

COACHING

Experiences from Graduation Projects in Displaced Contexts



Graduating to Resilience

Kamwenge, Uganda

On May 2-4, 2023, Trickle Up convened partners implementing the Graduation Approach and the Graduation community of practice to share experiences working in displaced contexts in Uganda and Kenya. During the event, representatives from three Graduation projects discussed successes, challenges, and key learning related to implementing Graduation programming. One of the main areas of discussion was designing and implementing the coaching component in each project context. The three projects are the Graduating to Resilience Activity, implemented by AVSI Foundation Uganda in consortium with Trickle Up and American Institutes for Research (AIR); Building Self Reliance and Resilience in the West Nile, implemented by Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Uganda, Trickle Up and CEFORD; and the Kakuma Graduation Project, implemented by Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Kenya with technical assistance from Trickle Up.

Role of Coaching in Graduation

Coaching is centered on the relationship between the coach and participant. Coaches support and motivate Graduation participants to use their existing knowledge and skills to achieve goals they define with their households. Project teams highlight the integral role of coaching to ensure participants receive personalized support, build their self-reliance and advance along a trajectory out of poverty. The coaching relationship strengthens other Graduation program components by supporting participants to make progress toward their livelihoods, savings, and overall household well-being.

Key Learning from Project Experience

1. Project teams must identify coaching models that are adapted to participant needs and project resources.



Group coaching and individual coaching are both effective modes of delivering coaching to participants. The Building Self Reliance and Resilience in the West Nile and the Kakuma Graduation projects implement individual household coaching where each coach is responsible for roughly 25 participants. The 'Graduating to Resilience' Activity has introduced a group coaching model in the second cohort of participants. In the group model, coaches work with groups of 25 participants, coupled with individual household touchpoints to discuss more sensitive topics. The group coaching model was refined in the

second phase of the randomized controlled trial from the first cohort, which found that individual and group coaching were similarly effective, but group coaching was more cost-effective. Both models offer differing benefits: group coaching encourages peer-to-peer learning and fosters group solidarity while individual coaching allows coaches to further tailor their approach to the household and address sensitive issues.

Coaching models can also be adapted by pairing coaches with specialized trainers who focus on building participants' technical and business skills. Both 'Graduating to Resilience' and 'Building Self Reliance and Resilience in the West Nile' pair coaches with community-based trainers or facilitators with business and technical expertise in the participants' chosen livelihoods. This model is more resource-intensive, but it ensures participants can access technical guidance, allowing coaches to focus on supporting participants' Graduation progress and skill building in other areas. Coaching can also be strengthened by incorporating digital tools. 'Graduating to Resilience' developed animated coaching videos to reinforce key training messages on participants' mobile devices.

2. Project teams designate the size of coaching caseloads based on what is feasible in the project context while giving coaches sufficient time to plan strategies, meet with their supervisors, and seek support when needed.

When setting coaching caseloads, project teams must consider a variety of factors including the other responsibilities assigned to coaches and the time required to travel between households or coaching visits. 'Building Self Reliance and Resilience in the West Nile' and the 'Kakuma Graduation Project' both assign caseloads of approximately 25 participants per coach. 'Graduating to Resilience,' which uses a group coaching model, assigns each coach to 4 groups. Each group is comprised of 25 participants, so the coach is responsible for 100 participants. This difference in caseload is feasible because coaching is delivered in groups and each coach is paired with a community-based trainer who follows and supports the same groups and participants (providing more specialized business-related support).

3. By involving other household members in the coaching process, coaches address potential sources of conflict and ensure participants are supported by their households.

While Graduation projects select a primary participant within in each household, usually a woman or youth, project experience demonstrates the importance of involving spouses and other household members in the coaching process woman or youth, project experience demonstrates the importance of involving spouses and other household members in the coaching process to sensitize them to the project and gain their commitment to helping the primary participant work toward goals for their households. As participants work toward goals to build sustainable livelihoods and improve the well-being of their households it is important other household members both understand and support these goals. Coaching takes place at the household level in all three projects. While coaches work with individual participants, it has proven critical to engage other household members who may not initially support the primary participant's involvement to address their concerns and share firsthand information about the project. Project teams have also introduced social contracts between coaches and participants to clarify the relationship and commitment to coaching. These contracts have been extended to other household members to promote household engagement and support the primary participant in the coaching process. Coaches also actively invite household members to participate in coaching sessions or visits (depending on the coaching model) and encourage participants to share what they learn.



"I've been working in livelihoods for over 10 years. What is unique with the Graduation Approach is the aspect of **coaching** and addressing the time needed for **mindset change**.

CEFORD Livelihoods Technical Lead

4. Developing a structured coaching curriculum tailored to the project context is essential for effective coaching.

By using a guided coaching curriculum developed by project teams with support from Trickle Up, coaches understand what content to deliver and how to sequence different topics. This also ensures that all participants receive the same coaching content. Across projects, the coaching curriculum guides coaches to work with participants to set goals and outline action plans to achieve them. User-friendly coaching tools like a self-assessment tool and a visual progress map designed for participants to use and keep with their households encourage participants to take ownership of their goals and remember the steps they identified to reach them. Project teams can also add coaching topics to respond to specific needs among participants. For example, 'Graduating to Resilience' integrated coaching topics related to nutrition and gender in response to local concerns about both subjects.



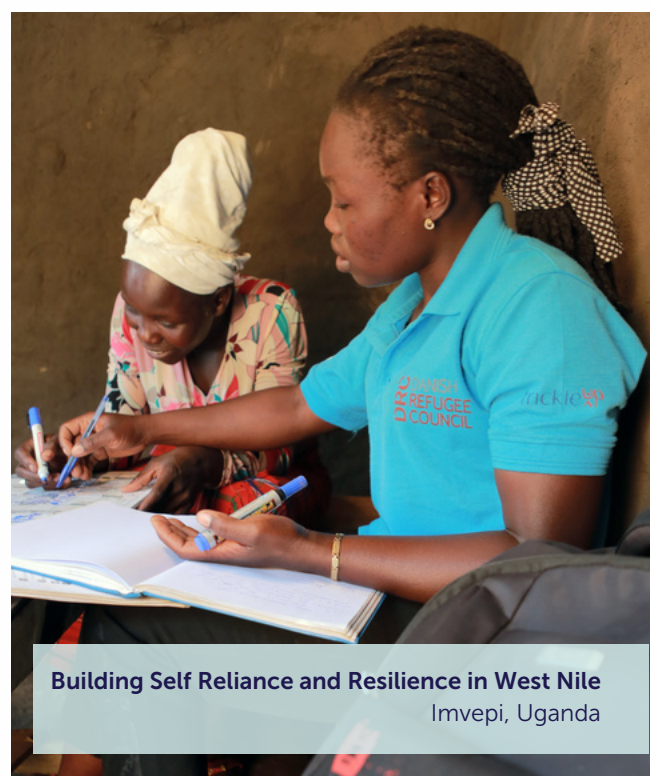
Kakuma Graduation Project
Kakuma, Kenya

5. Recruiting committed and quality coaches can be a challenge, so successful recruitment processes prioritize interpersonal communication skills, understanding of the local context, and motivation.

Coaches provide cross-cutting support that touches different Graduation program components. Project teams have found that it is ideal to recruit coaches who have diverse experience in livelihood development, financial inclusion, community development, and experience working with people living in extreme poverty. It can be difficult for project teams to find candidates who match all these desired skills and experience, but they identified the most important attributes for a coach. These attributes include the ability to gain the trust of participants, interpersonal communication skills, motivation for the role, ability to motivate others, respect for privacy, awareness of social and community dynamics, and knowledge of the local poverty context. Additional skills can also be built through robust coach training and supervision. It is also recommended to recruit coaches who come from similar backgrounds as participants, including language and cultural practices, particularly when working in displaced contexts, so they can relate to participants' experiences.

6. Coaches also need robust training and capacity building to carry out the various responsibilities of their role.

Coach training should cover the Graduation Approach, the coaching curriculum, data collection, and other key topics specific to the location or target participants, such as food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, and health and wellbeing. In addition to the initial training coaches receive, they must also receive ongoing capacity building to reinforce their skills as well as opportunities to participate in technical and business training sessions. Coaches are also able to improve and modify their approach through regular feedback and guidance from supervisors during regular check-in meetings, shadowing of coaching visits, and as needed for support. By recruiting and training coaches from project areas, project teams can ensure that the knowledge and skills gained by coaches remain in the community and provide additional social safety nets.



Building Self Reliance and Resilience in West Nile
Imvepi, Uganda

7. Project teams must plan for turnover and maintain a pool of coaches throughout the project duration.

Graduation projects often experience challenges in retaining coaches due to the demanding and time-bound nature of the role. Some Graduation projects mitigate this challenge by training a larger pool of candidates and retaining them to fill in when needed. In refugee camp settings, the challenge of coach retention is often more pronounced because coaches may resettle in other locations. Local regulations may also restrict the formal hiring of refugee coaches. For example, in the 'Kakuma Graduation Project,' refugees do not have the legal right to work; therefore, the project team emphasizes building transferrable skills to support the professional development of coaches who cannot receive a salary.

Impact of Coaching on Participant Outcomes

Project teams, coaches, and participants all highlight the critical influence of coaching in enabling participants to build self-reliance.

Coaches motivate participants to actively engage in project activities, apply the skills they gain to address immediate and future challenges, and make progress toward their goals. Across Graduation projects, participants have stated that coaching has been critical to their progress. AVSI's 'Graduating to Resilience' Activity found that 97% of participants considered coaching beneficial and relevant to addressing household needs and believed they improved their skills through coaching.



Susan and Jane are a participant-coach duo from South Sudan living in Imvepi Refugee Settlement in Western Uganda.

Jane showed me how to generate income. [She] has showed us what we are capable of.

Susan Amani | Participant



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I feel so excited because I know that she has done something that can help her family. I love my work so much because I am also getting skills from it.

Jane Nameka | Coach

Looking Forward

The implementation of these three Graduation projects in East Africa reinforces the idea that coaching is a valuable investment and a key to success for building self-reliance. A robust coaching component is particularly important in programs that target vulnerable people and people affected by displacement to ensure participants receive the personalized support they need to succeed. Project experience also demonstrates that coaching is most effective when the coaching model is adapted to the project context and the coaching curriculum is contextualized for participants' needs. To continue strengthening Graduation programming, the community of practice must continue testing different coaching models and share learnings on adaptations for cost-effectiveness and ease of implementation. Such strategies include incorporating other digital tools and using different group coaching models. As many Graduation implementers look to scale their programming, it will be important continue exploring strategies to ensure delivery of high-quality coaching at scale.

Trickle Up Technical Support for Coaching

Informed by Trickle Up's global experience and adapted to different project contexts, Trickle Up works with partners to design and implement structured coaching processes. At the design phase, Trickle Up guides partners to develop a coaching profile, determine caseloads, and design coach supervision tools. Trickle Up offers support during the recruitment process to select candidates with the skills and experience to be effective coaches. Trickle Up also works with partners to develop structured coaching curricula and contextualized coaching tools, including coaching guides for coaches and tools that participants can use to define their goals and track their progress. During implementation, Trickle Up trains coaches and supervisors and offers periodic refresher trainings to continuously strengthen coaches' skills as the process evolves.



Building Self Reliance and Resilience in West Nile
Imvepi, Uganda

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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