trickleUP

SELF-RELIANCE IN DISPLACED CONTEXTS

A Trickle Up Learning Event

OVERVIEW

On May 2-4, 2023, Trickle Up convened a learning event to facilitate discussion and knowledge exchange on technical and thematic topics related to designing and implementing social and economic inclusion programming based on the Graduation Approach in East Africa. During the first two days of the event, Trickle Up invited implementing partners to share learning and experiences from three projects that are delivered with technical assistance from Trickle Up: Graduating to Resilience, implemented by AVSI Foundation; Building Self Reliance and Resilience in the West Nile, implemented by DRC Uganda and CEFORD; and the Kakuma Graduation Project, implemented by NRC Kenya.

The final day was an opportunity to share learnings and engage with a larger group of donors, partners, researchers, and peers committed to addressing extreme poverty in contexts of displacement.

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

COACHING
Participants repeatedly confirm that coaching support is a key factor in their progress. Both individual and group coaching are effective to set household-level goals, assess participant progress, link participants to relevant referral services, and reinforce key training messages. Recruiting capable coaches can be challenging, but tailoring the recruitment process to the displacement context while identifying key characteristics of previously successful coaches supports the extensive training provided to build a roster of qualified coaches, directly supporting project success.

DIGITAL LITERACY & DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
Increasing digital literacy and access to digital technology strengthens programs and contributes to improved outcomes for households. Training participants on the use of digital technology and providing access to digital tools like cell phones, mobile money, and coaching videos helps increase access to support and resources, gain market information, manage household incomes, and reinforce key messages. Digital tools are not a replacement for in-person coaching and training but provide supplemental support that effectively contributes to increased resilience. Projects should tailor their use of digital tools to align with budget constraints and the local context.

PARTICIPANT TARGETING
Participant targeting is an important step to understand the specific characteristics of extreme poverty in the local context and determines who can benefit the most. Across projects, the targeting process is participatory and multistep, involving local community leaders. The projects define context-specific poverty characteristics collectively, enabling filtering of households in the area. Targeting is time and resource-intensive, but is necessary to ensure transparency in participant selection, gain community buy-in, and ensure projects target motivated participants who require holistic support from Graduation projects.

LOCALIZATION
Localization of programming presents opportunities to further tailor Graduation programs to their context, increase sustainability, and scale impact. INGO efforts to strengthen local capacity and enable local leadership and implementation of graduation programs are still relatively new. Ongoing technical assistance is key to building the capacity of local organizations, improving the effectiveness of programs, and supporting infrastructure for future local design and implementation. As the sector continues to prioritize localization, there will be further opportunities to gather information on successful strategies and develop shared learnings about mapping and developing local partners.

INTEGRATING CLIMATE RESILIENCE
People affected by displacement in East Africa are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. When assessing local context, the projects also assessed local markets to identify sustainable livelihood options, trained participants on climate-smart agricultural practices, facilitated household nutrition gardens for self-sustained food security, and raised household awareness on environmental issues. Although many in displaced contexts may view their situation as temporary, the projects sensitized participants to long-term environmental sustainability, referring to project activities as well as a history of climate-smart action in refugee settlements by previous refugees and residents.

INTEGRATING PROTECTION
Graduation programming can address or mitigate protection risks that are commonly faced by people experiencing displacement. Examples from these projects include integrating interpersonal group therapy, child protection, gender-based violence prevention, legal and rights education, and community-based protection linkages. In addition to staff training, reinforcing protection referrals and linkages through programs builds the protection ecosystem in displaced contexts. Projects also proactively engaged male household members in coaching and training to reduce risk of inequality within the household and encourage behavior change.

Trickle Up will develop thematic briefs on several of these topics in the coming months.

NEXT STEPS
Toward Building Self-Reliance in Displaced Contexts

Graduation programs present an opportunity to increase self-reliance for people experiencing displacement and the communities that host them. The following are priorities identified by implementing partners and key stakeholders for the future of Graduation in displaced contexts:

Build consensus around definitions of Graduation and resilience while measuring in context-relevant ways.
Developing these definitions and metrics will enable coordination with the joint UNHCR-WFP strategy to build self-reliance of refugee households so they do not have to be dependant on food assistance.

Test and report best practices of localization as it continues to develop.
Localization efforts are still relatively nascent, and it is important for INGOs and other international organizations to identify processes to work effectively with local partners to prioritize local expertise and support the sustainability of programming.

Reinforce the evidence base around implementing Graduation at scale.
The evidence around implementing Graduation programs at scale is still lacking, especially given Graduation's often resource and time-intensive program elements. Building the evidence base is critical for implementers to make the funding case for cost-effective programs to donors, demonstrating that the up-front investment pays off in the long-term. As humanitarian situations become increasingly protracted, Graduation offers a pathway to self-reliance, but the path to scaling this impact still requires testing. Future research can deepen the learnings gathered from existing studies that test different adaptations of the Graduation approach to demonstrate impact and cost effectiveness at scale.

Thank you to all our partners and peers who attended this event and contributed their learnings and knowledge from implementing social and economic inclusion programs in displaced contexts.

In addition to representatives of the three projects who participated in Days 1 and 2, Day 3 invitees included representatives of the following implementing organizations: BRAC, World Vision, Village Enterprise, Caritas Switzerland, Give Directly; UN agencies including UNHCR and WFP; the following donors: United States Agency for International Development, British High Commission - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the European Commission; research and learning organizations including Innovations for Poverty Action, U-Learn, Refugee Led Research Hub, RefugePoint, and Roskilde University; and the following agencies in the Government of Uganda: the Intergovernmental Authority on Displacement, the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, and the Office of the Prime Minister.

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To learn more about Trickle Up's work and the Refugee Affairs team, please email Shoshana Hecker, Senior Director of Refugee Affairs at shecker@trickleup.org.

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