

Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI) Contributions to pillar 2 of the JLIRP

Enabling entrepreneurial led development and market growth pillar system

The Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI) was a four-year initiative (2019-2022) financed by Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the Uganda Programme for Sustainable and Inclusive Development of the Economy (UPSIDE).

- NURI aimed to enhance the resilience and equitable economic development in supported areas of Northern Uganda, including for refugees and refugee-hosting communities.
- NURI was implemented in 13 districts in Northern Uganda, working in three areas: 1) Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA); 2) Rural Infrastructure (RI); and 3) Water Resources Management (WRM).

NURI contributed to two pillars in the Government of Uganda's Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (JLIRP). Ahead of the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, a round-table will be organised to discuss sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance in the Uganda refugee response in relation to the JLIRP. This 2-pager demonstrates relevant approaches and lessons from the NURI programme relating to Pillar 2. A separate 2-pager summarizes contributions relating to Pillar 3.



Pillar 2: Enabling entrepreneurial led development and market growth pillar system

The Rural Infrastructure component aims to improve refugee and host community access to input and output markets and services through improvements to agriculture-related infrastructure, particularly community access roads (778 km) and markets (12). A labour-intensive Cash-for-Work (CfW) approach was used to implement activities, offering opportunities for refugees and hosts to come together for planning and user-groups, as well as earning income. Through its implementing partner, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), NURI piloted, tested, and adapted resilience design (RD) approaches to build climate-smart rural infrastructure. This included testing and introducing water drainage from roads that feed into production, including permaculture garden demonstrations, and the introduction of Food Forests to replace the woodlots established in earlier programmes. Food Forests included a range of tree species and other plants, established in such a way as to copy the growth of natural forests. The improvement of local markets included, for example, improved security and general facilities at the Point J market in the newly created Terego District, which is an economic hub for both communities.

NURI worked with Parish Development Committees (PDCs), including local leaders and representatives of communities, to revalidate Parish Development Plans and prioritize projects suitable for implementation through labour-based approaches (community access roads, markets, water ponds, spring protection, food forests). Identified projects went through technical screening, and investment plans were developed approved by districts. Community groups made up of refugees and hosts (58% youth) were formed, trained and provided with tools. These groups participated in the implementation of 1,504 projects. Eighty-six percent of stakeholders report a reduction in time and/or cost of transporting goods to a marketplace.

The WRM component focused on water in the landscape in micro-catchments, selected by Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), including several that covered refugee settlements. The aim was to enhance the resilience of agricultural-related water infrastructure (physical and natural) in eight WRM micro-catchments, based on plans developed by the Upper Nile Water Management Zone (UNWMZ) under the MWE. Using the same CfW approach described above, 435 WRM infrastructure projects were implemented. There were seven types of projects, with food forests counting for more than half (279), followed by spring protection, water ponds, green roads for water, soil and water conservation, a valley tank, and a gravity flow scheme. New resilience design approaches were tested and adapted, such as the green roads for water concept, where run-off from roads was channelled into productive activities.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from the NURI Rural Infrastructure and WRM activities relating to JLIRP Pillar 2 are:

1. Investing in market infrastructure close to refugee settlements gives opportunities for income generation from household production and strengthens interaction between refugees and hosts.
2. In CfW activities where refugees and hosts are in mixed groups the dynamics of refugee life needs to be considered – i.e., distribution days and fluctuating numbers.
3. Plans for community maintenance of infrastructure through user-groups needs to take into account the type of support available (e.g., from UNHCR) in settlement areas vs non-settlement areas.
4. Resilience design in rural infrastructure activities offers greater sustainability of infrastructure investments in the face of climate change but requires substantial planning and financial resources.
5. Community and local government participation in dialogue meetings prior to the start of infrastructure activities minimises land conflicts and complications during implementation.

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