

# Selected Highlights on Integrated Approaches to Farm-Based Livelihoods in the Great Lakes Region<sup>1</sup>

The agriculture sector is a common source of livelihood intervention in refugee hosting communities within all six Great Lakes countries. Investment in agriculture creates jobs, builds livelihoods for refugees and hosts, contributes to food security and nutrition, and creates mutual benefits for both host and refugee groups, including the construction of infrastructure (roads and markets), inclusive food systems and strengthened local economies in refugee hosting areas. However, key challenges remain - namely related to creating durable and sustainable agricultural interventions. Over the course of a two-day learning event in May 2021, panelists and government officials from the six Great Lakes countries discussed three key challenges to address and opportunities to support for the extension of farm-based livelihood interventions in forced displacement settings, namely: **i) Legal and policy framework as a foundation for development gains, ii) Market system approaches to agriculture, and iii) Land Access for refugees in displacement settings.** To illustrate these discussions, three case studies from the discussions have been further outlined below.

## Legal and Policy Framework as a Foundation for Development Gains

Prevailing legal and policy framework remains the critical foundation for facilitating refugee self-reliance in displacement and enhance their contribution to local economic development. Within the region, the right to work, rights to mobility and levels of financial inclusion for refugees varies significantly, with some countries granting full access to work without requiring a work permit. Key themes discussed related to legal and policy framework included - how to facilitate decent work in agri-business and how to ensure mutual trust and cohesion between hosts and refugees engaged in farming. The Misizi Marshland project in Rwanda provides a blueprint for how decent work in agriculture can be facilitated in a way that engenders greater cooperation between hosts and forcibly displaced populations and leads to increased advocacy and investment by the government in subsequent farming livelihoods projects.

## Case Study: Rwanda - Misizi Marshland Project

### Key Features Enabling the Misizi Marshland Project



A favourable policy environment in Rwanda that promotes decent work for refugees



Political will to monitor project activities, support beneficiaries, and ensure project sustainability



Private sector engagement via market linkages with the Africa Improved Foods company

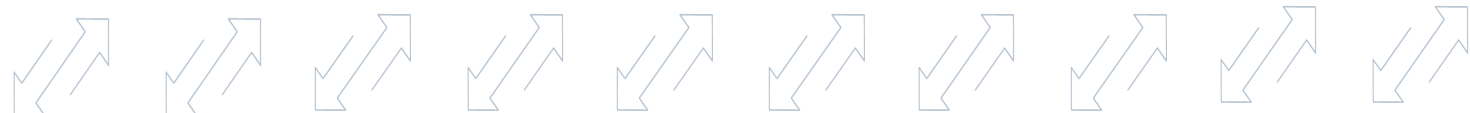


Collaboration with WFP and FAO to utilise expertise in agricultural programming

Food for the Hungry Association Rwanda is implementing two agricultural projects - **Misizi Marshland project and Nyabiheke project.** Both projects are implemented by members of the refugee and host communities, who work together on Misizi Marshland. The projects specifically include **women and youth as beneficiaries, as the project is intended to facilitate decent work for all.** After each harvest, both groups benefit from the agricultural products harvested, as well as the money earned from selling them at the market. A similar project in **Nyabiheke camp** follows the Misizi model of designating land for refugees and host communities to farm together. Prior to implementation, **studies were conducted under the guise of the Ministry of Environment,** to identify an

<sup>1</sup> This document was developed as part of a year-long series of learning events developed jointly by the World Bank, Samuel Hall, and the Rift Valley Institute on development responses to forced displacement with panelists and government officials from the six countries of the Great Lakes region.





environmental management plan assessment.

Misizi marshland was provided by Gisagara District to function as a **cooperative composed of 1,427 Congolese refugees and host community members, who use it to farm maize and harvest and sell products under UNHCR’s management.**<sup>2</sup> In this context, the Gisagara authorities have shown their **political will to monitor activities, support the beneficiaries and ensure the project sustainability.** The project contributes directly to the second Global Compact on Refugees objective of building refugee self-reliance. **Rwanda’s conducive legal framework acts as a foundation to facilitating decent work** - specifically, the Rwandan Refugee Law grants refugees the right to work, freedom of movement and to access documentation. Refugees are also able to own property and enter into contracts, which includes leasing land. This enabled refugees to engage jointly with host community farmers in the agricultural activities. Together, refugee and host farmers produced **101 tons of maize and sold 37 tons to the Africa Improved Foods company** and kept the remaining maize production for household consumption. This enabled farmers to **simultaneously gain income and improve their household food security.**<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the joint cooperative framework enabled refugees to access government agricultural programs, including provision of subsidized agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers) and agricultural extension services, while building social cohesion with members of the host community.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the Misizi project model functioned as an **advocacy tool**, which was used to engage other refugee hosting districts in Rwanda and encourage them to make land available for similar agricultural projects benefiting both refugee and host communities. A subsequent intervention, the **Climate-smart and Market-oriented Agricultural Livelihoods project**, built upon the Misizi marshland project model in response to one of the GRF Pledges. Nyabicwamba marshland was provided by Gatsibo District and Mushishito Marshland by Nyamabage District. District authorities remain involved to ensure the project sustainability.

The GoR - specifically Gisagara, Nyamagabe and Gatsibo districts - made land available, which facilitated access to free community marshlands and subsidized inputs for members of the refugee and host communities. **All three projects are examples of government initiatives where marshlands are freely provided to both refugees and host communities, where they work together, thus simultaneously building livelihoods and community cohesion.** Furthermore, refugees have been included in an agricultural project for joint farming with host communities. Lastly, the GoR has implemented market linkages with livelihood partners for both refugee and host communities, which has led to the project beneficiaries’ increased income and contribution to both local and national development.

However, the GoR highlighted that **challenges remain in implementation** - namely **lack of resources.** In order to overcome challenges, the following measures have been put in place:

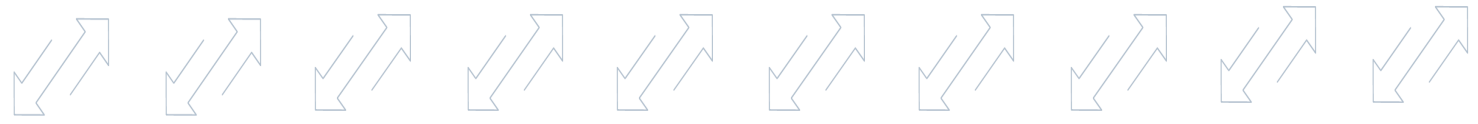
1. **Risk mitigation measures related to weather and climate change** in order to decrease the risks associated with these natural conditions
2. **Support refugees in small-scale and profitable farming** that requires low investments, as well as increased investment in organic farming
3. **Conduct remote trainings** due to COVID-19 preventive measures
4. **Encourage and support refugees in attending local business exhibitions** to build their networks and foster increased engagement with the host community and economy

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2021). Rwanda Country Refugee Response Plan: January – December 2021

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> IKEA Foundation (2019). Growing together in Rwanda. <https://ikeafoundation.org/story/growing-together-in-rwanda/>





## Main Impacts



101 tons of maize produced for personal consumption and sale



37 tons of maize sold to the Africa Improved Foods company



Increased income for both refugee and host community members



Increased food security for hosts and refugees



Facilitated refugee access to government agricultural programmes



Project model and successes used to engage other refugee hosting districts in similar projects

## Market Systems Approaches to Agriculture

Lack of sustainable and durable farm-based livelihood solutions and interventions remains a challenge for forcibly displaced persons and hosts in the region and was one of the key challenges mentioned by participating countries. In order to respond to this challenge, several common financing interventions have been applied in displacement settings to pinpoint **the root causes of market failures**, which include adopting market systems frameworks, establishing cooperatives to access markets, and implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within refugee businesses. The Government of Zambia's (GRZ) Market Systems Framework presents a useful case study on how financing interventions can be operationalised within agricultural-based livelihood interventions within refugee communities.

### Case Study: Zambia - Implementation of a Market Systems Approach

## Key Features of Market Systems Approach



Using Market Systems Approach to analyse root causes of market failures



Use of farmer cooperatives facilitate access to inputs, training and markets



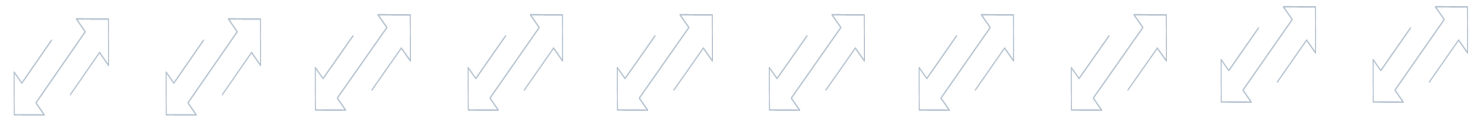
Partnerships with the private sector to facilitate access to markets



Refugee farmers Corporate Social Responsibility used to supplement livelihoods of vulnerable refugees

With support from cooperating partners, the **Market Systems Approach has been promoted to increase access to inputs, improve production and facilitate access to markets - with refugees, former refugees and hosting populations as the production centres**. There are **specific government interventions in the form of subsidies at each stage in the value chain**, which are carried out in collaboration with other stakeholders. The approach aims to give vulnerable but viable farmers - refugees, former refugees, and vulnerable host communities - an advantage within the existing national value chains. The government provides an extension service to production, which includes training, personal agricultural perspectives, and training in post-harvest losses. There is also a coordination component between government, NGOs, local communities and other market players in order to facilitate access to markets. This is exemplified by **rice farmers in Meheba settlement** - the GRZ supplied farmers with fortified rice and technical support in order to raise provincial yields and bolster market competitiveness. One of the farmers' groups - Kalota Cooperative - signed a contract to a local mine food caterer, who purchased over 3 tons of rice produced.





The GRZ identified the following **best practices** from the implementation of its Market Systems Approach: **i) utilizing a Market Systems Analysis (MSA) to analyse root causes of market failures; ii) the organisation of farmers into farmer groups such as cooperatives** to facilitate access to inputs, training and markets; **iii) partnering with the private sector** to facilitate access to markets; and **iv) “Refugee farmers Corporate Social Responsibility”**, where 20 percent of income is given back to supplement livelihoods of vulnerable refugees within settlements.

Key lessons learned from programme implementation include: **i) refugee businesses in the transport, wholesale and retail sectors provide employment opportunities for both refugees and hosts; ii) the challenge to access permits and their associated costs are a deterrent** to employment opportunities for refugees; **iii) MSA supports agri-businesses in identifying and developing viable long term solutions** that can be scaled up; iv) viable and sustainable agri-based livelihoods interventions programming must be based on **needs and skills analyses targeted at the ultimate beneficiaries; v) Inherent skill sets for crop production** positively impact the sustainability of agri-based livelihoods; **vi) produce certification** positively influences competitiveness and profitability of agri-products, such as Meheba rice; and **vii) humanitarian aid creates a dependency syndrome** with some former refugees unable to sustain their livelihood despite targeted support.

Despite the success of the Market Systems Approach, **challenges remain** in implementing sustainable livelihoods for refugees in both Mayukwayukwa and Meheba settlements, particularly regarding **operations and logistics**, as the areas are large with inadequate fuel and transport availability. There is also limited support for communication costs to facilitate usage of online applications for farmer registration within the Zambia Integrated Agriculture Management System (ZIAMS). Additionally, there are limitations with capacity strengthening due to limited resources, materials and tools for training; limited capacity on key issues such as climate change; adequate skills to facilitate agribusiness; and limited capacity to measure production and productivity assessments of refugees, former refugees and host households. Private sector partnerships also remain limited. In order to mitigate these challenges, the **GRZ is working with head farmers and cooperatives for cost effectiveness and addressing key training needs for extension staff and farmers**. The government is also **fostering support linkages from collaborating partners**.

## Key Lessons Learned



Existing skill sets for crop production positively impact the sustainability of agri-based livelihoods for refugees



Access to and cost of permits creates barriers to livelihood for refugees



MSA supports agri-businesses in identifying and developing long term solutions



Needs and skills analyses contribute to sustainable and targeted agri-based livelihoods interventions programming

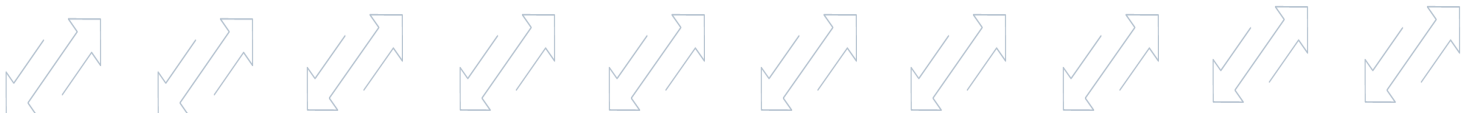


Produce certification positively influences competitiveness and profitability of agri-products for refugees



Some former refugees unable to sustain livelihoods due to aid dependency syndrome





## Land Access for Refugees

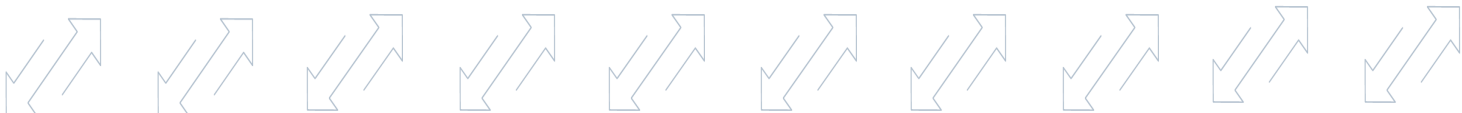
Mechanisms to favour access to land for forcibly displaced persons remain crucial in integrating (and re-integrating) these groups. Many countries in the Great Lakes region grant **land to refugees for cultivation** in camp settings, which decreases reliance and dependency on humanitarian aid and also facilitates refugees' access to local markets. One of the key issues in displacement settings is how this can be facilitated with a **conflict sensitivity lens**, in other words without creating sources of conflict between local host communities and refugees, and instead, to facilitate greater cohesion and cooperation between the two groups. Uganda's progressive land allocation and subsequent interventions on food security and land access provides a useful case study in how land allocation can lead to increased levels of gender protection and food security for refugee and host communities with the help of training and sensitization campaigns.

## Case Study: Uganda - Land Allocation, Gender Protection, and Food Security

The Government of Uganda has instituted one of the more progressive approaches to land allocation for refugees and forcibly displaced persons. However, often, this practice does not result in full food security for all recipients. Two projects led by [HarvestPlus](#) and the [FAO](#) in Uganda have worked to improve this in practice, demonstrating that **land allocation can lead to better gender protection and food security. HarvestPlus' work in northern Uganda has supported over 1,000 households in eight refugee settlements and host communities in Adjumani district.** The intervention targeted improving nutrition and income security by strengthening the supply and delivery networks of virus-resistant seeds. As part of this initiative, 50 gardens were established, which each provided vitamin A rich sweet potato vines to 20 households. Sensitisation campaigns were conducted for beneficiaries on the importance of vitamin A and Iron, in order to encourage beneficiaries to grow and eat the crops. Training on agricultural practices were also conducted, in order to help beneficiaries grow and preserve seeds for future use. Lastly, recipe demonstrations were conducted for households in order to diversify preparation and marketing of the agricultural products provided by the intervention. The AVSI Foundation has also partnered with HarvestPlus in order to supply 2,000 refugees and hosts in Kamwenge district in western Uganda with biofortified crops, in order to increase food security. This support has included capacity building sessions, with HarvestPlus carrying out training for AVSI staff within communities, in order to foster adequate training of refugees and hosts on the production, consumption, and value added of the crops provided.

This links directly to findings by the FAO on food security and resilience for refugee and host communities in northern Uganda, which found that **female-headed households are more entrepreneurial and more likely to attend training sessions and programmes offered within their communities.** Further facilitating their access to markets and inputs can be further supported via sharing market price information widely, investing in local market infrastructure, developing microinsurance and credit products that match their needs, and providing business training to entrepreneurs within the community. Founding women's associations and groups could further aid their integration within local associations within the community. The study also found that most refugee and host communities identified as crop farmers - with secure access to land as a main challenge for refugees and secure access to water as a primary concern. This can be addressed through providing land rights registration services, which facilitates durable pathways to land sharing arrangements in refugee hosting areas in a way that encourages increased agricultural productivity. Additionally, food security programmes need to address existing challenges related to both land and water access in areas of intervention, as well as the potential for conflicts between refugees and hosts.





## Additional Issues and Questions to Think About

### *Savings Groups*

Many of the farm-based livelihood interventions discussed mostly involved smallholder farmers from both refugee and host communities. Many participants discussed the challenges associated with farming in refugee hosting areas, which included depending on rainfall, drought, lack of transportation and infrastructure, and limited access to farming materials and loans. To respond to these challenges, **many farmers in refugee settings have formed savings groups**, such as the [Silekwa savings group](#) formed in Sikwale village in Pemba district in Zambia, which helped farmers purchase farming materials, as well as fund their children's education. The project implemented by Development Aid from People to People (DAPP) and the World Food Programme (WFP), who train member in saving methods, business skills, and entrepreneurship - which has contributed to increased savings for members, who are able to save regularly, borrow from their group's fund, and repay loans with a 10 percent interest rate. Savings groups are a crucial first step in facilitating financial inclusion, involving members in microfinance initiatives engendering secure systems for saving and borrowing amongst more vulnerable populations.

### *Youth Integration within Agricultural Value Chains*

Inclusive value chains are an essential aspect of durable livelihood solutions - especially as youth have different opportunities and face different challenges in comparison to other value chain actors. Targeting youth integration within identified value chains is a crucial step in implementing holistic livelihoods solutions. For further examples of this practice, **see: FAO's Farmer Field Schools**, which include [Youth and Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools \(JFFLs\)](#), which teach vulnerable children and young people life skills, social tools, and problem solving skills, in addition to farming. JFFLs are adapted to local needs and skills, which are incorporated within the curriculum, and are used to select the targeted group. JFFLs have targeted diverse groups, including demobilised child soldiers and combatants in South Sudan and Sudan; refugee and IDP youth in Kenya, Uganda, and Mali; and young migrants in Tunisia. The methodology has also been applied in areas of protracted crises and conflict. JFFL skill topics include youth employment and migration, green jobs, and agribusiness, and target young people up to age 35. An additional example of this practice is the [EU Farm to Fork](#) strategy as part of the Green Deal, which aims to make food systems equitable and sustainable, as well as attract young farmers.

### *Land Reforms*

As evidenced above, many countries in the Great Lakes region grant land or designate plots for refugees in order to encourage cultivation in camp settings to bolster self-sufficiency. However, in some countries this presents challenges - namely balancing land access for cultivation and land designated for industrial exploitation. Although this issue is often viewed as national in scope, the regional implications within the Great Lakes countries due to the movement of populations and their interrelations with host populations. For further examples of land reforms, **see: the DRC's recent efforts to reform land laws**. Balance is at the heart of the reforms - namely how to protect local populations via nature conservation and access to land with mining rights. The process is designed to prevent further displacement of communities to make way for mining activities, as current laws give individuals and companies with mining rights precedence over land rights. Environmental issues and nature conservation are a key consideration in relation to the right to exploit the land for livelihoods. While the reforms are underway, there are success stories in civil society, such as hiring local people as park workers and effective guardians of the park. This has encouraged residents to move away from exploitative practices, such as hunting, and towards becoming tourist guides. Their incomes thus paid for farming activities and contributed to the social and economic advancement of their communities.

