and basic service providers. However, there is still room for Koboko Municipal Council to strengthen its coordination with the national government and the private sector, especially on issues related to livelihoods and basic service delivery.

Finding 4. The design of the action, especially in terms of ensuring equal programming participation from refugees and host community members when selecting beneficiaries, as well as the involvement of local CBOs in the implementation of development funding, were effective in improving social cohesion in Koboko. The sub-granting of refugee-led CBOs by Koboko Municipal Council to implement some of the interventions made it easier for the municipality to reach refugee households and sensitise them on their rights. Moreover, local CBOs coordinated with the municipality, the police and other justice, law and order sector (JLOS) actors on handling reported cases related to conflicts between refugees, SGBV and child abuse. They also raised awareness on human rights and peaceful coexistence, which further enhanced social cohesion in Koboko.

II.   Lessons learnt and best practices

Finding 1. Providing direct funding to local authorities to implement their own activities proves to be a best practice in empowering them to identify and address local needs. The direct support approach piloted in Koboko effectively met the needs of the urban population. Its flexible nature allowed local authorities to adjust activity budgets and reallocate funds from one activity to another to accommodate changes in material costs and better reflect community needs, thereby increasing the project's 'value for money'. Moreover, the pilot action enhanced the municipality's accountability and transparency practices by improving its financial management and reporting systems, contributing significantly to the success of the pilot action. These activities support Koboko in managing municipal resources and could help to assure donor confidence to support future interventions.

Finding 2. Gathering evidence, particularly on the demographics of urban refugees and overall population needs, is key for inclusive development planning. Various surveys conducted in Koboko provided information on the population's perception of service delivery and inclusive planning, identified existing vulnerabilities among urban refugees, and highlighted priority areas in terms of service delivery and technical assistance. These surveys informed the EU's engagement with Koboko and its decision to support the municipality's refugee response. While the national government's inclusion of refugees in the 2024 population and housing census will provide essential data on urban refugees to Koboko and other local governments, such data are not collected with sufficient frequency or granularity. Therefore, regular data collection on urban refugee populations and their needs will be crucial for ensuring inclusive urban development planning in the future.

Finding 3. Technical assistance and learning support provided by ACAV contributed to the success and sustainability of the action. ACAV's intervention enhanced the capacities of Koboko Municipal Council and local CBO staff to effectively manage limited resources, engage stakeholders and deliver services to the public. Qualitative data indicate notable improvements in Koboko Municipal

Council's capacities in the areas of financial reporting, revenue collection and proposal writing, which could help to secure additional funding in the future. Moreover, the pilot action strengthened capacities of key actors such as teachers, police personnel, and school and health unit management committees.

Finding 4. An alignment of goodwill between the political and technical leadership is crucial for the implementation of a direct support approach. The political and technical leadership in Koboko, and especially the mayor, are perceived by community members, external observers and other stakeholders as visionary and dedicated to serving the community. The advocacy and engagement efforts of these leaders in areas such as urban development and refugee management have contributed to the effectiveness of various interventions implemented under the pilot action (including through increased political buy-in from local leaders thanks to their existing interest and work in these areas). Such conditions are unfortunately not easily replicable, and it is therefore critical to assess the political dynamics in municipalities being considered for future similar interventions and to select the most suitable project implementation arrangements accordingly.

Finding 5. Inclusion of marginalised groups was effectively prioritised. Project beneficiaries were equally selected across both genders and communities (refugee and host). Moreover, some of the project interventions explicitly targeted marginalised groups, such as people living with disabilities. In addition, Koboko Municipal Council's proactive approaches to the inclusion of marginalised groups, such as including special provisions in agreements with contractors to hire refugees, were identified as best practices that could be considered by other local governments or donors. However, CBO staff expressed concerns that the elderly were not adequately targeted, particularly under the livelihood interventions given the pronounced challenges and vulnerabilities faced by this population group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Central and local governments should increase their budget allocation to the provision of basic service delivery to account for urban refugee populations (which has historically not been the case). Augmenting budgets allocated to basic service delivery (especially around education, health and water) will help to address the current mismatch between population needs and the available services. In addition, extending support for basic services to areas neighbouring Koboko municipality (e.g. Kuluba and Lobule), as well as other urban centres, will allow residents in these areas to access essential services locally, thereby reducing strain on Koboko municipality. The central government and Koboko Municipal Council could also seek cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries (or local authorities) aimed at burden sharing and/or establishing an integrated cross-border system for basic service delivery (notably in the health sector).

Recommendation 2. The EU-funded follow-up programme (SUIDAC) could build on the livelihood interventions implemented under the pilot action. This could be achieved by expanding the age bracket for beneficiaries of employment and livelihood activities. SUIDAC could also expand these interventions to other sub-counties within Koboko and the surrounding districts. There is also an opportunity to include financial institutions in the project's livelihood activities in order to increase beneficiary access to financial services, particularly for refugees. Furthermore, for livelihood interventions targeting women exclusively, conducting dedicated awareness raising for beneficiaries' spouses or joint sensitisation activities on relevant topics could improve intervention outcomes by encouraging a shared understanding of the intervention's objectives and relevance.

Recommendation 3. Continue to prioritize capacity building and technical assistance to local governments. The provision of technical assistance and learning support was identified as a key best

practice under the pilot action. Focus areas for future technical assistance could include public finance management, resource mobilisation and the implementation of digital revenue collection systems.

Recommendation 4. Support local governments to regularly collect data on refugee populations within their areas. Evidence generation on refugee populations living in urban areas and their specific needs are critical for engaging external actors, attracting additional funding from the national government and donors, and including refugees in local development plans. Local authorities could be supported to regularly conduct surveys on the usage of public facilities to assess and determine when additional investments are needed as well as to integrate these findings into their development plans.

Recommendation 5. Implement a hybrid funding model when supporting local governments. To address financing challenges commonly faced by local authorities when directly implementing activities, a hybrid model is recommended, whereby a proportion of the funding is directly contracted to local governments and the rest is channelled through an experienced INGO. The direct funding model piloted in Koboko could also be enhanced through engagement with the national government agencies to fast-track approvals and align financial reporting cycles, as well as by results-based financing.

Recommendation 6. Include local CBOs in the implementation of interventions. The inclusion of the CBOs from the project design stage of the pilot action through a clearly defined memorandum of understanding with the lead implementing partners was identified as a best practice for increasing the community's involvement in project activities and sustaining the project results.

Recommendation 7. Local governments should involve private sector players in their interventions. Engaging private sector players in local government interventions has a potential of improving livelihood outcomes by linking more youths to employment and livelihood opportunities in the private sector. Besides, public-private partnerships can enable private sector stakeholders to finance local government initiatives and invest directly in the various sectors of the economy.

Recommendation 8. Local governments should sensitise communities to enhance their participation in decision making. Awareness raising in the municipality of Koboko (especially by targeting refugees through refugee-led organisations) is recognised as a best practice in increasing community engagement in local government activities and ensuring inclusive decision making at the local level. Other local governments can enhance their inclusive development approaches by empowering their communities to actively participate in development planning and decision making.

Recommendation 9. Target the elderly in future interventions. For future projects, the elderly should be explicitly targeted with livelihood support (such as trainings on urban farming practices and cash transfers) to improve their self-reliance and increase their ability to support their dependents. Finally, the elderly should be supported to actively participate (and where relevant, play a leadership role) in social cohesion interventions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cities are often the first point of entry for displaced populations and migrants seeking better livelihoods, protection and services.[1] In the Horn of Africa (HoA) region, secondary cities and urban areas often lack the capacity to target the specific needs of displaced populations due to population pressures from rural to urban migration and forced displacement, which in turn creates challenges related to housing, sanitation and access to basic services.[2] (The term 'basic services' refers to the essential services that are necessary for a decent quality of life such as education, health, protection and WASH services, which were the main focus of the project interventions.) One example of a secondary city facing these pressures is **the municipality of Koboko in Uganda**. Located along the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as being very close to South Sudan**, Koboko** hosts a significant number of self-settled refugees.

The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa, hereafter referred to as the EUTF) responded to the above challenges and the specific dynamics in Koboko by **piloting an intervention through which direct support was provided to the municipality to plan and implement its own refugee response**. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility in the Municipality of Koboko (hereafter referred to as 'the CRRF project', 'the pilot action' or 'the EUTF action in Koboko') was implemented through 'direct support' (referring to direct funding) from the EU to Koboko Municipal Council, with technical assistance provided by *Associazione Centro Aiuti Volontari* (ACAV) to Koboko Municipal Council to implement the CRRF[3] and monitor the municipality's progress in implementing the planned activities.

The project aimed to pilot a direct support approach in a municipality with low coverage of basic services and a high concentration of refugees. It specifically focused on contributing to the CRRF road map for Uganda – which aims to integrate the country's refugee response into national development planning – by strengthening the capacity of the local government[4] to provide integrated and inclusive basic social services and by promoting a multi-sectoral approach to humanitarian and development assistance. The CRRF project is the only instance in the EUTF portfolio where the EU directly provided funds to a local government or municipality to implement activities and has been widely celebrated as **a successful pilot of inclusive development activities in urban areas affected by displacement**. The success of the project inspired the EU to design a follow-up regional programme (the Sustainable Urban Integration of Displacement-Affected Communities programme, or SUIDAC), funded by the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), which expands the approach of direct support to municipalities to other parts of the HoA region.

This study aims to investigate the contributions of the EUTF action in Koboko to improving (i) the delivery of basic social services and the inclusion and integration of marginalised groups, (ii) economic empowerment of women and youth, (iii) social cohesion, (iv) the capacities of the municipality and other actors with regard to conducting and/or advocating for an inclusive development and refugee response, and (v) stakeholder perceptions around direct support to local authorities in the context of refugee response. It will also assess the extent to which the 'direct support' approach piloted by the action could be replicated in other contexts and provide recommendations to consider when doing so.

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[1] Cities Alliance, 'Forced Displacement and Rapid Urbanisation: Moving Towards Inclusive, Resilient Cities and Translating Ideas into Action', 2023.
[2] Migration Policy Institute, 'Migration and displacement in secondary cities: Insights from Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda', November 2023.
[3] The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) aims to support a more predictable and more comprehensive response to refugee crises by supporting countries that host refugees and facilitating the inclusion and integration of refugees into local communities.
[4] In this study, 'local government' refers to any lower level of government, including district governments and urban authorities such as municipal or city councils.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following key research questions:

1. What are the effects of the EUTF action in Koboko on the ability of the municipality to deliver services and to plan and coordinate its efforts effectively and sustainably?
2. To what extent is the 'direct support' approach likely to be replicable in other contexts? Which practices and lessons learned from the action can or should be replicated by other actors providing 'direct support' to municipalities or local governments in the context of a refugee response?

A full list of the research questions investigated in this study can be found in annex (section 10.3).
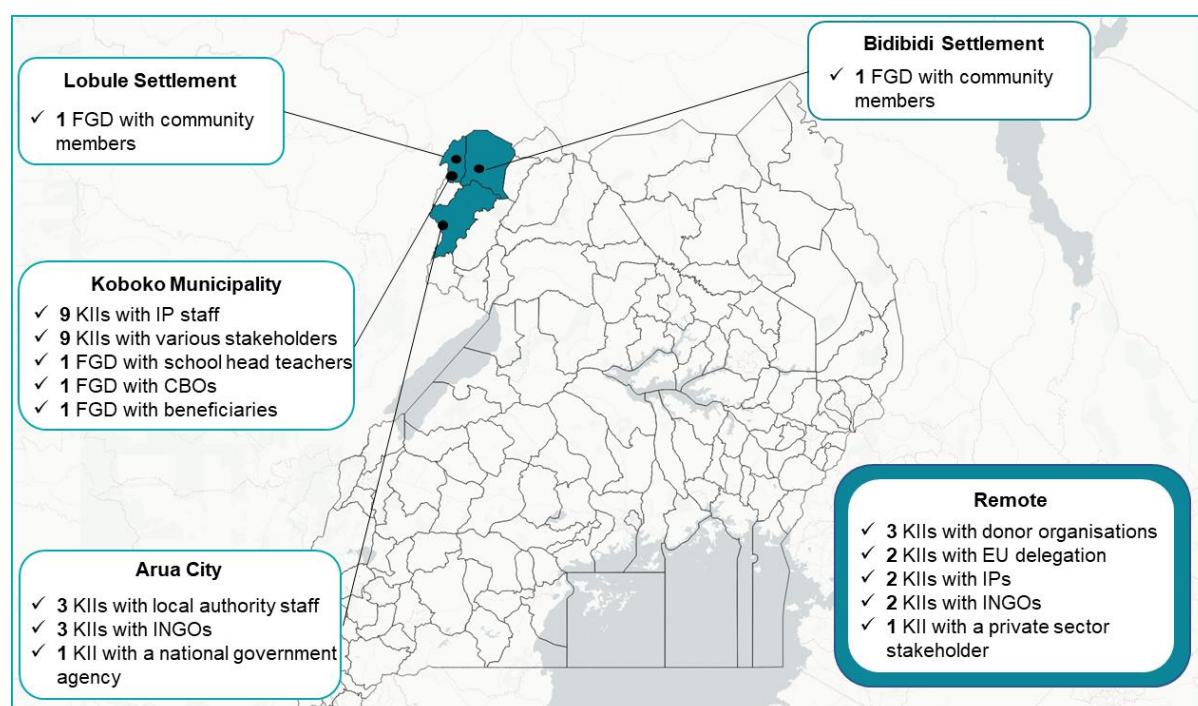
2.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study included:

- A desk review of key material, including project documents such as action documents, narrative reports, evaluations and ROM reports, as well as relevant secondary sources;
- An analysis of the project's outcomes based on data in evaluation and narrative reports; and
- An analysis of qualitative data collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) during a field visit to the municipality of Koboko and some of the pilot action's other intervention sites.

Primary data for the study were collected both remotely and through face-to-face interactions with programme participants between 4 March and 3 May 2024. Stakeholders interviewed include project managers at the EU Delegation to Uganda, the project's implementing partners (ACAV, Cities Alliance and Koboko Municipal Council), international actors such as DANIDA and the World Bank, INGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), the Office of the Prime Minister, local governments (such as Arua City Council and Koboko's district government), basic service providers, community and religious leaders, and community members. A total of 74 participants, of whom 31% were women and 12% were direct project beneficiaries, were included in the study via 36 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 5 focus group discussions (FGDs).

Figure 1: KII and FGD locations

Lobule Settlement
✓ **1** FGD with community members

Bidibidi Settlement
✓ **1** FGD with community members

Koboko Municipality
✓ **9** KIIs with IP staff
✓ **9** KIIs with various stakeholders
✓ **1** FGD with school head teachers
✓ **1** FGD with CBOs
✓ **1** FGD with beneficiaries

Arua City
✓ **3** KIIs with local authority staff
✓ **3** KIIs with INGOs
✓ **1** KII with a national government agency

Remote
✓ **3** KIIs with donor organisations
✓ **2** KIIs with EU delegation
✓ **2** KIIs with IPs
✓ **2** KIIs with INGOs
✓ **1** KII with a private sector stakeholder

2.3. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The following limitations should be taken into account when considering the findings in this study. First, quantitative data that could be used to corroborate the project's outcome data as well as the qualitative information collected via FGDs and KIIs is generally lacking at the municipal and district level. For instance, location-disaggregated outcome data on areas of interest such as the quality of education and health services, or unemployment rates, is limited.

Furthermore, although a refugee population survey was conducted in Koboko by VNG International in 2018, no updated numbers are available, which makes it difficult to identify relevant trends and developments related to the local refugee population and their needs.

Relatedly, the project's 2023 endline evaluation report, which is a key source of outcome data for this study, calculated its refugee sample on the basis of official UNHCR and OPM data, which appears to be a drastic underestimate of the actual refugee population (around 6,000, compared to an estimated 23,000 as of 2018 according to the targeted survey conducted by VNG International – a number that is believed to have increased further in the intervening years). This implies that refugees are significantly underrepresented in the endline evaluation, which in turn may not accurately reflect their perspectives of Koboko municipality and/or the contributions of the EUTF action in Koboko.

Lastly, of the seven key informants from donor organisations contacted for this study (other than the European Commission), only three accepted the research team's interview request. This limited the amount of qualitative information that could be collected regarding any changes to donor perceptions of the direct support approach as a result of the EUTF action in Koboko.

3. DISPLACEMENT IN UGANDA

- Uganda has a long history of hosting refugees, currently hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa and is among the top refugee-hosting countries globally. Climate-induced shocks, food insecurity and conflict in the region continue to trigger displacement into Uganda.

- Uganda is recognised for its progressive refugee policies, which aim to promote self-reliance by granting refugees freedom of movement and rights to access basic social services and livelihood opportunities.

- Uganda's refugee response is supported by the CRRF on the basis of a whole-of-society approach and has been mainstreamed into national and local development planning.

- Although refugees have historically resided in designated settlements across the country and in Kampala city, they are increasingly moving to secondary cities and urban areas in Uganda. This trend is attributable to the refugees' freedom of movement, the presence of livelihood opportunities in urban areas and decreasing aid support, among other factors.

- Urban refugees outside Kampala (and their hosting authorities) are indirectly represented in Uganda's Refugee Engagement Forum through district and settlement leadership.

3.1. CONTEXT

Uganda hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa (approximately 1.7 million as of March 2024) and is among the top five refugee-hosting countries globally. About 56% of Uganda's current refugee population is from South Sudan and 31% is from the DRC.

Uganda's long history of hosting refugees dates back to the 1940s, when the country (then a British protectorate) hosted over 7,000 Polish refugees displaced by the Second World War (who later relocated to Australia, Canada and the UK). In the 1950s and 1960s, refugees from neighbouring countries such as South Sudan (then considered part of Sudan), Rwanda and the DRC (then known as Zaire) fled to Uganda following outbreaks of war or violence in these countries.[5] Since then, political and ethnic violence, food insecurity and natural calamities have pushed many refugees and asylum seekers into Uganda. For instance, between mid-2016 and 2018, insecurity, wars, violence and persecution in the region led to the largest refugee influx into Uganda to date, with 960,000 people entering the country from the DRC, South Sudan and Somalia.[6] Meanwhile, Uganda's relative stability over the past few decades, combined with its generous refugee policies as described in section 3.2,

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[5] Merle Kreibaum, 'Their suffering, our burden? How Congolese refugees affect the Ugandan population', 9 June 2014.
[6] UNHCR, 'Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Review of practical application in Uganda', November 2018.

and the fact that some of Uganda's borders with neighbouring countries (such as the DRC and South Sudan) cut across tribal community catchment areas, all further facilitate cross-border movement.[7]

Figure 2: Uganda displacement map
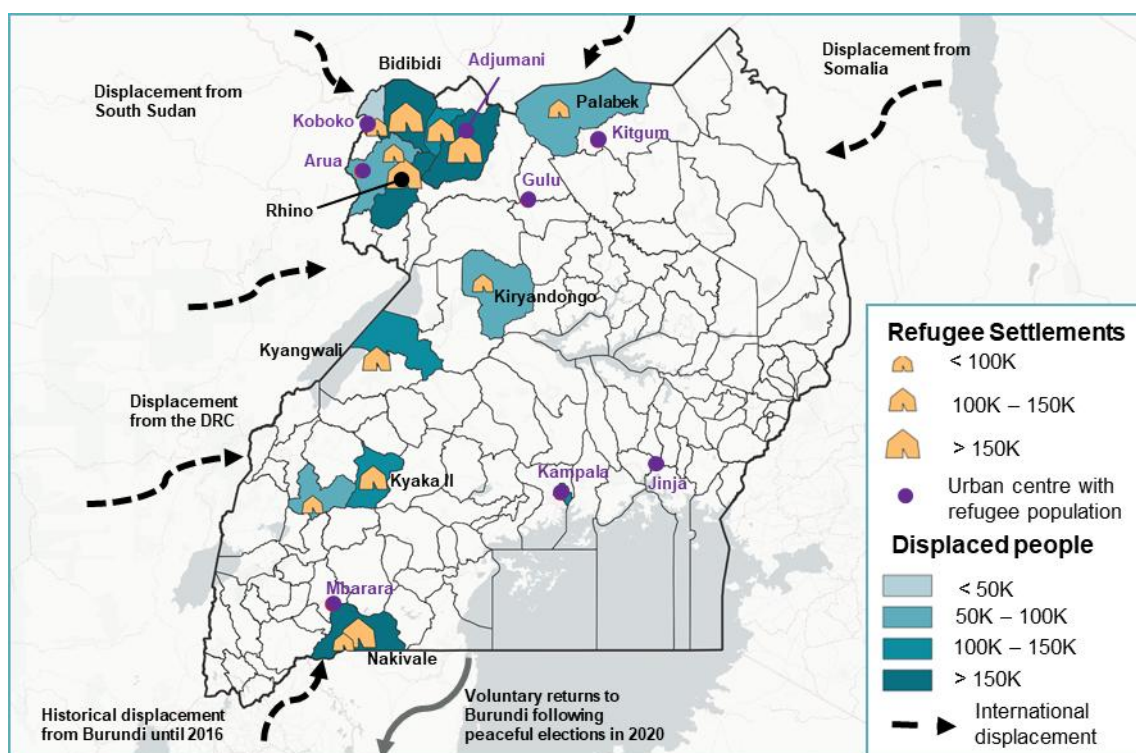
Although the majority of refugees in Uganda live in designated settlements, **many are finding their way to urban areas.** Settlement-based refugees are spread across thirteen settlements in twelve districts,[8] while self-settled urban refugees can be found in Kampala city and other urban areas across the country such as Arua, Gulu, Jinja and Mbarara cities, as well as and Adjumani, Koboko and Kitgum towns. Ugandan policies encouraging the free movement of refugees, the challenging funding environment for refugee response (that has led to rationing of food assistance) and increasing competition for resources within the settlements have all contributed to the increased movement of refugees away from settlements in favour of the abovementioned urban areas. In addition, urban areas offer employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector, which has long been the main source of livelihood for refugees in Uganda but is increasingly affected by droughts and limited access to land.[9] Moreover, when refugees move from settlements to urban areas, they do not lose access to the support that they are entitled to in the settlements. This has resulted in some refugee families splitting up (with some family members staying in settlements and others, particularly the youths, moving to urban areas), as well as circular movements between the urban areas and settlements. Social networks formed by refugees based on their countries of origin or ethnic backgrounds have also facilitated movements of refugees from their countries of origin directly to the urban centres.[10]

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[7] Asiimwe Solomon Muchwa, 'The effects of porous borders on the security of states in the Great Lakes region: a case of Uganda', 2023.
[8] Adjumani, Isingiro, Kamwenge, Kikuube, Kiryandongo, Kyegegwa, Koboko, Lamwo, Madi-Okollo, Obongi, Terego and Yumbe districts.
[9] Research and Evidence Facility, 'Rural to urban migration of refugees in Uganda', 29 September 2017. Retrieved from here.
[10] Ibid.

Refugees living in urban areas other than Kampala do not receive direct humanitarian assistance from the central government or non-governmental organisations (unlike their counterparts in refugee settlements), despite the fact that they constitute up to 26% of the population in secondary cities in border areas of Uganda.[11] In May 2024, Uganda included urban refugees outside Kampala in its national census (the 2024 Uganda Population and Housing Census) for the first time following advocacy at the national and international levels.[12] This inclusion of urban refugees in national population statistics is an important step forward in ensuring that national government budget allocations to city and municipal councils reflect the true population of these urban areas and promote the inclusion of refugees in urban development planning.[13]

3.2. UGANDA'S REFUGEE POLICIES

Uganda has one of the most progressive refugee policies in the world, and the Ugandan government has developed a strong migration and governance architecture and invested considerable effort into upholding its commitments to refugees.[14] The 2006 Uganda Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, together with Uganda's 1995 Constitution, outline refugees' rights to work in Uganda, to move freely within the country, to access identification documents (identity cards and conventional travel documents) and basic services on an equal basis with Ugandan citizens, and to live free from discrimination. South Sudanese refugees (and Congolese refugees who enter Uganda through official border crossing points) are granted refugee status *prima facie* (i.e. automatically granted refugee status based on the current circumstances in their country of origin[15]) while awaiting registration and documentation. (For refugees from other countries, the Refugee Eligibility Committee conducts a refugee status determination process [verification] before granting refugee status.)[16] Moreover, the government of Uganda provides refugees with plots of land in designated settlements to practice small-scale agricultural production with the aim of enhancing their self-reliance, although the size of plots issued has decreased over time due to population pressure.

The country has also mainstreamed its refugee response into national and local development planning. Although refugee affairs in Uganda are primarily handled by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the decentralisation of government services since 2015 has created room for increased involvement from local governments. The Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA), introduced in 2015 and supported by a joint UN - World Bank strategy known as the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment programme (ReHoPE),[17] aimed to bring economic development and basic social services closer to refugee-hosting areas and to enhance the self-reliance of refugees and their host populations. Interventions related to the STA are centred around community infrastructure, environmental protection, land management, governance and rule of law, sustainable livelihoods and peaceful coexistence.[18] The STA and other refugee response strategies have been integrated into the National Development Plan (NDP) III 2020-2025 (and its previous iterations) as well as sectoral plans such as the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities, the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan, and the Water and Environment Sector Refugee Response Plan. These strategies and plans are further integrated into district contingency plans and service delivery plans at the local level as part of the government's decentralisation strategy, which was launched in 2015 to promote service delivery at the local level, involvement of the community members in planning and accountability for resources by the leaders.[19] This integration and decentralisation of the refugee

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[11] Cities Alliance, 'From invisible to counted: Including refugees in Uganda's national census', 10 May 2024.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Altai Consulting, 'State of migration governance in 21 countries of the Horn of Africa and West Africa regional report', April 2022. Available here.
[15] UNHCR, 'Guidelines on International Protection No. 11: Prima Facie Recognition of Refugee Status', 24 June 2015.
[16] UNHCR, 'Protection Dashboard: Uganda Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2022-2023', June 2022.
[17] Ibid.
[18] UNHCR, 'Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Review of practical application in Uganda', November 2018.
[19] ACODE, 'Decentralisation in Uganda trends, achievements, challenges and proposals for consolidation', 2019.

response agenda therefore aims to strengthen service delivery to refugees and Ugandan citizens in every sector, while at the same time ensuring the engagement of relevant line ministries and local district governments in refugee response.

3.2.1. THE CRRF ROADMAP FOR UGANDA

The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants advocates for **a more predictable, comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to refugee response** that protects refugees' rights and eases pressure on their host countries.[20] The CRRF, which builds on the New York Declaration, aims to support the mainstreaming of responses to protracted refugee situations into national development planning, and advocates for equal opportunities for refugees and their hosting population to enhance their self-reliance.

The rollout of the CRRF in Uganda in 2018 has served as an opportunity for the country to deepen and consolidate its existing efforts around comprehensive refugee management.[21] As a result, the CRRF has effectively enhanced coordination, meaningful engagement and partnerships between the Office of the Prime Minister, line ministries, local government and other stakeholders (including the refugees and host community members). Uganda has sought to operationalise the CRRF via **five main pillars of engagement**: i) admission and rights, ii) emergency response and ongoing needs, iii) resilience and self-reliance, iv) expanded solutions, and v) voluntary repatriation.[22]

Figure 3: CRRF coordination bodies in Uganda
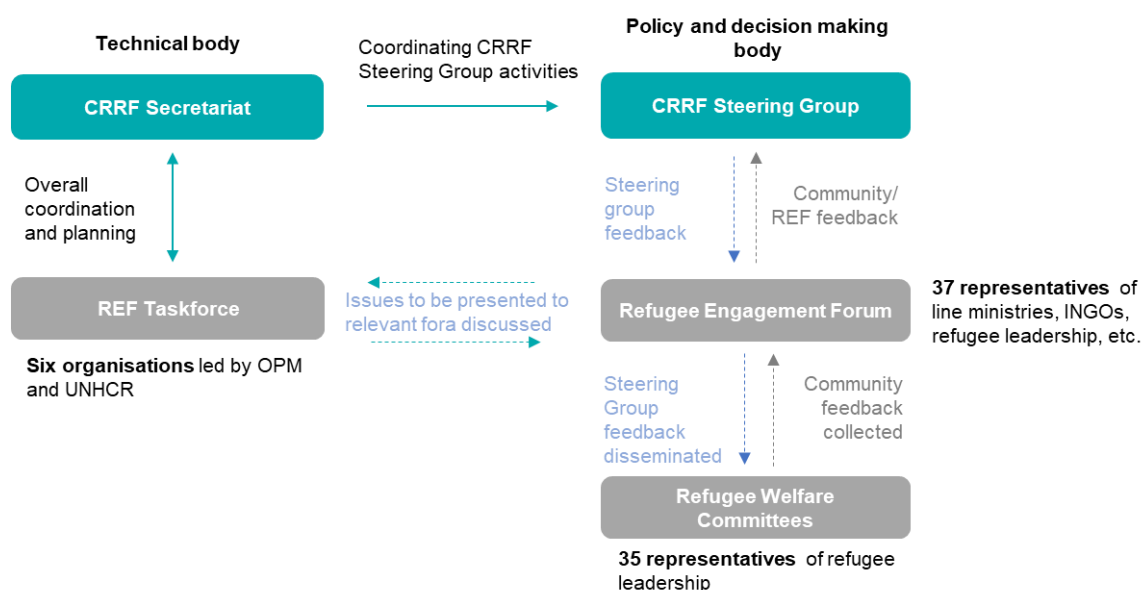
Uganda's implementation of the CRRF takes a government-led whole-of-society approach[23] **and is generally considered to be well coordinated, integrated and sustainable**.[24] It is driven by the OPM, facilitated by UNHCR and benefits from the engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders including civil society, the private sector and representatives of host and refugee communities. It is coordinated by the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) taskforce, the CRRF secretariat and the CRRF

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[20] UNHCR, 'Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Uganda: The way forward', October 2017.
[21] Research and Evidence Facility, 'Comprehensive refugee responses in the Horn of Africa: Regional leadership on education, livelihoods and durable solutions', February 2020. Available here.
[22] Ibid.
[23] A multilevel and collaborative governance approach that advocates for policymaking processes to be conducted in an integrated way by involving all government bodies and members of society.
[24] Altai Consulting, 'State of migration governance in 21 countries of the Horn of Africa and West Africa regional report', April 2022. Retrieved from here.

Steering Group. The **CRRF Steering Group**, which is co-chaired by the OPM and the Ministry for Local Government, is the policy and decision-making body of the CRRF. Its 35 members hail from the central government's ministries, departments and agencies, local (district-level) governments, UN agencies, humanitarian and development donors, INGOs and refugee representatives. It oversees the **CRRF Secretariat**, which is also led by the OPM and supports the implementation of the CRRF by organising REF meetings, engaging stakeholders and mobilising resources. The **REF** bring together refugee representatives and leaders from all the settlements across the country so that they can raise their concerns and share feedback (through their REF-elected representatives) with the CRRF Steering Group. This forum aims to ensure that refugees are represented in the CRRF Steering Group's strategic decisions.[25] Lastly, the **REF taskforce** provides support to the REF, including organising the election of the REF representative to the CRRF Steering Group, planning and coordinating REF meetings, and facilitating information sharing.[26]

Given the current national legislation, which gives insufficient attention to refugees in urban areas outside Kampala, urban authorities (other than Kampala) are only indirectly represented in the CRRF structure. The 37 members of the REF are currently drawn from districts that host formal refugee settlements and Kampala, while urban authorities (other than Kampala) are not directly represented in the CRRF architecture. One key informant for this study explained that the municipal councils and other urban authorities are currently considered to be indirectly represented in these discussions through the districts' refugee response and/or coordination structures. Moreover, political and technical leaders from these urban authorities are sometimes involved in high-level discussions related to the CRRF and refugee response.[27] At the time of this study, there is reportedly an ongoing review of existing refugee-related legislation, which, among other things, is likely to lead to the formal inclusion of urban refugees in central government planning and therefore to the inclusion of urban authorities outside Kampala in active refugee response.[28]

Focus box 1: Regional Engagement Forum in West Nile Sub-Region, Northern Uganda[29]

Via the Sustainable Development through Improved Local Governance (SDLG) project in collaboration with Muni University, Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU), Uganda Local Governments' Association (ULGA) and the West Nile Development Association (WENDA),[30] VNG International established a Regional Engagement Forum in West Nile sub-region. This forum meets twice a year and brings together relevant stakeholders, including central government representatives, local leaders, urban authorities, CSOs and representatives of local refugee associations, to discuss issues pertaining to refugee response in the region, and particularly issues related to urban refugees in Arua and Koboko.

The West Nile REF has set out various planned actions for refugee response in the region, including:

- Establishing localised (city, district or municipal level) REFs to discuss urban refugee response-related issues, challenges and solutions.

- Regionalising approaches and strategies to facilitate joint actions and partnerships aimed at engaging urban refugees in the region.

- Advocating for the inclusion of urban refugees in the plans and interventions of central government programmes.

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[25] Response Innovation Lab, 'The Refugee Engagement Forum in Uganda as an innovative approach to accountability to affected communities', 25 November 2020.
[26] GoU, 'Refugee Engagement Forum in Uganda: Good Practice Study', June 2021.
[27] KII with implementing partner; KII with private sector organisation.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Retrieved from VNG International here.
[30] A regional association of local governments, private sector and civil society actors in the West Nile sub-region.

4. DIRECT SUPPORT APPROACH

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Despite the critical role of local governments in refugee response, national government and donor policies tend to favour channelling donor funding via central government agencies or INGOs.
- Uganda has piloted various funding mechanisms to support local authorities, including performance-based financing such as performance-based grant systems (PBGS) and off-budget support that occurs outside the framework of the municipal annual budget controlled by the central government authorities, allowing for greater financial autonomy at the municipal level.
- Although the direct support to a local refugee response piloted by the EUTF action in Koboko was a unique intervention in the EUTF portfolio, other donors such as the Mayor Migration Council have implemented similar approaches in the region.

In the HoA region, where citizens have chronically faced shocks related to conflicts and natural disasters, local governments often act as the link between donors, humanitarian agencies and affected populations. As the decentralisation of national government functions becomes more prevalent, local governments are becoming increasingly active and responsive around policy issues and development challenges within their jurisdictions.[31] Local authorities, together with other local actors, often act as the first responders to humanitarian crises, and can provide national and international actors with critical insights into local challenges and possible solutions.[32] Moreover, local authorities are instrumental in the integration of displaced populations into their local communities and ensuring peaceful coexistence between displaced and host populations.[33]

The possibility of providing direct development funding to local authorities has long been constrained by donor policies that strongly encourage financing through UN agencies, central governments or INGOs. This traditional 'way of working' has largely been shaped by perceptions of low capacity and insufficiently robust accountability systems among local governments to manage relatively large amounts of donor funding. Constraints imposed by national regulatory frameworks also represent a significant challenge, as they typically require funding to local authorities to pass through central government agencies, which in turn limits their ability to autonomously plan and implement activities.

At the same time, it is increasingly recognised that local authorities and governments play a crucial role in improving development and delivering services to their populations.[34] For example, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights that local action by local governments is essential to achieving the SDGs and associated targets by 2030. As a result, **providing development grants directly to local governments is becoming more common, and Uganda has served as a key pilot country for this approach since the 1990s.** The UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) is a leading actor in this field, having designed and piloted the Local Government Performance-Based Grant System (PBGS) that is now being implemented in various countries. Uganda was one of the earliest adopters of this approach, starting with four districts but quickly scaling up to cover all local governments nationwide by 2003 with funding from the World Bank and other development partners.[35] However, despite the existence of this central government financial

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Humanitarian Action, 'Global humanitarian overview 2024: As local as possible; progress in making localization in humanitarian action a reality', 8 December 2023.

[33] Cities Alliance, 'Uganda: Cities Alliance Joins Partnership on Refugees', 24 April 2023.

[34] Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization, 'Local Government Finance: The Challenges of the 21st Century', 2010.

[35] UNCDF, 'Performance-based grant systems: Concept and international experience', 2010.

system for supporting local authorities, donors have often used an **off-budget support approach in Uganda (i.e. financing local governments outside the framework of their annual budget allocations from the central government by channelling funds directly to project-specific accounts),** particularly with regard to health sector interventions**. Although the EUTF pilot action to support the refugee response in Koboko is considered innovative, other examples of donor funding being directly channelled to local authorities to support refugee populations can also be observed.** The Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees, for instance, is a funding instrument for the Mayor Migration Council, which connects international funding with local urban authorities and local governments across the world with the aim of steering inclusive development and responding 'to the unmet needs of cities as they support migrants, refugees and internally displaced people in the face of pressing challenges'.[36] This instrument has funded over 20 projects (with more than ten in sub-Saharan Africa) directly targeting local governments. Examples include a project in Dar es Salaam to improve its waste management system while 'connecting migrants and refugees to green jobs' such as waste collectors and sorters.

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[36] Mayors Migration Council, 'Global cities fund for migrants and refugees' n.d. Retrieved from here.

5. PROJECT OVERVIEW

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The pilot action was part of the EUTF-funded CRRF Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility programme implemented between December 2019 and November 2023 (€8.2 million [M] budget),[37] which aimed at addressing the dual challenges of urbanisation and displacement in the HoA.

- The EUTF action in Koboko had a total budget of €3.8M, of which 74% (or €2.8M) was directly implemented by Koboko Municipal Council and eight sub-granted CBOs.

- The design of the project benefitted from need assessments, technical assistance from ACAV and inputs from various stakeholders including refugee-led CBOs and community members (refugees and hosts).

- The project was implemented by Koboko Municipal Council (which undertook construction and equipment of infrastructure), local CBOs (which led livelihood interventions and community outreach) and ACAV (which provided technical assistance to the municipal council and CBO staff as well as overall capacity building to stakeholders).

5.1.1. THE CRRF INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY PROGRAMME

The CRRF Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility programme was implemented between December 2019 and October 2023. The action aimed to help countries in the Horn of Africa address the **dual challenges of urbanisation and the rising numbers of displaced people hosted in urban areas.** The programme was anchored in the belief that by supporting municipalities and secondary cities to strengthen urban planning and service provision, and by creating spaces for communal dialogue, living conditions and opportunities for refugees and their host communities would improve and the risk of conflict between these groups would decrease. The programme had a total budget of €8.2M and was divided into three components, of which one is the Koboko action (with a budget of €3.8M).

The first component focused on **regional dialogue and fostering peer networks and knowledge exchange** on the challenges and opportunities resulting from urban displacement in the context of urbanisation. This component was implemented by Cities Alliance, and it brought together the implementing partners of the two other components as well as stakeholders from other secondary cities to learn through peer learning events and exchange.

The second component is the EUTF action in Koboko, which piloted a direct support approach to an urban area with severely stressed or pre-existing low coverage of basic services and a high concentration of refugees. It was piloted in the municipality of Koboko in Uganda and implemented by Koboko Municipal Council alongside eight other sub-granted local CBOs,[38] and by *Associazione Centro Aiuti Volontari* (ACAV), which provided technical assistance to Koboko Municipal Council to implement interventions under the pilot action.

The third component also supported an urban area with low coverage of basic services and facing challenges related to displacement. This component was implemented in Assosa town, Ethiopia. This

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[37] More details on the CRRF Inclusive Urban Development Programme are available in the Action Document (here).
[38] The organisations are Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation (CECI), Community Empowerment and Rehabilitation Initiative for Development (CERID), Congolese Refugees Association (CORA), Koboko Civil Society Network (KOCISONET), Partners in Community Transformation (PICOT), Support for Peace, Education and Development Programme (SPEDP), Support Trust for Africa Development (STAD), and Umoja Rescue Agency (UREA).

action did not employ a direct support approach as in the case of Koboko, in part due to the higher degree of centralisation in Ethiopia. Instead, an INGO (IRC) led the implementation of the activities.

Figure 4: CRRF Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility Programme
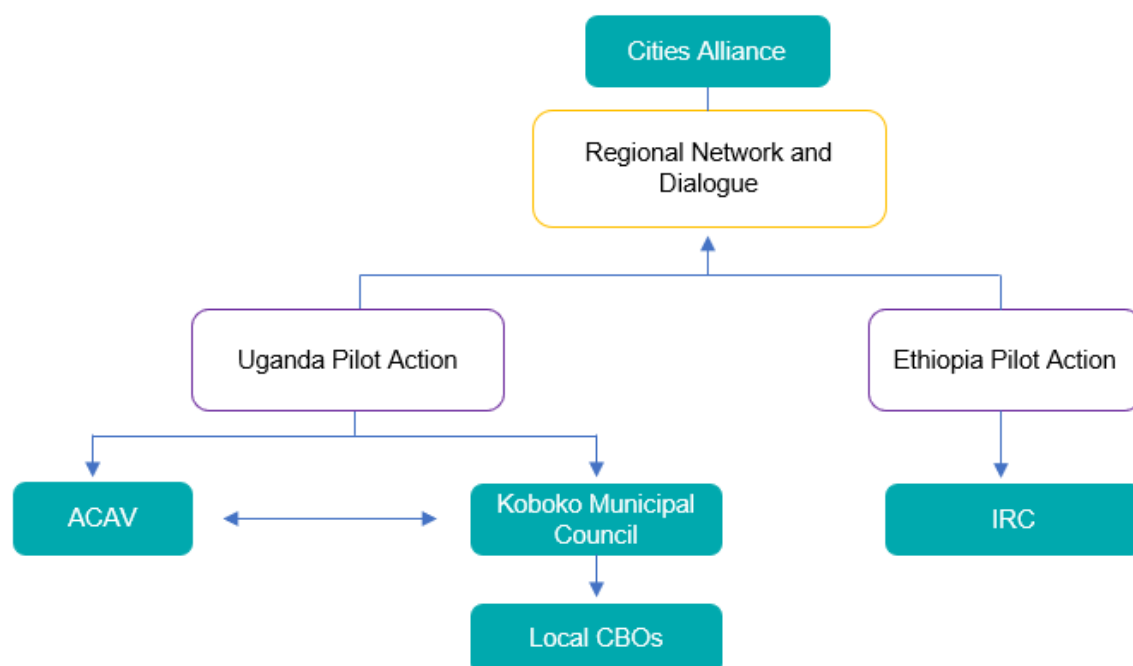
5.1.2. THE CRRF INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY ACTION IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KOBOKO

This pilot action responded to a call for support for municipalities hosting refugees made by the Ministry of Local Government.[39] **It aimed to contribute to the CRRF roadmap for Uganda by strengthening the capacity of a local government to provide integrated and inclusive basic social services and by promoting a multi-sectoral approach to humanitarian and development assistance.**

The EUTF pilot action was implemented through 'direct support' from the EU to Koboko Muncipal Council, with technical assistance provided by ACAV to monitor Koboko Municipal Council's progress in implementing activities under the pilot action. It had a total budget of €3.8M, of which 74% (or €2.8M) was implemented by Koboko Municipal Council and the remaining €1M by ACAV. The project targeted 83,000 members of host and refugee communities (about 28% of whom are self-settled refugees) in Koboko municipality.

The overall objective of the action was to **increase the safety and wellbeing of refugees and host communities in Koboko municipality and to reduce inequalities between these groups.** It also had three intended outcomes:

i) **inclusive, participatory and sustainable urban planning strategies** in Koboko municipality are developed and implemented;

ii) **access to and utilisation of quality basic social services** for refugees and host communities in Koboko municipality is increased; and

iii) Koboko municipality's **capacity to engage in regional dialogue on migration management in secondary cities is strengthened.**

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[39] Cities Alliance, 'The Systems of Secondary Cities: The neglected drivers of urbanising economies', 2014.

The design of the project's activities was informed by various assessments as well as input from relevant stakeholders. The EU contracted ACAV to begin offering technical assistance to Koboko Municipal Council around ten months before the start of the Koboko Municipal Council-led component of the pilot project. During this period, the EU funded ACAV to support Koboko Municipal Council in conducting a needs assessment and a perception survey on urban planning in Koboko municipality. The findings from these surveys together with those from the assessment conducted by VNG International on self-settled refugees in Koboko municipality in 2018 highlighted critical needs in areas such as education, health, livelihoods, waste management and protection. On the basis of these findings, ACAV and Koboko Municipal Council engaged CBOs and other stakeholders in identifying priority needs and the design of project proposals. Thereafter, Koboko Municipal Council presented their needs and priorities to the EU, and they became the focus of the project intervention. The assessment findings as well as engagement with stakeholders further guided the selection of benefitting areas, and even the designation of roles among the implementing and sub-implementing partners.

The EU then released funds to the municipal council's project accounts, allowing Koboko Municipal Council to directly implement 70% of the contracted funds. (While normally these funds would have to be channelled via the central government budget, in this case Koboko Municipal Council engaged the relevant line ministries and received approval to open project-specific accounts allowing them to implement project activities off-budget [that is, outside the municipal annual budget governed by the central government].)[40] A similar approach had previously been adopted by the Dutch NGO VNG International in the municipality of Koboko, where the Koboko Municipal Council was directly funded by VNG to implement its waste management interventions (informed by VNG's 2018 assessment, which also highlighted critical gaps in Koboko's waste management), although with a significantly smaller budget.

The majority of the stakeholders interviewed for this research consider that local actors were in the driver's seat of the project's design, and that contractual project processes were flexible enough to allow for adjustments to meet pressing needs. CBOs and implementing partners highlighted that the project intentionally created room for the inclusion of community members and all relevant stakeholders in activity planning and implementation, including Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) actors (such as the Uganda Defence Forces, Uganda Police Force and Uganda Prisons Service), religious and political leaders, private sector partners such as saving and credit cooperatives, and relevant ministries from the central government (such as ministries of education, health and housing). To avoid overlap and duplication of roles, ACAV, Koboko Municipal Council and the sub-granted CBOs[41] developed and signed a memorandum of understanding, which clearly outlined their roles and targeted synergies during project implementation.

Some of the activities implemented by the pilot action include the following:

- **ACAV provided overall technical assistance to and capacity building** of the municipal and local government staff, political leaders, local CBOs and community members on inclusive development planning, public finance management, financial reporting and technical reporting. This was done by hiring thirteen staff and seconding them to different KMC departments (in accordance with their area of expertise) to work for the project fulltime, providing one-to-one mentoring to their counterparts from the relevant departments of the municipality (and of lower levels of government such as divisions and wards) and the sub-granted CBOs. ACAV also led the review, development and implementation of inclusive municipal development plans.

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[40] KII with implementing partner.
[41] The sub-granted CBOs are Community Empowerment for Creative Innovation (CECI), Community Empowerment and Rehabilitation Initiative for Development (CERID), Congolese Refugees Association (CORA), Koboko Civil Society Network (KOCISONET), Partners in Community Transformation (PICOT), Support for Peace, Education and Development Programme (SPEDP), Support Trust for Africa Development (STAD), and Umoja Rescue Agency (UREA).

- **Koboko Municipal Council implemented the construction, equipment and expansion of education, health, livelihood and sanitation infrastructure**, with ACAV offering technical assistance (including supervision of works led by ACAV's engineering and technical work staff). Other activities implemented by Koboko Municipal Council with ACAV support include organising stakeholder meetings, developing the capacities of basic service providers, and establishing conflict response and follow-up mechanisms at municipal level.

- **Local CBOs implemented livelihood interventions (including financial literacy trainings and youth skilling),** awareness raising campaigns, community outreach with JLOS actors, and capacity building of community members and other actors (e.g. religious leaders, village health volunteers and parasocial workers) on issues such as health, human rights and protection. The CBOs also organised events around international days such as World Refugee Day and International Day of the Blind, as well as sports events and debates in schools, all aimed at promoting inclusion, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Each CBO was sub-granted to implement interventions in a thematic area with which they had prior experience and expertise.

6. FINDINGS

- The pilot action contributed to improvements in quality and access basic services in the municipality of Koboko through the construction and equipment of education and health infrastructures, although critical infrastructural and human resource gaps still exist in these sectors.
- EUTF-funded livelihood interventions created employment opportunities for the youth and sustainable IGAs for women. However, more of these types of interventions are needed in Koboko and its surrounding districts.
- The technical assistance provided by ACAV strengthened the capacities and systems of Koboko Municipal Council, CBOs and basic service providers (including JLOS actors such as the police).
- Coordination between Koboko Municipal Council and its stakeholders was strengthened through the creation of sector working groups, development forums and community events, all of which contributed to inclusive development.
- The project further enhanced the peaceful coexistence of communities by involving CBOs in conflict prevention, setting up mechanisms at community and municipal level to handle cases related to SGBV, intra- and inter-community conflicts, and raising awareness on these topics.
- Marginalised groups were included in the project design and activity implementation in various ways, such as the inclusion of refugee-led CBOs in project implementation as well as interventions specifically targeting people living with disabilities.

6.1. BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY

According to a VNG International survey conducted in 2018, the municipality of Koboko hosts around 23,800 self-settled refugees, of whom 88% are South Sudanese, 10% are Congolese and the remaining 2% originate from other countries across the region.[42] Although subsequent surveys have not been conducted, this number is likely to have grown significantly since 2018 given persistent conflict in the DRC and chronic climate-related shocks in South Sudan. Against the backdrop of this growing population and their associated needs, the municipality of Koboko is facing funding shortfalls from the central government, population pressure caused by rapid urbanisation, and infrastructural challenges related to poor housing and sanitation. In other words, there is a significant mismatch between the growing population and the municipal financial budget meant to cater for basic services and the municipality's development needs.

In response to these challenges, Koboko Municipal Council used around €2.1M of EUTF funding received via the pilot action to improve basic service delivery in the education and health sectors, with the aim of **increasing refugee and host community households' access to and utilisation of these services, as well as improving their quality**.

In the health sector, the municipal council constructed or improved three health facilities, including a new health centre in Lasanga (near Koboko's border with the DRC) with an outpatient department and staff housing, an outpatient department constructed and equipped at Koboko Mission Hospital, and a new mental health unit constructed and equipped at Koboko District Hospital. Lastly, the project constructed and equipped a trauma healing and counselling centre in Koboko. These activities were complemented by the construction of WASH facilities (such as drainable public toilets) in supported

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[42] VNG International, 'Empowering refugee hosting districts in Uganda, making the Nexus work: Survey highlights on self-settled refugees in Koboko Municipal Council', 2018.

schools, health centres and public spaces to improve sanitation, as well as awareness raising and sensitisation campaigns on mental health and psychosocial support conducted by the local CBOs.

Picture 1: Mental health unit at Koboko District Hospital, Koboko Town

Picture 2: Twin staff housing at Lasanga Health Centre III, Koboko Municipality

With regard to education, the municipal council constructed and equipped new classroom blocks in ten primary schools, four secondary schools and a technical institute, and provided learning and sports materials to these schools. The municipal council also constructed latrines, laboratories and staff housing in some of these institutions. The construction and equipment of learning facilities (including sporting equipment) was complemented by trainings of teachers and school management committees by facilitators contracted by ACAV and Koboko Municipal Council on themes related to curriculum implementation and school management.

6.1.1. EFFECTS OF THE PILOT ACTION ON BASIC SERVICES

According to the project's endline evaluation, the municipality's investment of EUTF funds in the development of health and education services effectively improved the quality, utilisation of, and access to, these services. However, the relative lack of quantitative municipal-level data on changes in the objective quality of healthcare and education services, as well as on student performance in national examinations, limits the analysis that can be done to triangulate this finding.

96% of the surveyed respondents in the project endline evaluation reported having access to quality education and health services at the project's endline, compared to 44% at the beginning of the project, and against a target of 66%.[43] (However, it should be noted that the quality of the services was subjectively assessed by the respondents themselves and not directly observed. While such assessments can be valuable indicators of the respondents' experiences with the services in question, ideally this data should be triangulated via more objective measures such as mortality or readmission rates in the case of health facilities.) The project's outcome data also shows that beneficiaries of antenatal care increased from 4,543 women at baseline to 18,315 women at the end of the project. Positive trends were also reported by healthcare stakeholders interviewed for this study in the number of hospital births and outpatient visits. Healthcare stakeholders attribute these positive results to the support provided by the construction and equipment of health facilities in Koboko.

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[43] Koboko Municipal Council, 'EUTF Final Narrative Report', December 2023.

Picture 3: Outpatient department at Lasanga Health Centre III, Koboko Municipality

Picture 4: Trauma healing and counselling centre, Koboko Municipality

The education interventions also appear to have led to improvements in education outcomes, as confirmed by all relevant stakeholders interviewed for this study. The project endline evaluation found that the average number of pupils per classroom decreased from 128 at the beginning of the project to 101 pupils per classroom at the endline, although this is still far higher than the national average of 55 pupils per classroom. There was also a reduction in the pupil dropout rate, from 8.1% in 2019 to 5.1% in 2023.[44] Interviewed education stakeholders emphasised that the project contributed to positive changes in attitudes to education among parents and learners. For instance, children used to learn under trees due to congested classrooms, which they found demoralising. However, thanks to the CRRF project, the infrastructural capacity of the 10 targeted primary schools collectively increased from 137 classrooms at the start of the project to 160 at the project closure. Parents were also

> *'When I was posted here, the structures were not good. Now the project renovated the school and the student performance in the last two years is impressive.'*
>
> **– School head teacher, Koboko municipality**

reluctant to send their children to school or to participate in the parent-teacher associations' activities, partly because of their limited involvement in decision-making processes related to school management (especially for refugees) and the poor state of sanitation infrastructure in schools. Through the project's support to WASH infrastructure in schools, the number of latrines in the targeted schools increased from 120 to 185 during the project implementation period. The abovementioned improvements made to education infrastructures and consequent changes in attitudes among children and their parents towards education reportedly contributed to improvements in performance for schools within Koboko municipality over the past three years. Several headteachers reported that Koboko district currently ranks first in the West Nile sub-region with regard to student performance. Several headteachers highlighted that Koboko municipality currently ranks first in the West Nile sub-region with regard to student performance, according to the official district and municipality education rankings. However, the research team was unable to obtain comparison data disaggregated by school from during or after the intervention to verify changes in performance for the schools supported by the project.

Moreover, the decision by the municipality to build and rehabilitate education infrastructures by constructing multistorey buildings reportedly generated positive competition in Koboko, with other public and private schools now opting for similar buildings to have modern structures matching the ones constructed by the municipal council and to create space for more classrooms.

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[44] Ibid.

Picture 5: An eight-classroom storey block at Nyaliro Primary School, Koboko Municipality

Picture 6: A six-classroom block at Teremunga Primary School, Koboko Municipality

6.1.2. REMAINING CHALLENGES AROUND BASIC SERVICES

Despite the positive improvements to which the EUTF pilot action appears to have contributed, the municipality of Koboko and its surrounding areas still face numerous challenges around service delivery.

One concern expressed by numerous stakeholders is that the increasing population seeking these newly available and improved services will likely strain current resources and negatively impact service quality in the future. For example, the aforementioned improvements to schools in the area have already led to a significant increase in school enrolment. The cumulative number of learners enrolled in the primary schools supported by the project increased by 22% between 2020 and 2023 (or from 16,200 to 19,800 students), while the total student population in the four secondary schools and technical institute increased by 3.6%.[45] Education stakeholders highlighted Nyaliro Primary School as a notable example, with enrolment reportedly increasing from 1,800 in 2020 to around 3,000 in 2023.[46] Education officials expressed concern that as the project's investment in the areas of education and health continues to attract people from outside the municipality, the number of service users will surpass institutional capacity, with negative consequences for service quality. Community members from Lobule refugee settlement in Koboko district confirmed that people living in the settlements perceive the quality of education and health services within Koboko town to be superior to those provided in the settlement. As such, many parents send their children to stay with relatives living in Koboko town to benefit from what they perceive as better education.[47] These findings are consistent with those in other studies, which have reported better education and health services and employment opportunities as the main factors attracting refugees to Koboko municipality. For instance, a survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 2024 on the legal protection needs of self-settled refugees in four secondary cities in Uganda (including Koboko) reported that 34% of the

'Our facility is only 150m from the border with the DRC and we offer services to patients from both countries. We serve up to 200 non-nationals monthly. Supply of drugs has been a major challenge – very low or inconsistent supplies.'

– Health facility manager, Koboko Municipality

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[45] Koboko Municipal Council, 'EUTF Final Narrative Report', December 2023.
[46] FGD with education stakeholders.
[47] FGD with community members, Lobule Refugee Settlement.

surveyed refugees moved to Koboko town because of better education and health services, with work opportunities (19%), limited assistance in settlements (18%) and security reasons (12%) being some of the other main drivers.[48]

Similarly, health service providers, community leaders and community members confirmed that non-nationals from neighbouring countries (especially those living close to the border) freely cross over to Koboko to access education and health services. Key stakeholders also noted that these cross-border movements negatively affect the ability of the Koboko Municipal Council and district government to manage communicable diseases like measles and yellow fever.

Infrastructure and equipment also represent an ongoing challenge. Due to national health policies that prohibit public health facilities from procuring drugs from anywhere other the National Medical Stores,[49] these institutions rely solely on government distributions of drugs, which health stakeholders consider untimely and insufficient for meeting the underlying demand. This is partly attributable to the fact that the central government does not take the population of self-settled refugees into account when planning for equipment and drugs.[50]

Health and education institutions in Koboko are also acutely understaffed. Despite improvements in teacher-to-pupil ratios in the past three years, they are still above the national averages. **Moreover, despite these low numbers of education staff, housing for teachers in the area is insufficient**. On average, about four in ten teachers in Koboko municipality are housed within the schools at which they work, while the rest must seek accommodation elsewhere (with Koboko town being the only option). This number is even lower for health facilities, where only about two in ten staff are housed within the facilities that employ them. As some of these institutions are in remote areas, staff living outside the facilities often have to leave early or arrive late, leaving the facility unattended.[51] The high cost of transport to and from Koboko town and of renting accommodation create an additional financial burden for these staff. However, in a positive development explained further in section 7.2, both the staffing and housing challenges are actively being addressed by the central government and other actors such as facility management units and associations.

Finally, gaps and challenges around access to clean water remain for both facilities and the community. For instance, the Koboko Mission Hospital has no regular water supply, which limits its operations, especially in the provision of in-patient healthcare services. One community leader also highlighted that while there are boreholes, most are not operational and have not been repaired by the municipal council, leading to overreliance on piped water which is stressed by high demand. As a result, the community still lacks reliable water supply.

6.2. EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

The livelihood component of the project was conducted by the sub-granted CBOs[52] in partnership with three TVET institutions (namely the Koboko, Chavara and Ombaci technical institutes) and private sector employers. Each CBO was assigned to implement a livelihood intervention based on their previous experience implementing a similar activity. For instance, PICOT, which had experience handling interventions related to agricultural livelihoods implemented the urban farming activities (horticulture and poultry farming), while STAD implemented the TVET and skills development training and business support for beauty-related business activities such as hairdressing.

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[48] NRC, 'Legal Protection Needs of Refugees Self-Settled in Secondary Cities in Uganda', March 2024.
[49] This is the national government's central medical store mandated to procure, warehouse and distribute essential medicines and health supplies to all public health facilities in Uganda.
[50] KII with health stakeholder.
[51] KII with health stakeholder.
[52] CECI, CERID, CORA, KOCISONET, PICOT, SPEDP, STAD and UREA.

A total of 300 youths between the age of 15 and 24 years, equally selected from refugee and host community households, were enrolled in business and TVET courses for a period of three months in the above institutions. These youths were trained on business activities related to horticulture, poultry rearing, saloon and beauty, hospitality and welding. After completing the training, the youths were linked with private sector employers for a two- to three-month apprenticeship programme to gain practical skills in their chosen sector. The youths were thereafter absorbed for fulltime employment by the employers or were supported with start-up kits by the project to start their own businesses. The start-up kits were provided to youths who either had not been linked to employers (or had not found fulltime employment) at the end of their graduation, or whose vocational training was considered more suitable for self-employment, such as saloon/hairdressing, bead making, tailoring and welding.

In parallel, the project targeted women (who were non-youths and mainly members of livelihood groups) by creating 30 women groups, each composed of ten members. These women groups were selected based on their existing IGA activities and business ideas. The municipal council and the CBOs provided material and financial support to the groups in the form of business management and financial literacy trainings, seed funding and start-up kits to boost the group members' IGA activities. The municipality also constructed satellite market shades that were allocated to 160 project beneficiaries – mostly women with active IGAs or MSMEs – with the aim of creating a suitable environment for these women to sell their products in the markets. The allocation of these stalls to the project beneficiaries reportedly followed a series of consultation meetings between the vendors committee and the relevant divisional and municipal leaders.

Picture 7: Vendors at Abele market shades, Koboko Municipality

Picture 8: Vendors at Asukutu market shades, Koboko Municipality

In addition, another 300 members of vulnerable households were supported to practice urban farming with the aim of improving household food security, nutrition and income. These beneficiaries received agricultural training at the Jabara Agricultural and Vocational Institute-Koboko and were provided with tools to start urban farming at the end of the training.

6.2.1. EFFECTS OF THE PILOT ACTION ON EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Through these interventions, the EUTF action in Koboko's skilling and IGA support to youth and women successfully created livelihood and employment opportunities in targeted communities. The project endline evaluation found that 93% of targeted households reported an increase in household income, although the fact that the increase amount was not measured makes it difficult to assess the relative size of this increase. Moreover, 88% of the previously unemployed youth beneficiaries (all of whom were school dropouts) either found wage employment or were self-employed after the business and vocational training and IGA support provided by the project. FGDs with the youths as well as a site visit to some of the businesses owned by the youth beneficiaries appear to confirm the evaluation's findings. All nine youths who participated in the FGD confirmed that the project

had transformed their lives by significantly improving their employment prospects. Community leaders noted that the project's interventions targeting youths and women also supported the beneficiaries in avoiding substance abuse and early marriage. The emphasis on refugee women was considered particularly judicious because of the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on female unemployment rates, and the fact that numerous South Sudanese refugee women have been left as the sole breadwinner for their families in Koboko. (Many male refugees have returned to South Sudan due to the need to supplement their sources of family livelihood with agropastoral activities.)

With regard to food security, **agricultural training on and support to urban farming practices seemingly had positive outcomes for the targeted (less resilient) households.** An assessment conducted by the project in June 2023 revealed that 81% of targeted farmer households reported having sufficient dietary diversity (reflected by eating at least two meals and three food groups a day), an improvement from a similar assessment in October 2022, which reported sufficient dietary diversity among 75% of the households.

The diversity of cultural and economic backgrounds among the refugees seems to have played a key role in their involvement in, and the effects of, these employment and livelihoods interventions. Several respondents (including the youth beneficiaries) highlighted that young Congolese female beneficiaries of skills development and IGA support related to beauty and hairdressing were generally more successful than those trained in other trades.[53] According to the respondents, this was attributable to traditional Congolese beauty practices, which are celebrated and passed down through generations, creating an attractive business opportunity around hair dressing and beauty products. By contrast, young male refugees from both South Sudan and the DRC were reportedly not willing to participate in the cash for work activities implemented during the construction of infrastructure at the beginning of the project. This was attributed by respondents economic circumstances in their places of origin, which likely do not expose them to hard labour.

Picture 9: Female youth trainees during hairdressing practical session, Koboko

Picture 10: Female youth trainees receiving coaching, Koboko

6.2.2. REMAINING CHALLENGES AROUND EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

At the same time, the CBOs and youths supported by the project reported facing several challenges. First, two of the eight youths participating in FGDs for this research noted that some of the materials provided, such as seeds for horticulture, were of low quality and thus resulted in agricultural losses. Similar challenges were reported for the poultry rearing interventions, whereby some beneficiaries claimed that all the poultry that had been supplied to them died. These challenges discouraged some of the beneficiaries from continuing with their horticulture and poultry farming

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[53] FGD with youth beneficiaries.

activities. In addition, youths matched with private sector employers claimed that some of them were not provided with a stipend despite the project catering for this. It was however not possible to verify these reported challenges.

One CBO staff member expressed concern that male relatives of participants in the women-focused livelihood interventions may not have been adequately sensitised on the objective and nature of the intervention, leading to misunderstandings exacerbated by cultural norms around gender and household finances. This reportedly contributed to tensions (and possibly even incidents of violence) between the women beneficiaries and their spouses, although further investigation beyond the scope of this study would be required to triangulate this information.

Funds provided to the local organisations were limited by the funding threshold prescribed by the general conditions of the EU grant. This may have unnecessarily limited their ability to implement larger interventions as they reportedly had much more capacity to accommodate funding than what was allocated to them. This was confirmed by ACAV and Koboko Municipal Council staff, who highlighted that the general conditions of the grant as well as central government requirements for funding CBOs limited the ability of the CBOs to effectively implement activities. It is worth noting that the majority of the CBOs had initiated the process of registering as regional NGOs at the end of the pilot action in order to be able to attract and implement donor funding across the region.

Moreover, **despite directly targeting more than 750 youths, men and women with employment and livelihood interventions, the demand for similar support is still high.** Findings from interviews with KMC staff, the sub-granted organisations and youth beneficiaries reveal that the number of community members requesting similar support has continually increased since the second year of the project. In addition, the number of traders in the markets has outgrown the available market spaces. As such, further support is still needed to meet the needs of the many unskilled and out of school vulnerable youth and women groups who did not benefit from the project's interventions.

Finally, the CBO staff expressed concerns that there were no plans to support them to follow up with the beneficiaries after the end of the project.

6.3. INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

Before the pilot action, municipal planning processes essentially focused on the needs of the host community, as data on self-settled or urban refugees was generally unavailable and moreover the budget allocation from the national government to urban authorities and municipalities such as Koboko does not account for refugees. The pilot action therefore included interventions to more effectively integrate the needs and priorities of refugees into municipal planning, as well as to strengthen the capacities of local CBOs and community members to advocate for integrated and inclusive policies.[54] To that end, ACAV supported the capacity building of municipal council staff at all levels, as well as local CBOs, community members and other stakeholders through trainings, events and workshops, and also provided technical assistance for the development of municipal planning documents.

Stakeholder coordination was implemented through the establishment of sector working groups, an NGO coordination committee (chaired by ACAV's project manager) and municipal development forums. The project created five sector working groups for i) protection and community services, ii) livelihood and economic empowerment, iii) education and skills development, iv) health and psychosocial support, and iv) infrastructure and environment. These working groups were led by heads of the related departments at the municipal council level and by the CBO leading the project's interventions in the given sector.

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[54] KMC, 'CRRF: Inclusive urban development and mobility in the municipality of Koboko- description of action', November 2020.

The NGO coordination committee brought partners and stakeholders together to ensure that activities implemented in the district were coordinated and to avoid duplication. Some of the stakeholders included in these forums and working groups included the district government's education and health departments the Office of the Prime Minister, the benefitting education and health facilities, women associations, institutional partners that provide vocational training, JLOS actors (such as the Uganda Police Force and Uganda Prisons Service) and the Uganda Revenue Authority, among others.

The municipal council, with assistance from ACAV, also organised multistakeholder meetings to collect feedback from the community and other stakeholders on topics such as education, health, security, protection, and the identification of development priorities. These municipal development forums served as a space for the municipal council to update the community members and other stakeholders on the project's progress. Moreover, feedback shared during these sessions was fed into the municipal annual and five-year plans.

6.3.1. Effects of the pilot action on inclusive development planning and stakeholder coordination

The EUTF action appears to have had positive effects on the inclusion of refugees in Koboko's municipal development planning processes. Findings from the project's ROM evaluation highlight that the project contributed to **positive reforms and more democratic governance** in Koboko in terms of refugee inclusion in community structures and school management. Primary data collected for this study confirms this. The inclusion of refugee-led organisations and refugee representatives in the sector working groups and development forums mentioned above was considered by stakeholders to be a key success factor of the project. At the community level, health and education stakeholders mentioned that the inclusion of refugees in the school management committees, the parent-teacher associations and the health management unit committees reduced refugees' fears of being taken back to settlements and positively increased their involvement in, and contribution to, school activities.

Although conversations around refugee inclusion had already started in Koboko before the project, community leaders affirm that the project interventions put these conversations into action. Prior to the project's implementation, development planning in the municipality of Koboko started at the cell level (lowest administrative level), where community members were invited to list their development priorities. These inclusive practices were further strengthened by the project, which supported Koboko Municipal Council to hold regular meetings and to bring refugee-led CBOs and refugee households onboard. Through various stakeholder meetings and feedback sessions organised by the municipal council, community members and their representatives, local CBOs (both host community- and refugee-led) and other key stakeholders from the national, municipality and district local governments, the private sector and NGOs had an opportunity share their needs and priorities.

Thanks in part to ACAV's technical assistance, three municipal development plans and policy documents were developed, approved and operationalised to improve service delivery and integrate urban refugees in municipal services. It should however be noted that while 82% of the host community members surveyed during the endline evaluation confirmed that they participated in the development of these plans and that they reflect community needs, only 18% of surveyed refugees reported the same.[55] Unfortunately, the evaluation does not offer possible explanations for this low proportion among the surveyed refugees, although it should be noted that the sample size for refugee respondents was much smaller than it likely should have been (as it was based on statistics that are significantly lower than current estimates of Koboko's refugee population).

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[55] ACAV, 'End line evaluation of the technical assistance to Koboko Municipality to Implement the CRRF: Inclusive urban development and mobility action in Koboko 2020 – 2023', December 2023.

The project also effectively scaled up coordination between relevant actors. All interviewed stakeholders highlighted that the EUTF pilot action positively contributed to the way in which the municipal council engages its stakeholders. For instance, a local government official explained that since the inception of the project the municipal council has brought them onboard to share their concerns and feedback, which was not the case before. Moreover, the direct support approach – and consequently the high degree of involvement of politicians in the project design, beneficiary selection and activities – increased their ownership of the action, thereby incentivising them to actively engage their communities and ensure the action's effectiveness. Koboko Municipal Council and the community's slogans of 'leaving no one behind' and 'you cannot do something for us without us' showcase their commitment to ensuring the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in their planning and decision-making. **This coordination even extends well beyond the municipality**. The municipal council, local leaders and CBOs have initiated cross-border coordination meetings that bring together leaders of the areas that border Koboko (in the DRC and South Sudan as well as in Uganda) in order to ensure a coordinated response during disease outbreaks. One of the local CBOs highlighted that these meetings are now being facilitated by a new non-EUTF funded project.

> *'Whenever the municipal council wants to do something, they consult us first. We then present the priorities of our people. The community's voice is heard.'*
>
> **– Community leader, Koboko municipality**

The aforementioned establishment and support of sector working groups and municipal development forums are considered by all stakeholders as some of the project's most important contributions to stakeholder coordination in Koboko. For example, CBO staff noted that they can now liaise with government officers from every sector relevant to the interventions that they implement thanks to the networks and linkages created during the implementation of the project.

Koboko municipality is also a member of the Cities Alliance-led component of the CRRF Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility programme, which aims to create regional networks and dialogue to support the inclusion of urban refugees and their host populations in development planning by local governments of secondary cities.[56] Through this network and others, implementing partners noted that the story of Koboko has attracted the attention of other local governments who are coming to learn from the Koboko case in order to replicate of their approaches to inclusive development and stakeholder coordination. For instance, Arua City Council is now engaging refugee-led organisations in development planning processes as well as reaching out to refugees – a decision informed by their learning visit to Koboko. Similarly, an implementing partner highlighted that the story of Koboko motivated the mayor of Assosa to increase his involvement in the implementation of the IRC-led component of the CRRF Inclusive Development and Mobility programme in Ethiopia, which was not the case at the beginning of the project's implementation.[57]

> *'Koboko's success story have attracted the attention of other municipalities and cities. They want to learn from the successes and challenges, and to replicate Koboko's approach.'*
>
> **– Implementing partner staff**

It should be noted that Koboko Municipal Council had already benefitted from programmes that implemented capacity building of local authorities

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[56] Refugee Investment Network and Japan International Cooperation Agency, 'Data collection survey on refugee-related business and social investment final report', February 2022.
[57] KII with implementing partner.

around governance prior to the EUTF pilot action, which is regarded by stakeholders as a contributor to the success of the pilot action with regard to inclusive development planning. All key informants from Koboko Municipal Council highlighted that their previous involvement in projects such as IDEAL, NEXUS and SLVG – all implemented by VNG International – had effectively prepared them for the 'direct support' model of donor funding. The predecessor projects advocated for inclusive governance, transparency and accountability, and proper population data inventory and management, which respondents believe pushed the municipal council to prioritise service delivery to its population and to lobby for funding from, and partnerships with, donors and the private sector.

6.3.2. REMAINING CHALLENGES AROUND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

It appears that the EUTF pilot action's contribution to improved coordination and more inclusive development planning has overall been extremely positive, although a few outstanding challenges remain. For example, while coordination at the municipal and district level has greatly improved over the course of the pilot action, coordination with the central government reportedly remains weak. One key informant highlighted cases in which the central government communicates key points regarding planned interventions to the district local government without informing the relevant municipal council department, which reportedly hinders an efficient collaborative approach to issues affecting the population. For instance, the Ministry of Health directs actors with planned interventions in the district to report to the district government health department but leaves out the municipal health department, which limits their involvement in the coordination of such activities.

In terms of effectively engaging all relevant stakeholders, the ROM evaluation report highlighted that private sector involvement in the interventions was very low. Key informants stressed that suppliers and employers were the most involved private sector players in the project (namely in the construction and equipment of education and health infrastructures and livelihood interventions), which means that the valuable role that the private sector could play in addressing migration management in Koboko (including through direct investment in the education and health sectors) has yet to be leveraged to its full potential.

6.4. PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION

The relatively high level of integration of refugees in Koboko and social cohesion in the area is facilitated by the district and town's long history and experience with displacement and by unique cultural ties. The people of Koboko (including refugees from the neighbouring DRC and South Sudan) are predominantly from the Kakwa tribe and therefore share cultural connections as well as a common language. This unique mix of experience and common culture has made it easier for the host community to understand the plight of the refugees among them and thus for peaceful coexistence. However, with the increasing population in Koboko and the associated pressure on the limited resources and livelihood opportunities, implementing social cohesion and peacebuilding activities is crucial to curb any possible rising tensions.

The project included targeted interventions to promote peaceful coexistence and social cohesion between refugee and host communities living in the municipality. To address cases of community conflict, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other issues, the CRRF project established administrative mechanisms, especially for complaints reporting and handling as well as referrals and follow-up. The referral mechanism brings together the already existing community and administrative structures, including the Koboko District Hospital mental health department, the Office of the Prime Minister, the police protection desk and UNHCR, with the aim of ensuring smooth coordination on complaints reporting and handling, referrals and follow-up, as well as assuring

continuity of these procedures beyond the project implementation period. Together with an issue tracking system, the mechanism enables the Koboko Municipal Council and CBOs to track progress and feedback on complaints as well as recommended actions.

Picture 11: Youths present songs during World Refugee Day in Koboko

Picture 12: Congolese women present songs during World Water Day, Koboko

The sub-granted CBOs trained community parasocial volunteers,[58] staff from lower levels of the municipal council (division, ward and cell levels) and other protection stakeholders themes related to child protection, children and youth in conflict with the law, and social protection programming, among other topics. The local CBOs also conducted community outreach, events and sensitisation campaigns targeting community members with messages on human rights, protection and peaceful coexistence. Activities included debates and sports events in schools, and celebrations of cultural days and World Refugee Day.

6.4.1. EFFECTS OF THE PILOT ACTION ON PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION

The EUTF pilot action appears to have concretely contributed to improvements in inter-community relations. For example, project outcome data suggests a significant reduction in the number of reported cases of conflict reported by community members in the past three years. A total of 8 cases were reported in the last year of project implementation, compared to 92 and 59 cases in the first and second years, respectively.[59] These cases were either handled by refugee-led organisations such as CORA, SSURA and STAD, or they were referred to the appropriate departments such as the mental health unit at the Koboko District Hospital, the police, the OPM or UNHCR. The ROM report attributes the improvements in safety, security and social cohesion in Koboko to positive collaboration between the police and all key stakeholders, as supported by the CRRF project. Qualitative data collected by the research team during field visits for this study appears to confirm the above claims. Four interviewed ward administrators all mentioned that the number of cases of inter-communal conflicts had decreased over the past few years. They attribute this to the inclusion of community members in municipal council activities, non-discriminatory practices in access to resources such as water and markets, increased sensitisation of community members on the established conflict reporting and handling mechanisms, and the linkages created between the local CBOs and JLOS actors (especially the Uganda Police Force), all of which have increased social cohesion and provided community members with alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. At the time of this study, monthly and quarterly sector coordination meetings (including on security and protection) were still taking place after the end of the pilot action, and there are strong indications that Koboko Municipal Council and other relevant stakeholders (including the police, JLOS actors and other local administrative structures) will continue coordinating and engaging through the established administrative mechanisms to handle

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[58] Professionals who provide social services to the community and act as a link between the community and formal service delivery systems. In Uganda and in the context of Koboko, they include village health teams.
[59] Koboko Municipal Council, 'EUTF Final Narrative Report', December 2023.

conflict, safety and security issues within the municipality beyond the project's lifetime. The significant drop in reported cases of conflict suggests an overall improvement in community relations among those living around the municipality of Koboko.

Involving local CBOs in project implementation is widely considered by stakeholders to have made a significant contribution to improving peaceful coexistence. Community leaders highlighted that the sub-granting of host community- and refugee-led CBOs to implement activities within the action was crucial in increasing the involvement of communities (especially refugees) in the project interventions, because community members are more likely to recognise and engage with their community-led organisations. The involvement of refuge representatives and refugee-led organisations such as CORA, SSURA and CECI in the programme made it easy for the municipality to share critical information with the refugee population and to get feedback from them. These organisations were also able to

"The EUTF project strengthened us in terms of sensitisation around coexistence. Currently, it is the dry season and you could expect cases of quarrelling reported, which is not the case."

– Community leader, Koboko Municipality

implement more effective awareness raising on human rights, protection and peaceful coexistence because they have a greater understanding of the communities they serve. Notably, the CBOs involved JLOS actors in these events, thereby providing a space for the population to interact with these actors. These sensitisation activities reportedly helped to improve reporting of security- and safety-related cases, such as SGBV and child abuse.

The FGD with the youth beneficiaries of the project's TVET intervention revealed that **the project's balanced selection of refugee and host community households also contributed to improvements in social cohesion**. All of the youths participating in the FGD confirmed that, through the programme, they had developed networks and built customer bases that cut across both communities. They also stressed that they are now recognised for their expertise and that people from different communities come them to acquire skills and exchange ideas about their respective businesses.[60]

6.4.2. REMAINING CHALLENGES AROUND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION

One key informant noted that although the project established a trauma centre, which increased the demand for such services as many community members visited the centre for support, **protection services for those affected by intra- and inter-community conflict were still lacking**. For instance, there was no shelter at the trauma centre to host victims whose issues were still being handled by the relevant CBOs or those who needed time to heal before reuniting with their families.[61]

6.5. INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

The project implemented numerous measures to ensure the inclusion of marginalised groups in development planning and basic service delivery. For example, the project applied a 50:50 ratio for beneficiary selection with regard to gender and displacement status. Similarly, the eight sub-granted CBOs were selected from refugee- and host community-led organisations in equal numbers. Women and youths were targeted for the project's livelihood interventions in response to the disproportionate importance of gender and age in unemployment rates. Moreover, during the construction of the

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[60] FGD with youth beneficiaries.
[61] KII with local CBO staff.

infrastructure supported by the project, Koboko Municipal Council included special provisions in its contracts with contractors to include refugees in their workforce. This ensured that both refugees and host communities members were given the chance to participate in the cash for work activities.

The project also targeted specific marginalised groups with certain interventions. For instance, CECI, a refugee-led CBO, conducted outreach in celebration of the International Day for the Blind, during which a total of 207 visually impaired individuals were supported to undergo eye checks and surgeries.

Picture 13: International Youth Day celebration in Koboko

Picture 14: International White Canes Day celebration in Koboko

6.5.1. EFFECTS OF THE PILOT ACTION ON INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

The services supported by the EUTF pilot action are widely considered to be non-discriminatory. Cultural ties between the communities of Koboko, as described in section 6.4, already play a significant role in facilitating non-discriminatory access to services by refugees and Ugandan nationals. Indeed, even before the pilot action, Koboko municipality and district practiced an open-door policy (similar to the national government refugee policy) and offered no-cost services to all. However, the proportion of refugees and host community members of Koboko municipality that consider municipal services to be inclusive and non-discriminatory increased from 15% at baseline to 96% at endline, according to the endline evaluation.

The involvement of refugee-led organisations in project implementation, as well as sensitisation campaigns carried out by these CBOs over the project lifetime, is generally seen as positive step towards increasing self-settled refugees' involvement in and engagement with municipal activities. The project's application of a 50:50 ratio with regard to beneficiary selection, especially for livelihood interventions, was also perceived by CBOs and beneficiaries as extremely positive and empowering, thereby instilling a sense of ownership of the interventions among the community and increasing refugees' perception of their level of integration in Koboko. The practice of engaging refugee-led organisations and refugees in project interventions has already been taken up by other authorities such as Arua's city council, which is currently working with refugee organisations to address social cohesion and security issues.[62]

The endline evaluation, ROM report and primary data collected by the research team also highlight that the project directly and indirectly included people with disabilities in key interventions. Although no quantitative data is available on the inclusion of people with disabilities, qualitative data collected by the research team seems to validate these findings. For example, a visit to the schools and health facilities with newly constructed infrastructure confirmed that all the structures constructed with the project's funding took the needs of people with disabilities into consideration. For

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[62] KII with private sector organisation.

instance, all structures had staircases specifically designed for individuals with physical disabilities. Community leaders also reiterated that people living with disabilities were involved in project activities such as stakeholder meetings, community events and livelihood interventions.

6.5.2. REMAINING CHALLENGES AROUND INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

Despite the positive progress made with regard to refugee inclusion, lack of proper awareness among refugees continues to limit Koboko Municipal Council's efforts around integration. Some refugees still believe that they could be taken back to settlements when they are discovered, which prevents them from identifying themselves as refugees. These fears limit Koboko Municipal Council's ability to implement targeted interventions aimed at increasing their inclusion.

On another note, one key informant highlighted that while other forms of marginalisation (such as people living with disabilities, refugees and women) were given specific considerations in the project's interventions, the elderly population within Koboko municipality was not adequately targeted.

7.   SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACTION

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A follow-up programme (SUIDAC) funded by the EU will benefit Koboko (six other secondary cities in the region) by building on the pilot action.
- Through its annual budget, Koboko Municipal Council has set aside funds to support the maintenance of the infrastructure constructed and equipped by the pilot action.
- Local communities and other stakeholders such as the school and health unit management committees will continue to support the schools and health facilities targeted by the pilot action through their own funding sources.
- The municipal development forum, NGO coordination committee and sector working groups established by the project will continue to be supported by ACAV and the municipal council.
- Koboko Municipal Council and local CBOs intend to continue applying the skills gained through the action. These CBOs have also received funding from other donors to continue implementing (in Koboko and other areas) some of the activities started under the action.

7.1.   IMPROVED CAPACITY OF KOBOKO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

ACAV and Koboko Municipal Council staff are confident that the knowledge and skills gained through the technical assistance provided by ACAV will enable the municipal government to continue delivering quality services to the community. For instance, municipal council staff are using the relevant skills they have developed via the pilot action, such as proposal writing skills, to mobilise resources and lobby for more funding. ACAV's long-term relationship with the municipal council means that they will continue to provide technical assistance to Koboko in accordance with a needs-based approach, particularly given that they will continue to be a funded municipal council partner under the EU's SUIDAC programme (see section 7.5).[63]

Koboko Municipal Council will also continue to operationalise the established NGO coordination committee, sector working groups and the development forums (particularly the municipal development forum). These forums are still functioning and will continue with regular meetings aimed at coordinating the various sectoral responses. As such, Koboko Municipal Council will continue to promote inclusive approaches by bringing together key stakeholders including JLOS actors, private sector players, INGOs and CBOs. These coordination bodies will be instrumental in operationalising the municipal plans developed with EUTF support.

There are also opportunities for Koboko Municipal Council to continue learning from other non-EU-funded interventions. For instance, programmes such as the Project for strengthening refugee hosting and refugee affected districts of West Nile (PROCEED), financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), targets twelve local governments within the West Nile sub-region (including Koboko district local government). PROCEED, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and the OPM, seeks to build the capacity of local governments to carry out integrated development planning and to include refugees in these plans.

In addition, WENDA, in partnership with VNG's SDLG programme and Muni University, established a leadership academy at Muni University in March 2024.[64] This initiative is aimed at engaging topical champions (former political and technical leaders with a track record of good leadership and governance) to provide inspiration and continuous coaching and mentorship to the current technical and political leadership. These champions will also help to mediate conflicts between the technical and

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[63] KII, implementing partner.
[64] KII with private sector organisation.

political staff (no such conflicts have been reported in Koboko so far although they seem to exist in other local governments).[65] Koboko and other urban authorities and local governments in the West Nile sub-region will benefit from the programme.

7.2. CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS TO BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY

The central government is providing complementary support to basic service delivery that should help to address some of the sustainability gaps highlighted in section 6.1.2. At Lasanga Health Centre III, which was constructed by the EUTF pilot action, the central government has constructed a maternity ward via the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers Program (UGIFT), which, among other objectives, aims at improving social service delivery at the local government level. The facility is in the final stages of obtaining formal recognition to be able to access drugs and other support from the central government. Moreover, in schools where the project constructed staff housing, the central government has constructed similar structures to accommodate more teachers (although the need for more housing still exists in all of the supported institutions). These achievements are a result of coordination between the central government and Koboko Municipal Council that enabled each actor to offer support to the facility without duplication. It is worth noting that the municipal council reallocated the project funds initially meant for the construction of the same maternity ward to other activities such as topping up budgets for construction of education facilities, which were under pressure from inflation and exchange rate losses.

Koboko Municipal Council has also allocated budgetary support to schools and health facilities for infrastructure maintenance, although low revenue, limited funds, and competing development needs are still likely to limit the municipality's capacity to maintain these structures.

The existing management structures at the supported institutions did also come up with additional ways of sustaining the results. For example, school management committees and parent-teacher associations are locally hiring trained teachers to bridge the teaching gap created by the significant increase in school enrolment. They also incorporated infrastructure maintenance into their operational budgets and development plans. Moreover, the community's involvement in the EUTF action led to support from groups such as school alumni clubs and associations, who have supported the construction of latrines, school fencing and staff housing. These are in line with existing policies such as the Universal Primary Education Policy of 1997, which requires parents to contribute financially and/or in kind to support the education needs of their children.[66] In Lasanga, some of the land allocated for the hospital was designated for modern agricultural activities aimed at generating revenues for the facility and engaging the long-term involvement of the community. However, these efforts are limited given that they largely rely on financial support from the municipal or central government, which is not sufficient to support emerging and increasing needs.

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[65] KII with INGO staff.
[66] Ministry of Education and Sports, 'Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda 2017-2021' September 2018.

Picture 15: Water-borne toilet at Koboko taxi park, Koboko Municipality

Picture 16: Eight-stance VIP latrine at Lasanga Health Centre III, Koboko Municipality

7.3. CONTINUED EFFECTS OF LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS

Beneficiaries of the livelihood interventions continued to generate income from their supported IGAs and businesses, or to maintain their fulltime jobs. The majority of beneficiaries who started their own businesses, especially in the salon and beauty industry, seem to have experienced growth and expanded their operations by employing additional youths. Moreover, the market stalls constructed by the municipal council will continue to serve as a municipal source of revenue, while at the same time creating an enabling environment for women and other community members to earn their livelihood from the markets. Lastly, beneficiaries trained on urban farming will reportedly continue to apply the acquired skills on modern agricultural practices such as raising and managing vegetable nursery beds, backyard/kitchen gardening, pests, and disease control and management, which are expected to increase their yields and income.

Picture 17: Women group members preparing cassava for sale in their store, Koboko Town

Picture 18: A project beneficiary selling her wares at the market shades

Koboko is among the fifteen municipalities newly selected to benefit from the World Bank-funded Uganda Cities and Municipalities Infrastructure Development (UCMID) program 2024-2029. The UCMID programme, which will expand road networks, bridges and drainage channels, is expected to directly create job opportunities for the local communities and open up Koboko and the other selected municipalities for trade and investments.

7.4. CONTINUITY THROUGH LOCAL CBOS

The EUTF pilot action's partnerships with local community-based organisations proved an effective way of implementing the localisation agenda by empowering local actors to lead

humanitarian and development responses. As previously described, Koboko Municipal Council sub-granted funding to local organisations to implement skilling programmes, awareness raising and protection interventions, with technical assistance and support provided by ACAV. This implementation arrangement and the direct and active involvement of local CBOs was praised by all relevant stakeholders for effectively operationalising the localisation agenda. The capacity building and technical assistance offered to these organisations, particularly in the areas of proposal writing, project management and financial reporting, strengthened their capacity to handle donor funding. In addition, they were given opportunities to lead the implementation of various components of the interventions under the pilot action, which strengthened their abilities and gave them confidence to apply for further funding. Furthermore, Koboko's success story afforded them significant visibility and recognition among donors and INGOs.

Moreover, five of the eight local CBOs that received subgrants from Koboko Municipal Council secured funding from other donors to implement complementary interventions to the ones executed under the EUTF pilot action. For instance, CECI, a refugee-led organisation that implemented the protection, skilling and health interventions under the EUTF action, has been sub-granted by other partners such as Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and War Child Canada to implement interventions in the West Nile region on issues around youth skilling, non-formal education and clean energy.[67] CECI in partnership with Sesame Workshop through funding from the Conrad Hilton Foundation will target early learners in Koboko Municipality and Lobule Refugee Settlement through a project the 'Welcome Sesame: Inclusion and Belonging for Displaced Learners' project.[68] SPEDP, a host community-led organisation, received funding from the Open Society Foundations and African Union Development Agency to implement activities in the region around education, youth skilling, livelihoods and protection.[69] These interventions are expected to reach more beneficiaries both within and outside Koboko and will therefore build on the already recorded positive outcomes of the pilot action.

7.5. FOLLOW-UP EU-FUNDED PROGRAMME

The successes of the pilot action in Koboko inspired the EU to expand the 'direct support approach' to municipalities, local governments and urban areas affected by displacement in Uganda and four other countries[70] across the HoA region via the NDICI-funded Sustainable Urban Integration of Displacement-Affected Communities (SUIDAC, €30M) programme.[71] Koboko municipality will participate in this programme, although the details remain unconfirmed as the design of the programme is still underway.

Focus box 2: Overview of SUIDAC Programme[72]

SUIDAC, a €30M four-year NDICI-funded programme targeting nine secondary cities in five countries across sub-Saharan Africa, namely Kananga and Tshikapa (both in the DRC), Assosa and Jigjiga (both in Ethiopia), Borama and Gabiley (both in Somalia), Atbara (Sudan), and Arua and Koboko (both in Uganda). The Cities Alliance-led programme aims to **enhance the sustainable integration of displacement affected communities (DACs) in the targeted hosting secondary cities**. The specific objectives (outcomes) of this action are to:

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[67] KII with local CBO staff.
[68] CECI Uganda, 'Strengthening Early Childhood Education in Koboko District, Uganda: A Path to Inclusion and Belonging' n.d. Retrieved from here.
[69] KII with local CBO staff.
[70] The DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan.
[71] More details on the SUIDAC programme is available here.
[72] Cities Alliance, 'Launching SUIDAC: Sustainable Integration of Displaced Communities in Sub-Saharan Africa', 18 June 2024. Retrieved from here.

- **Improve self-reliance and social cohesion of DACs living in the targeted urban and peri-urban areas.** This will be achieved by improving their access to education, health, nutrition and housing services. In addition, the action will also support the creation of livelihood opportunities and provide documentation and legal assistance to the displaced populations in the targeted secondary cities.

- **Strengthen the readiness of local city administrations, national governments and regional bodies to respond to the needs of DACs in urban areas.** The programme will support relevant authorities to develop inclusive urban development plans and integrate sustainable approaches to forced displacement. It will support key infrastructure projects and promote multi-level policy dialogue to strengthen urban authorities' responses to urban displacement.

As with the pilot action, a technical assistance component as well as a local CBO participation approach will be adopted under SUIDAC. However, unlike the Koboko model, the EU will channel its funding through a regional implementing partner, who will handle the disbursement of funds to the participating municipalities and local governments during a six-month inception period. As the SUIDAC programme will target multiple local governments in various contexts, the involvement of a regional implementing partner during the inception period will help to assess the feasibility of working with additional urban areas in new operating contexts, and thereby mitigate the risk of failure.

After SUIDAC's inception phase, a hybrid approach will likely be adopted, whereby a certain share of implementation funding will be channelled through an INGO (in this case, Cities Alliance) and the rest transferred directly to the local governments. This hybrid approach will address some of the challenges experienced in Koboko, such as the delayed release of funds caused by bureaucratic national government processes, and the challenges faced by the municipal government in meeting the general grant conditions regarding the release of final payments (which, as described in section 8.1, required Koboko Municipal Council to pre-finance the final 10% of the project budget before the balance could be released). INGOs will therefore be relied on under SUIDAC to mobilise their internal financial resources to meet the requirements for pre-financing activities or, in case of unforeseen delays in funding, to facilitate the smooth implementation of the project.

8. LESSONS LEARNT AND BEST PRACTICES

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Stakeholder coordination and engagement through sector working groups and development forums are considered best practices that promote project ownership and inclusive development.
- Capacity building and needs-based technical assistance to local authority staff and relevant stakeholders as well as visionary leadership are critical success factors in the implementation of a direct funding approach.
- Evidence generation through the collection of data on refugee populations as well as needs assessment surveys are key for maximising the effectiveness of refugee response in urban areas.

8.1. DIRECT SUPPORT APPROACH

The EUTF pilot action's approach of providing direct funding to local municipalities and local authorities is viewed by key informants, including local authorities themselves (such as the political leadership in Koboko and nearby Arua), INGOs and donor organisations, as a successful practice. This funding arrangement empowers local authorities to plan and allocate resources to their local priorities and most pressing needs. The project's flexibility was also commended: for instance, it created room for the Koboko Municipal Council to adjust their budgets and reallocate funds in response to exchange rate losses and overwhelming community needs beyond the project scope.[73] For instance, Koboko Municipal Council was able to reallocate funds initially meant to construct a maternity ward at Lasanga Health Centre III to top up the budgets for the construction of education infrastructures following inflation and exchange rate losses. (The maternity ward was later constructed with support from the World Bank-funded UGIFT programme.) The Koboko success story is seen by political leaders as an incentive for other local governments to put in place robust systems (which have been enhanced by the pilot action) to manage internal and donor funds.

> *"The EU pilot in Koboko [debunked] the perception that local governments cannot implement huge donor funding."*
>
> **KII – Implementing partner staff.**

The direct support approach was also celebrated for addressing the plight of urban areas hosting refugees, which have received significantly less attention and support from donors than refugee-hosting areas with camps and settlements. Directly supporting local governments helps them to strengthen their systems, to more effectively manage the limited resources available to them, and to better respond to changing population needs.[74]

However, it should be noted that the effectiveness of the direct support approach in Koboko municipality was reportedly limited by various administrative challenges. First, Uganda's federal budget policies require that procurements or contracts above €55K (thousand) must be approved by the solicitor general. This requirement and other bureaucratic criteria associated with national government processes led to delays of up to three months in the approval of project procurements and contracts, which in turn negatively affected the timely implementation of the project activities. It should,

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[73] ACAV, 'End line evaluation of the technical assistance to Koboko Municipality to Implement the CRRF: Inclusive urban development and mobility action in Koboko 2020 – 2023', December 2023.
[74] KII with donor organisation staff.

however, be noted that despite the delays caused by bureaucratic processes from the central government authorities, no tensions or conflicts between the Koboko Municipal Council and the national government were reported by key informants.

Second, the general conditions of the EUTF grant (which apply to all EU grant contracts regardless of the implementing partner) stipulated that Koboko Municipal Council would receive the final 10% of the grant after completion of all the project activities. This was challenging for the municipal council, which, like other municipalities and local authorities, is reliant on central government funding allocated to specific budget lines, and thus has no other sources to complement donor-funded activities. As a result, the municipal council faced difficulties in completing the project activities that were still ongoing by the time the project had officially ended. As explained in section 9.4, the most straightforward solution to this problem may be to subcontract part of the grant to a co-implementing partner with other financial sources to leverage, as is being planned under the SUIDAC programme. Another possible option would involve the local authority in question engaging the central government during the contracting phase of the project to advocate for the creation of internal mechanisms to facilitate the allocation during the final year of implementation of an amount equivalent to 10% of the overall budget from a specific municipal budget line. Dedicated guidance for negotiating and developing such a mechanism could be co-created by interested stakeholders, and its initial applications closely monitored for future adaptation.

8.2. VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Visionary political and technical leadership is key to the success of a direct support approach. Multiple stakeholders, including external observers, noted that Koboko municipality had particularly effective and engaging leaders who shared a common goal of quality service delivery to the public. The current mayor is widely perceived as being especially charismatic and effective. Moreover, the political team (led by the mayor) and the technical team (led by the town clerk) have shared aspirations around service delivery to their community. (This is particularly important as key informants emphasised that in the case of many other urban authorities, tensions and differences in priorities between political and technical leadership hinder effective action.) 89% of respondents participating in the project endline evaluation reported that the project received adequate political, technical and administrative support from Koboko Municipal Council and local leadership. The Koboko Municipal Council leadership has also reportedly been extremely proactive in lobbying for development funding and ensuring accountability to the public.

Koboko municipality received a City and Mobility Award from Cities Alliance in recognition of its inclusive approach to refugee integration and migration management in secondary cities. In addition, the mayor of Koboko has been elected as the president of the Urban Authorities Association of Uganda for the period 2021-25. These acknowledgements reflect the current Koboko Municipal Council leadership's exceptional status and characteristics, which may not be easily replicable in other municipalities. To address this, Cities Alliance has been selected to be the regional implementing partner for the follow-up programme to the pilot action (SUIDAC). Cities Alliance will assess the political dynamics within the benefitting secondary city authorities during the inception period and recommend the most suitable project implementation arrangements (including the funding model to be adopted).

8.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Continuous and open engagement with stakeholders through sector working groups and development forums, as well as participatory monitoring of project activities, was considered key to the success of the action. Community leaders, education and health facility administrators and local CBOs echoed that Koboko municipality continuously engages with all stakeholders drawn from the community, local and central government, partners, political and religious leaders, which was not the case before the project. For instance, the local CBOs as well as other relevant stakeholders such as political leaders were involved in the project design, including the development of proposals and the

selection of benefitting institutions and community members. In addition, the inclusion of JLOS actors, and particularly of the police, in the meetings and events organised by Koboko Municipal Council was praised for helping to coordinate issues around security and conflict prevention. The creation of a dedicated reporting mechanism enabled the police, courts, refugee-led CBOs, the newly established trauma centre and Koboko Municipal Council to track the progress of reported cases of conflicts, abuse and other crimes.

The sector working groups and the municipal development forum received particular praise from relevant actors for bringing the various stakeholders together. They maintain that this way of fostering open communication has increased accountability, transparency and openness and has established shared responsibilities among partners and project beneficiaries. Koboko Municipal Council ensures the involvement of their political leadership (down to the lowest level), technical staff and constituents, among other stakeholders, in all relevant activities, including the selection of benefitting areas and individuals, procurement and tender awarding, and so on. This inclusive approach to development planning and decision-making positively contributed to the project's success. For example, the community leaders noted that members of their communities voluntarily monitored the progress of the project's construction works in their areas and shared their feedback regarding the speed and quality of construction directly with the municipality staff. This allowed the municipal council to take immediate action when needed on the projects or constructors in question and ensure that public confidence in the municipality and the service providers was maintained.

8.4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Various due diligence practices were effectively taken up by the municipal council as a result of the pilot action. Throughout the duration of the action, Koboko Municipal Council, ACAV and other project stakeholders carried out site visits to verify the quality of past works delivered by prospective contractors before awarding them contracts. In addition, project teams (including engineers from ACAV and Koboko Municipal Council) assessed the progress of construction works before payments were made to contractors. These practices were highlighted by the community leaders, staff from ACAV and Koboko Municipal Council, and other stakeholders as an effective way of engaging competent service providers and ensuring that the beneficiaries got value for money.

However, **the lack of an integrated database or computerised performance management system at the local government level limited the ability of other stakeholders**, especially at the national level, to assess the progress of the project's interventions. The ROM study observed that Koboko Municipal Council could have regularly reported to the Office of the Prime Minister (CRRF Help Desk) and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, who had expressed interest in receiving progress reports on the project interventions. In the future, local authorities directly managing funds for similar interventions could increase efforts to report to relevant structures such as the CRRF Help Desk on their progress and successes, thereby increasing accountability, boosting their visibility and potentially increasing the likelihood of future funding opportunities.

8.5. DATA ON REFUGEES LIVING IN MUNICIPALITIES AND URBAN AREAS

Investment in accurate data and evidence gathering on refugee populations living in urban areas is key to effectively and successfully integrating them into urban development planning. VNG International's 2018 survey on self-settled refugees in Koboko brought the plight of urban refugees living outside Kampala to the fore. This survey was praised by all relevant interviewed stakeholders as a 'game changer' with regard to the conversation around urban refugees in Uganda. The need for accurate and regularly updated evidence on the number of urban refugees hosted in cities and municipalities (including forecasting data to anticipate and respond to likely trends, such as strains on existing resources) has since drawn the attention of civil society, local governments and INGOs.

Currently, Arua city and Koboko municipality are the only two urban areas outside Kampala with documented self-settled refugees, and both councils are advocating for the collection and use of relevant data for inclusive development planning and lobbying for external funding. International and local actors (such as Cities Alliance, JICA, VNG International, WENDA, and IMPACT Initiatives) have taken action on this front in the form of surveys and other data collection initiatives. Moreover, in a positive development, the Uganda national population census scheduled for May 2024 will reportedly include data on refugees. This will mean that for the first time, official government data on refugees in urban areas other than Kampala will be available for local governments to include in their planning. However, regular and highly disaggregated data (in terms of vulnerability, gender, age, origin, skills, etc.) will be needed by the local governments to plan for and carry out targeted responses to the needs of these refugees, particularly with regard to **forecasting changes in population trends and anticipating effects on demand for existing and future resources**. However, the successful collection of such data will require considerable human and financial resources, and study participants from the INGO and private sectors stressed that most local governments will need support in terms of trainings and financial assistance to regularly collect and manage such data.

8.6. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND LEARNING SUPPORT

The technical assistance provided by ACAV is considered by virtually all stakeholders to be one of the main success factors of the action. Attaching technical staff from ACAV to Koboko Municipal Council ensured that that the municipality received consistent and continued support throughout the project period. The technical staff from ACAV and the municipal council worked hand in hand to ensure project delivery, and key informants observed that Koboko Municipal Council staff now have stronger capacities compared to the beginning of the project. This means that the municipal council will be able to work independently to deliver services to the population and sustain the results from the action. The CBOs and municipal council staff noted that the short trainings and one-on-one mentoring support greatly improved their efficiency in financial management and reporting, revenue mobilisation, etc. Moreover, ACAV is part of the Koboko NGO monitoring committee and will continue to provide technical assistance to Koboko and the local CBOs.[75]

The reported success of ACAV's technical assistance in Koboko could be partly attributed to their long history of engagement and good working relationship with the municipal council, which has led ACAV to understand the technical and leadership dynamics of the municipal council, making it easier to for them to effectively coordinate engagement with the various stakeholders and community members. Efforts to replicate the direct support approach elsewhere would benefit from the involvement of technical assistance experts with prior knowledge of, and engagement with, the local authority to be supported.

It should be noted that ACAV's capacity building was only provided to staff directly involved in the project implementation. Given the positive narrative and evidence arising from the project's successes, the municipality staff observed that the project outcomes, especially on capacitating the municipal council, could have been more impactful if the project had extended the technical assistance and learning support to other departments that were not covered under the pilot.

Finally, peer learning events organised such as those organised by the pilot action and the Cities Alliance-led CRRF Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility: Regional Networks and Dialogue project as enabled the municipal staff, sub-granted CBOs and the community leaders to network and exchange ideas. These events offered opportunities for the municipal technical and political leadership, local CBOs and community leaders to exchange ideas and best practices with other municipalities and secondary cities affected by displacement. Local CBO staff affirmed that the forums and learning events enhanced their visibility and knowledge about refugee response and migration management. For instance, the project's final narrative report states that the local CBOs, municipal staff

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[75] KII with implementing partner staff.

and political leaders have gained knowledge on implementing strategies around waste management, greening Koboko town, executing physical development plans amicably with members of the community, revenue mobilisation, and improving the quality of education from these types of events.[76]

8.7. INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

Koboko Municipal Council's approach of targeting marginalised groups, especially refugees, women and people living with disabilities was hailed by the study participants as a best practice. For instance, the inclusion of special provisions in the municipal council's agreements with its contractors to hire refugees as part of their workforce has been hailed as a best practice in breaking down barriers to livelihood opportunities and ensuring refugee integration.[77] Other interventions, such as the construction of a mental health unit in Koboko District Hospital and a trauma and healing centre in Koboko town, are considered positive steps in ensuring community access to mental health services. Other inclusion efforts in project interventions include adaptations aimed at improving the accessibility of health services for people living with physical disabilities.

Picture 19: Youths participating in construction works, Koboko Municipality

However, careful consideration should be given to **cultural dimensions when engaging the marginalised groups in different project interventions.** As previously mentioned in section 6.2.1, the different cultural and economic backgrounds of targeted refugees appear to have played a key role in their involvement in, and the effects of, the project's employment and livelihoods interventions. **Future interventions could** integrate these dimensions into the selection process and when matching beneficiaries to project activities in order to maximise the likelihood of positive outcomes and thereby build more cohesive and self-sustaining communities.

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[76] Koboko Municipal Council, 'EUTF Final Narrative Report', December 2023.
[77] Cities Alliance, 'Uganda: Koboko recognised for best practices in refugee integration', 7 January 2023.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. EXPAND SUPPORT FOR BASIC SERVICES

The EUTF action aimed to addressed Koboko Municipal Council's education and health service delivery needs. The construction, renovation or equipment of health and education facilities significantly improved access to and quality of these services. However, as noted in section 6.1.2, key capacity and infrastructure gaps remain. For instance, the Koboko Mission Hospital, which was supported by the project to construct a modern outpatient department, lacks a proper maternity ward, which hinders the delivery of maternal health services. Other facilities are not properly stocked with drugs, lack necessary health equipment or water supply, and, in some cases, have not been fenced. Similarly, education facilities are burdened by the low number of teachers, lack of electricity and reliable water, and limited latrines, staff housing and equipment. Moreover, the primary schools lack early learning centres or early childhood development and education (ECDE) centres for children under primary school age. These challenges, combined with the fact that the improved services are attracting people from outside the municipality at higher rates, will likely exacerbate pressure on resources and may eventually reverse the gains realised by the action.

To mitigate this risk, the central and local government could increase their budget allocations to these education and health facilities to account for Koboko's refugee population, which has historically not been the case. **If this is not possible or insufficient, the EU or other donors could also allocate more funding to continue supporting these facilities.** Various interventions could be envisioned for this purpose, including:

- Constructing, renovating or equipping more structures (especially multistorey buildings given Koboko's space-constrained urban setting) such as wards, ECDE centres and staff housing;
- Sinking boreholes to increase water supply to facilities and putting up fencing to secure these facilities; or
- Supporting the recruitment and training of additional teachers and other relevant staff.

Selected additional facilities could also be targeted, both within Koboko as well as in neighbouring communities, so that people living in these areas will be less likely to consider that they need to travel to Koboko for satisfactory services.

In addition, **Koboko could seek to conclude formal or informal agreements with neighbouring local authorities (ideally with support from the central government) aimed at establishing an integrated border health system** (i.e. a unified health system that provides universal access to health care services for the population in a cross-border area). This model has been implemented in other cross-border contexts facing similar migration and displacement challenges such as the border area between Brazil, Colombia and Peru. Koboko Municipal Council and the central government could reach out to the national and local governments of neighbouring DRC and South Sudan to assess the feasibility of creating an integrated health service delivery system, possibly co-financed by the three countries, that will allow for universal access to quality and equitable health care services.

Focus box 3: Cross-Border Health Integration in Brazil[78]

The Triple Amazon Border between Brazil, Peru and Colombia is characterised by high levels of movement of people in search of basic services, protection and livelihoods. In response to this challenge, the Federal Government of Brazil rolled out the SIS-Fronteiras project to support municipalities providing healthcare to economic migrants from neighbouring countries. This initiative

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[78] Giane Zupellari Santos-Melo, 'Integration in health: cooperation at triple international border Amazon', 2020. Retrieved here.

aimed to a) enhance healthcare infrastructure and services in border regions, b) address the unique health challenges faced by border communities, and c) support municipalities in managing the influx of migrants and in ensuring that they receive adequate healthcare.

As part of this initiative, the Federal Government of Brazil concluded several cooperation agreements with the federal governments in neighbouring Colombia and Peru to promote an integrated border health system. Moreover, the local governments (regional and municipal level) implemented various strategies to improve health services to the host and migrant populations in Tabatinga municipality in Brazil. Some of these strategies include:

- Informal cooperation agreements between the municipal governments of Tabatinga (Brazil), Leticia (Colombia) and Santa Rosa (Peru), mainly focused on health surveillance (i.e. exchange of health-related information such as disease occurrences or outbreaks in any one of the bordering countries).

- Co-financing of the construction and equipping of health infrastructures with a focus on urgency and emergency care infrastructures.

- Establishing regionalised healthcare networks that bring together healthcare service providers to coordinate service delivery.

Finally, in future interventions conditionalities could be adopted to incentivise ownership and encourage the investment of government resources in the sustainability of the action. These conditionalities should be based on an assessment of eventualities and externalities likely to affect project outcomes if objectives are met (for instance, if the quality of a given service is effectively improved by the intervention, this may attract external users and overextend the service in question). For example, a contractual clause could require a local implementing authority to hire and pay for additional teachers upon the completed construction of new classrooms and teacher accommodation by a donor-funded intervention.

9.2. CONTINUE SUPPORTING LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTHS AND WOMEN

All the beneficiaries of the TVET and IGA interventions implemented under the pilot action found employment or were running businesses in the informal sector by the end of the action. Findings from the research team's field visit to Koboko indicate that livelihood support to youths not only helps to address their economic needs and those of their households, but also contributes to reduced crime rates, improved security and peaceful coexistence.

The EU (through the follow-up programme, SUIDAC) and other donors targeting local governments or secondary cities with livelihood interventions could also consider increasing their investment in feasibility assessments to ensure their relevance to the project's implementation areas. For example, fieldwork conducted by the research team found that pilot action beneficiaries supported to work in trades such as salon and beauty, hospitality, tailoring, mechanics and welding reported more success stories, possibly indicating greater relevance and sustainability of these trades in urban areas, than those supported with horticulture and poultry.

Scaling up livelihood support in the area could also include expanding the age bracket to up to 30 years in alignment with Uganda's National Youth Policy, instead of limiting support to youths under 25 years old, as well as a geographical expansion to other divisions within Koboko district (such as Kuluba, which is a critical entry point into Koboko district from the DRC, and Lobule, which is a formal refugee settlement area).

There is also room to engage financial institutions in the implementation of similar interventions. Despite the progressive refugee policies in Uganda, refugees still face barriers in accessing financial services due to issues related to documentation (which leave them unable to register for mobile money services and open bank accounts), lack of assets to act as collateral for loans, and lack of awareness of the financial services available to them. To ensure the sustainability of planned livelihood interventions, project stakeholders could actively engage financial institutions by advocating for the timely provision of needed documentation and for dedicated support to beneficiaries to access financial services (including opening bank accounts and obtaining business loans).

Finally, for livelihood interventions that exclusively target women, even if men are targeted in parallel, findings from this study suggest that it may be necessary to conduct dedicated sensitisation activities to enhance understanding and engage spouses in supporting their partners' self-reliance. This could be implemented through meetings conducted at the start of the project, whereby spouses are informed of the details and objectives of the support provided, as well as regular consultative meetings conducted throughout the project lifetime whereby men and women discuss progress, challenges and solutions related to the livelihood intervention. To maximise cost effectiveness, these sessions could be combined with or added to other relevant activities in the project workplan. This recommendation aligns with previous calls from refugee and host community women leaders in the region on the need to engage men as allies in the promotion of women's leadership and participation.[79]

9.3. REPLICATE AND EXPAND THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPONENT

Efforts to replicate the direct support approach should include a technical assistance component similar to the one implemented by ACAV in Koboko municipality. This component not only provided accountability and transparency around local government spending, which is critical to ensuring effectiveness and assuring donor confidence, but also strengthened the municipal council's capacity to deliver services. Moreover, one-on-one monitoring and technical assistance (delivered by attaching an ACAV specialist to every department relevant to the project) ensured that the local authority staff and other relevant stakeholders had access to full-time support throughout the implementation of the action.

In view of the funding gaps experienced by local governments, similar interventions could also prioritise building the capacities of local authorities to mobilise resources. For instance, more emphasis could be placed on revenue collection, proposal writing, advocacy and lobbying, as these skills determine the ability of municipalities to fund or co-fund initiatives aimed at sustaining results achieved with EU and other donor funding.

Findings from this study also suggest that the capacity building component of the action could have been more impactful if the scope of individuals and departments receiving technical assistance extended beyond those directly implicated in the project interventions. For instance, the public finance management and accountability trainings were only offered to between one and three staff from each selected department, excluding the majority of staff from capacity building training on critical topics relevant to all. Interviews with the municipal council administration also highlighted that there are still significant capacity gaps in certain areas, and that departments such as the engineering division would greatly benefit from capacity building and technical assistance. To ensure the continuity and transfer of skills and expertise, municipal staff trained during the pilot action could be incentivised and guided to train and mentor other colleagues who did not receive similar trainings. This could also include the development of training materials and guides to benefit current and future staff of the municipal council. Koboko Municipal Council could also include capacity building on public finance

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[79] CECI Uganda, 'Report of the Refugee Women Conference on Women Participation and Leadership in Uganda', December 2023. Available here.

management and other critical areas in their annual budgets and workplans to ensure the continual improvement of staff capacities.

Finally, the sub-granted CBOs also reportedly benefitted from strengthened capacities to respond to community needs thanks to ACAV's technical assistance. ACAV trained the CBOs on various topics (including financial reporting and proposal writing), offered them technical assistance on content development for their awareness raising and capacity building activities, directly supported some of their activities with scheduling and facilitation, and provided overall guidance on quality delivery of the project interventions. As stressed by local CBO staff, continued tailored support to these organisations will help them to continue strengthening their capacities and will likely help to sustain project results. Capacity building areas that reportedly need urgent attention include software-based reporting, resource mobilisation, strategy formulation, protection and communication.

9.4. CONSIDER AND ADVOCATE FOR ALTERNATIVE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Although the implementation of a direct support approach in Koboko is largely considered a success, Koboko Municipal Council experienced numerous challenges with regard to financial reporting of the project funds to the central government (due to conflicting reporting periods and activity timelines) and to seeking approvals for procurements, all of which negatively impacted project implementation. In future, the local implementing authority should (possibly with EU facilitation or support) hold discussions with other relevant authorities and the EU delegation to discuss underlying reporting challenges and agree on aligned financial reporting.

Another critical financial challenge encountered by Koboko Municipal Council is that it was expected to implement the project activities before the final 10% of the final funding disbursement was released, per the EU's standard contractual obligations. This proved extremely difficult for the municipal council given its limited internal resources outside EU funding. The hybrid financing arrangement being considered under SUIDAC, where part of the funding is transferred directly to the local authority per the Koboko model, but another portion is channelled through an INGO, may prove a useful solution as INGOs have access to other core funding that they can draw on to prefinance activities. Another possible option would involve the local authority in question engaging the central government during the contracting phase of the project to advocate for the creation of internal mechanisms to facilitate the allocation during the final year of implementation of an amount equivalent to 10% of the overall budget from a specific municipal budget line. The effectiveness of these approaches, along with any issues that may arise (particularly around planning and coordination between the local authority and the INGO partner), should be carefully monitored under the SUIDAC programme to assess suitability for scaleup or replication.

Other donors seeking to replicate direct support to local governments could also consider embedding a results-based criterion within this model to incentivise performance. Under the pilot action, the EU disbursed funds in full for subsequent reporting periods provided that Koboko Municipal Council had spent more than 70% of the funds meant for the current year's activities and an assessment showed the delivery and quality of implemented activities to be satisfactory. However, for similar interventions in the future, financing conditions could also link funding for the next phase of a project activity to the achievement of clear, pre-defined performance targets. Performance-based financing to local governments in Uganda is already being implemented by interventions such as the Local Government Excellence Fund (jointly supported by the UNCDF and the EU-funded Development Initiative for Northern Uganda programme) and the World Bank-funded Uganda Support to Municipal Development (USMID) programme.

9.5. Support central and local governments with evidence generation and investment in data for self-settled urban refugees

Koboko's success in attracting funding for direct support is partly attributable to Koboko Municipal Council's ability to show that there is a refugee population in Koboko and to concretely demonstrate what exactly the needs of that population are. A survey conducted by VNG in 2018 on the plight of self-settled refugees in Koboko, which was followed by a needs assessment and a perception survey provided information on the population perception of service delivery and inclusive planning in Koboko, existing vulnerabilities of urban refugees and priority areas in terms of service delivery and technical assistance. Findings from these surveys were key to informing the EU's engagement with Koboko and its decision to support the municipality's refugee response. Besides, the Koboko case has demonstrated that proper urban development planning, effectively integrating refugees into these plans and accurately forecasting and anticipating relevant population trends requires robust, accurate and regularly updated evidence and data.

Although the central government has made positive steps in including urban refugees outside Kampala in the May 2024 national population census, it will be necessary to continuously update the demographics of refugees in urban areas far more frequently than national censuses take place. Regular data collection on key characteristics of urban refugee populations (including gender and age disaggregation), their specific vulnerabilities and their potential assets (for example in terms of skills, especially for the youth), and forecasts regarding potential upcoming changes in these numbers will be critical for developing and maintaining a strategic, effective and needs-based local refugee response.

The Office of the Prime Minister could set up refugee desks in secondary cities and urban areas to facilitate the registration of urban refugees and regularly update their population statistics. (Currently refugee desks are only located in settlement areas and in Kampala.) This could be piloted in one location (such as Koboko) and scaled up if successful. Relatedly, local authorities could be supported to regularly carry out surveys aimed at tracking the usage of public facilities in order to forecast if and when usage may exceed capacity. The EU and other donors could consider advocating for and supporting such efforts with financial or technical assistance. Once this is happening effectively, additional support or technical assistance may be needed to integrate the identified needs into their development plans, as ACAV did for KMC.

9.6. Engage the private sector

The private sector actors involved in the pilot action, such as employers, suppliers and financial institutions, all played an important role in the project's implementation, but in most cases could have been more actively engaged by the implementing partners. For example, engaging private sector employers more effectively in TVET and apprenticeships (for instance by consulting with them closely on curriculum design to ensure that skills development programming adequately meets their needs) will help to ensure the employability of trained youths. Such engagement could be coordinated through private sector organisations such as WENDA, which represent and are trusted by private sector players and moreover can contribute their intimate understanding of local socioeconomic dynamics to increase the effectiveness of programming.

Koboko Municipal Council should also continue engaging private employers to ensure that more youths can access apprenticeship and employment opportunities (particularly in the informal sector where most job opportunities are available). For example, the municipal council could regularly organise events that bring together employers and youths. Such events would help to address the general lack of awareness of employment rights (including the right to employ refugees) among employers and the public while simultaneously publicising the availability of concrete employment opportunities.

Local authorities could also form strategic public-private sector partnerships aimed at encouraging private sector players to finance local government projects or directly invest in and provide services in the education and health sectors. For example, the upcoming West Nile Diaspora Convention to be held in August 2024 jointly organised by WENDA and the West Nile Community in the Nordic Region (a diaspora organisation),[80] seeks to showcase West Nile as an investment destination. Koboko Municipal Council and other local governments in the region could develop municipal private sector engagement strategies with the aim of identifying and exploiting such opportunities for partnerships.

9.7. INCLUDE CBOS IN SUPPORT TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Working with CBOs in the implementation of the project's interventions has been highlighted as a good practice that ensures the increased participation of community members, and especially of refugees. In future similar programmes, when contextually relevant, the EU and other donors could support targeted local authorities in facilitating the establishment of refugee associations and involving them in the planning of activities. To implement lessons learned from the Koboko case, CBOs should be involved from the onset of the project to ensure that their opinions and approaches are considered in the project design. In addition, a clearly defined memorandum of understanding between the local CBOs and the lead partners could help to avoid overlapping roles and mandates during the project implementation. In the case of Koboko, the presence of a memorandum of understanding between ACAV, the municipal council and local CBOs enabled each partner to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, which contributed to the successful implementation of the project interventions.

9.8. SENSITISE COMMUNITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

The high level of community involvement in development planning in Koboko was partly attributed to the awareness raising campaigns and events led by the municipal council and the local CBOs. For other local authorities considering replicating the inclusive development approaches practiced in Koboko, community awareness and engagement will be a critical success factor. Similar interventions as those implemented in Koboko should therefore be carefully considered and adapted to the local context, such as using refugee-led CBOs to raise awareness on refugee rights, which in turn builds confidence among and refugees empowers them to identify as refugees and to actively take part in community activities. Awareness raising on local government interventions and collective monitoring of the projects could also be replicated. These activities can help to empower target communities to play an active role in decision making at the local level as well as in the implementation of relevant interventions, thereby increasing accountability and transparency from local authorities directly implementing development grants and improving the effectiveness of donor funding. Moreover, the fundamental approach undertaken by the pilot action positively contributes to conflict prevention and social cohesion as both refugees and host communities benefit from the interventions and are actively involved in the implementation of activities.

9.9. WHEN PLANNING FOR THE INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS, CONSIDER THE ELDERLY

Despite targeted interventions dedicated to the marginalised groups, findings from this study indicate that the elderly members of the community were not adequately targeted by the pilot action. The elderly do not only play a key role in promoting peace and social cohesion, but they are

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[80] WENDA, 'The inaugural West Nile diaspora convention 2024', 2024. Retrieved from here.

also often primary caregivers in contexts such as those found in the pilot action's intervention area. As such, it is recommended that future projects increase efforts to include and target elderly members of society in their interventions. Where possible, the elderly should be involved in the beneficiary selection process, project monitoring and stakeholder meetings and other planning activities. Moreover, **they should also be targeted with livelihood support** (such as trainings on urban farming practices and cash transfers) to improve their self-reliance and increase their ability to support their dependents. Finally, the elderly should be supported to actively participate (and where relevant, play a leadership role) in social cohesion interventions.

10. ANNEXES

10.1. LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Type of stakeholder	Organisation / project involvement	# of people
IP	Koboko Municipal Council (political leadership, project team, communications, education, economic planning and finance departments)	10
IP	ACAV	1
IP	Cities Alliance	1
EU	EU delegation in Uganda	1
EU	EU follow-up (SUIDAC) programme	1
EU member state	Embassy of the Netherlands	1
Funding agency	DANIDA	1
Funding agency	World Bank	1
National Government Agency	Office of the Prime Minister, West Nile – Sub Region	1
Local authority	Arua city council and Koboko District Local Government	4
INGO	Impact Initiatives	1
INGO	VNG international	4
Stakeholder	Community leaders	5
Stakeholder	Religious leaders	3
Private sector organisation	West Nile Development Association	1
Service Providers	Health facility managers	2
Total		**36**

10.2. LIST OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS PARTICIPANTS

Location	Programme activity	Type of beneficiary	Participants
Koboko municipality	TVET and livelihoods	Youth beneficiaries	9
	Construction and equipment of schools, and capacity building	School head teachers and members of management committees	8

	Technical assistance and implementation of livelihood interventions	Local CBO staff	9
Bidibidi refugee settlement	None	Community members (non-project beneficiaries)	6
Lobule refugee settlement	None	Community members (non-project beneficiaries)	6
Total	5 FGDs		38

10.3. LIST OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research aim(s)	Preliminary research questions	Relevant informants	Priority of questions
What are the impacts of the action on the municipality's service delivery, sustainable planning, and coordination?	**Impact on service delivery and sustainable planning:** • How has the situation of access to basic services (such as education, health, etc.) been over the last 5 years? How has it evolved? Has the situation been different for the vulnerable population (e.g., the elderly, refugees, women and girls, people living with disabilities, etc.) and / or intersecting identities? • What do key stakeholders consider to be the main factors driving this change, if any? • How has the involvement of various stakeholders in municipal planning and decision making evolved in the past five years? • What do key stakeholders consider to be the main factors driving this change, if any? • What has the collective impact of EUTF-funded projects in Koboko been on development planning and basic service delivery? • Were there any unintended effects of EUTF-funded activities on development planning, basic service delivery, or other areas (either positive or negative)?	KMC, ACAV and sub-granted local organisations staff Local government actors (Koboko District) Other CSO and CBO (e.g. refugee and host community founded orgs) Beneficiaries	High
	Stakeholder engagement and coordination: • How does the project showcase the municipality as a model for the 'direct support' approach? • What is the perception of political leadership in Koboko on the 'direct support' approach to development programming? How has this changed over time? How has it affected the implementation of the action? Are there	CSO / NGO actors (within and outside Koboko District). Opinion leaders Project documents Donors	High

	any unintended effects of direct support to municipalities on the political leadership (e.g. political gains)? Has there been any change in the level of collaboration between the KMC and other government institutions (such as the central government and Koboko District local government) as a result of the action? Did the programme promote or support multi-level structured dialogue or coordination framework? • Has the action managed to engage decision-makers and external stakeholders (both within and outside KMC)? If yes, how and has there been any change in the level of collaboration between the KMC and these stakeholders as a result of the projects, with particular regards to private sector and civil society engagement? • Were the different vulnerability criteria (age, disability, displacement, gender, etc.) taken into account when engaging stakeholders mentioned above?		
What are some of the key achievements and effects of the project, including on direct beneficiaries and stakeholders, government coordination and implementation, and regional collaboration? *Any good practices and lessons learned from the project that can help guide future programming?*	**Design phase:** • Which stakeholders were involved in designing the project? Were any needs assessments conducted, and if so, how did this inform the intervention? • Did the government contribute to identifying activities, beneficiaries, etc.? • How were various forms of vulnerabilities taken into account into service design? How did the intersecting identities of the target population affect beneficiary selection?	KMC, ACAV and sub granted local organisations staff Other CSOs Beneficiaries	High
	Achievements: • To what extent does direct support to local governments support positive development outcomes and impacts for the targeted communities? Do these outcome and impacts differ depending on vulnerability criteria? • Which components of the project are considered particularly successful? • What are the key achievements of the project? Which components or approaches of the project have helped contribute to these achievements? • To what extent has the programme showcased local authorities at municipal	Project reports KMC, ACAV and sub granted local organisations staff Local government actors (Koboko District) Other CSO and CBO (e.g. refugee and host community founded orgs) Beneficiaries	High

	level as major actor for refugee inclusion programmes? • To what extent has the displacement context in the KMC facilitated the successes highlighted above? • To what extent has the CRRF and refugee policy context in Uganda facilitated the successes highlighted above? • Has the success of the Koboko pilot led to any positive changes in external stakeholder perceptions around targeting municipalities and direct support to local authorities? What are some of the challenges (if any) in Koboko that limited the success of the action?	Donors	
	Value added by TA: • What value if any did ACAV's technical assistance add to the action? If so, in what form (such as in terms of capacity building, coordination, implementation strategy, etc.)? • What worked well and what did not with regards to the technical assistance? What could have been done differently (for example, in terms of which actors should be involved in similar type of interventions, level of support, etc.)?	Project reports KMC and local governments	Medium
Which sustainability mechanisms have been put in place, and which items could be replicated for 'direct support' to other municipalities or local governments?	**Sustainability and best practices:** • Which sustainability and continuity mechanisms were put in place through the project? What is the likelihood that these mechanisms will continue building on the efforts gained through the grant? • In light of the displacement context in Koboko and the challenges above, to what extent is the 'direct support' approach replicable to other municipalities/contexts? • In light of the CRRF and refugee policy context in Uganda, to what extent is the 'direct support' approach replicable to other countries in the region? • Taking the case of KMC, what are some good practices that could be adapted in future programming? Are there other similar / better practices to draw from elsewhere? • What recommendations could be made for future programming taking a 'direct support' approach?	Project reports NCTC staff, including project staff Government and county government actors Other NGO / CSO staff working on P/CVE efforts Beneficiaries INGOs and donors	Medium