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Building resilience in the humanitarian-development nexus:

The Community Flood Resilience Project, Kakuma, Kenya

Summary

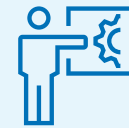
- COFREP was implemented in line with a significant shift in Kakuma, from humanitarian support to a comprehensive development approach – part of a global shift in the humanitarian sector towards a more integrated approach to supporting sustainable livelihoods. It provides critical learning for consortium partners and others operating in the area on how and why to integrate interventions in support of this shift.
- Different interventions, designed to i. reduce floods, ii. relieve the effects of drought conditions; and iii. boost livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries, are layered within COFREP. Interactions between these interventions strengthen each other, offering a holistic response to climatic risks and opportunities and supporting progress towards resilient livelihoods for COFREP beneficiaries.
- COFREP works through local systems, aligns with existing plans and policy and engages with institutions in the area, generating potential for local ownership, sustainability and broader learning.
- Activities external to COFREP integrate with and build on COFREP activities – offering additional intervention layers that can support resilience building. These include livelihood, market development and peace building activities.
- COFREP appears to be unique in its efforts to address flash floods, and to transform associated risks into opportunities.



46,135 beneficiaries



30,737 people receiving climate information; (75% female; 25% male)



722 people trained (67% female; 33% male)



331 people provided with farming inputs



2 government agreements signed



5 CMDRR committees established

Introduction

The Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) aims to build resilience, globally, by working with multiple stakeholders to trigger rapid transformation in resilience investment, knowledge, policy and innovation. At ground level, the GRP has delivered two challenge rounds, supporting 21 consortia to deliver resilience projects in vulnerable contexts across Africa and Asia.

The Water Window challenge round, funded by Z Zurich Foundation, supports innovative solutions to flood related issues such as the Community Flood Resilience Project (COFREP), delivered by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Lotus Kenya Action for Development Organization (LOKADO). COFREP sought to reduce risks from flash floods in Kakuma, Kenya, while simultaneously harnessing opportunities of the flood waters to support vulnerable communities to thrive (DRC, 2017a). Delivered in a climate and conflict sensitive context, COFREP offers lessons on resilience programming at the frontier of the humanitarian and development nexus.

This case study is for a broad audience of practitioners and decision-makers working in the resilience area. It explores how the layering of interventions works, in this context, to support vulnerable¹ populations. While the outcomes of the project are not explored, this case study looks at the resilience approach taken in COFREP and its significance within the context of implementation. It is based on data collected during a week-long field visit in Kakuma, involving formal interviews and group discussions with consortium partners, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders involved in the project, as well as a series of site visits.

COFREP layered interventions to reduce risks posed by flash floods, while simultaneously harnessing the flood waters to support vulnerable communities to thrive

Project location and context

Kakuma is located in Turkana County, North West Kenya (see Figure 1). It has received international attention since 1991, when a camp was established there to host refugees fleeing from conflict from nearby countries.

Figure 1. Location of Kakuma within Kenya




Pastoralism is the predominant livelihood activity in the area, with 70% pastoralism and 22% agro-pastoralism reported for Turkana West (UNHCR, 2017). Small-scale farming activities are practiced at household level, with crops such as sorghum, millet, maize and kale being produced (DRC, 2017b). The refugee camps have had an impact on local livelihoods and the economy (UNHCR, 2017). Many of the refugees come from agricultural communities and they have introduced agricultural skills to the host community, and also provide a market for the host community crops (UNHCR, 2017).

An arid and semi-arid area, Turkana is prone to severe drought (DRC, 2017a; DRC, 2017b). These droughts lead to loss of livestock, severely affecting pastoralist livelihoods and leading to famine (DRC, 2017a). It leaves the ground too dry to absorb rains that come (DRC, 2018).

As such, flooding also represents a severe climatic risk in the area. Heavy rains typically occur twice annually, between April and July, and October and November (DRC, 2017b). While rainfall durations can be brief, they often come through violent storms, which lead to flash floods. In parts of Turkana, flash floods also result from rainfall received from higher mountains and hills in neighbouring Uganda (DRC, 2017b).

These floods restrict movement, destroy property and increase risk of disease. One community member explained:

“...when we experience heavy rains it really affects our lives – flood water washes away households, also animals and children and the old are washed away by this water; houses and structures are destroyed; farms are also washed away” (Host community member).



“ When we experience heavy rains it really affects our lives – flood water washes away households, also animals and children and the old are washed away by this water”

Host community member

Changing the dynamic: Shifting to comprehensive solutions in humanitarian assistance

Humanitarian support in Kakuma

Kakuma has received many years of humanitarian support for both the refugee and the host community, from the Government of Kenya and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (DRC, 2018). However, this assistance has created a 'dependency mindset' among both host and refugee communities in the area (UNHCR, 2017). As such, it fails to produce sustainable solutions for Kakuma's communities, and instead increases their vulnerability by inadvertently encouraging reliance on handouts. One interviewee explained:

“The humanitarian approach was – who can fund what – and then people received.”
(UNHCR interviewee)

A corresponding lack of coordination and integration between different agencies has led to a duplication of support as opposed to a comprehensive system of support for recipients.

Shifts to integrated development

In recognition of these issues, assistance is shifting from a traditional humanitarian response, towards a development oriented and integrated approach. As a first step, UNHCR increased coordination between development agencies, by allocating specific responsibilities. However, an emphasis on service provision over sustainable livelihoods or community empowerment remained. Since 2016, UNHCR and the Kenyan Government have introduced a shift towards socio-economic integration between host and refugee communities in Kakuma, via improved livelihood and economic opportunities.

This was established through the Kalobeyei Integrated Social and Economic Development Programme (KISEDPP) (2016 - 2030) (UNHCR, n.d.), and reinforced through the Kakuma Integrated Livelihood Strategy 2017-2019 (UNHCR, 2017).

These represent a significant shift from humanitarian support to a comprehensive development approach, reflecting a global shift in the humanitarian sector towards a more integrated approach to supporting sustainable livelihoods, as laid out in the UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods, 2014-2018 (UNHCR, 2014).

COFREP delivered in this shifting context, offering a collaborative and sustainable approach that was new to its delivering partners. It provides learning on delivering an integrated approach with potential to support sustainable outcomes.

Building Resilience in COFREP

COFREP sought to build the resilience of the refugee and, primarily, the host community, by i. reducing floods, ii. relieving the effect of drought conditions; and iii. adding further value by boosting livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries, essentially creating opportunities to thrive within a challenging environment.

To do this, the three consortium partners collaborated to scale and build on their existing activities, by layering them to strengthen the potential of individual interventions and offer a comprehensive approach to supporting resilience among their target beneficiaries. The collaboration extends beyond the consortium to local stakeholders, including community and government stakeholders, with activities delivered through local systems to encourage ownership and sustainable outcomes. What results is a set of interdependent activities that interact to respond to multiple problems, in so addressing a complex mesh of local issues with an intertwined set of solutions:

“...you need a number of solutions for one problem, and, at the same time, one solution should address many problems” (DRC Kakuma interviewee).

Working as a consortium

The collaboration under COFREP saw three organizations already operating in the area coming together to deliver interventions based on their knowledge and experience in an integrated way. This added value to each activity by forming a more comprehensive whole.

Each consortium member brought additional skills and experiences to the project. For example, NRC and DRC both have experience supporting refugees, while LOKADO brought local contextual knowledge and offered an entry point to the host community. The consortium members reflected positively on this experience and highlighted ongoing collaboration beyond the scope of COFREP to enable them to support one another with ongoing activities. They now have a better understanding of what each member does, share their knowledge and support each other.

“The design of the consortium means we have been maximizing what we are doing, and now we can borrow things and share information on thematic areas, so we can ask DRC and NRC for information and connections – we can also minimise DRC and NRC’s time for their activities – we take information to the right partner and then results are delivered” (LOKADO interviewee).

In this way COFREP has triggered an organizational shift towards ongoing collaboration. It has also raised understanding of resilience. A consortium partner explained:

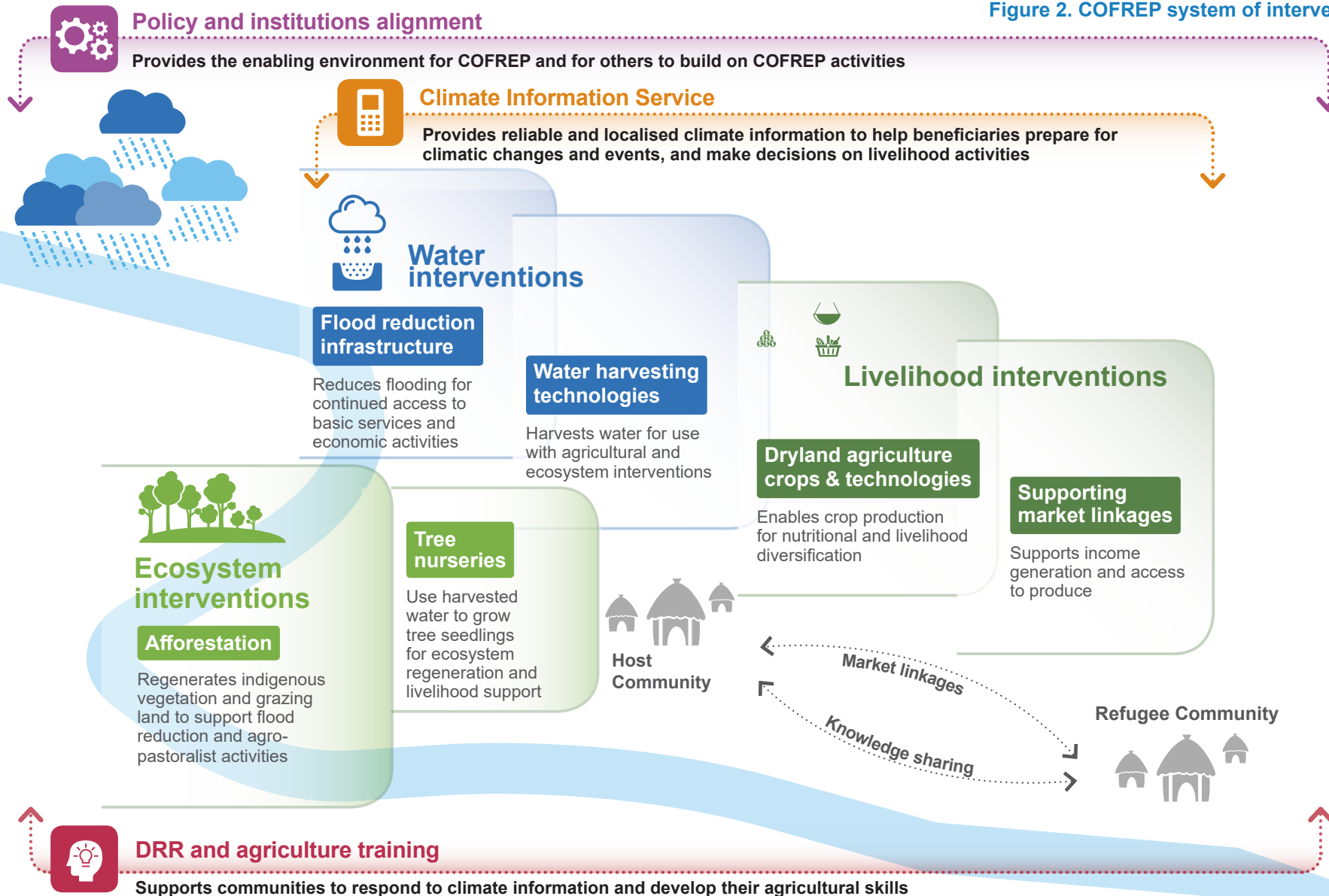
“Partners did not understand what resilience was all about. DRC brought people in to help with this. Going forward it would be good to get all staff involved in training on resilience” (NRC interviewee).

One consortium member explained the additional benefit of this in raising their profile among other stakeholders, highlighting that the consortium had received more attention from the government, and appeals to donors by providing the opportunity to spread risk.

Layering interventions for community flood resilience

Within COFREP, interventions were layered to build resilience. First, the central consortium activities, delivered directly by DRC, NRC and LOKADO, were layered to support and strengthen one another. Building into this system, are activities, delivered by government and private sector stakeholders, that provide additional layers of support to COFREP aims.

Figure 2. COFREP system of interventions



Layering consortium activities

DRC, NRC and LOKADO operated in Kakuma before COFREP, delivering livelihoods, water and sanitation, and environmental conservation activities, respectively (DRC, 2017a). In COFREP, they layered water, ecosystem and livelihood interventions to build resilience among host and refugee beneficiaries.



Water interventions

Water interventions are the basis of COFREP's resilience approach and represent the first layer of interventions. They were designed both to reduce flooding during rains and to provide critical support to livelihood and ecosystem interventions. NRC constructed infrastructure for flood reduction, namely a check dam and a large water pan, just upstream of the host community, to reduce the volume of water flowing off the river and reaching the host community, and subsequently the refugee community. Flood reduction allows continued movement during rainy periods, enabling continued access to basic services and economic activities (DRC, 2017c). By relieving the extent of flooding, people can continue to engage in market activities.

These interventions also harvest flood water, enabling communities to feed livestock and crops (DRC, 2018). The water pan holds 20 million liters of water (DRC interview) that will be made accessible to communities to use for agriculture, livestock feeding and other needs. Small scale water infrastructure, such as water channels, serve to reduce waterlogging and channel water to the crops. In this way, the project transformed the risk of flood into an opportunity for communities in the area.

Additional water technologies, such as drip irrigation and micro-catchment technologies were also introduced to communities not yet using them to provide water for feeding crops and tree seedlings.

Not only flood water was leveraged – under COFREP an existing borehole was used to support a drip irrigation system at Wapet farm, and a shallow well was regenerated to provide water for domestic and agricultural use for the Wapet community. Increased access to water through these water harvesting activities directly supports the ecosystem livelihood activities discussed below.



Ecosystem interventions

Ecosystem interventions represent the second layer of COFREP's resilience building approach, building on water interventions to support flood reduction and agro-pastoralist activities by regenerating indigenous vegetation and grazing land. LOKADO are expanding the establishment of green belts, which serve to reduce flooding and soil erosion, and to improve soil fertility. While green belts were established during the project period, the benefits will be long term. LOKADO also established tree nurseries for community members to grow drought tolerant and indigenous seedlings (DRC, 2018). Beneficiaries who work there receive training on growing tree seedlings:

“We were taught how to grow trees – these were initially there in the past – but people’s way of life has meant trees are cut down so we have been taught this, including fruit trees”
(Host community member).

This intervention therefore provides skills development and employment opportunities for those working there.



We were taught how to grow trees – these were initially there in the past – but people’s way of life has meant trees are cut down so we have been taught this, including fruit trees”

Host community member

Photo: Host community member watering tree seedlings at a COFREP tree nursery



Livelihood interventions

Livelihood interventions are the third layer of COFREP's approach, building on the water interventions by increasing people's capacity to use harvested flood water for crop production and income generation. They also leverage opportunities presented by ecosystem interventions, which provide improved soil fertility and moisture content for crop production, and employment options and natural resources for income opportunities.

Agricultural livelihoods interventions respond to drought by increasing people's knowledge of dryland agriculture, which provides an alternative livelihood when they lose livestock or when family members travel long distances with their livestock to find pasture. They represent longer-term diversification of livelihoods for resilience, still in its early stages in Kakuma, where pastoralism is the traditional and dominant livelihood option.

Agricultural livelihood interventions include the introduction of climate-smart technologies, which are supported by the water harvesting technologies discussed above. COFREP trains host and refugee communities in dryland agriculture activities in collaboration with the

Ministry of Agriculture (see Disaster Risk Reduction section), and provides inputs such as tools and seeds. A host community farm allows testing of crops and agricultural techniques to understand what works and create knowledge that will be shared with surrounding communities and the refugee community (DRC, 2018).

Economic livelihood interventions provide additional support to encourage beneficiaries to turn climate risks into opportunities to increase resilience. Economic opportunities are offered by flood water management and ecosystem rehabilitation (e.g. employment in tree nurseries, selling of natural resources from rehabilitated species). COFREP partners also inform and connect beneficiaries with market opportunities, to enable them to sell their produce in Kakuma market (LOKADO; DRC 2017b) and thereby contribute to the local "business ecosystem" (UNHCR interviewee). COFREP built a drift road river crossing between an area called Letea and Kakuma to enable the community in Letea to continue to access the local market and basic services in times of flood. Community beneficiaries observed that market activity helps them to earn money for other foods, clothing, school fees and medication.

Photo: Host community member harvesting crops under shade nets



Layering beyond the consortium

The COFREP consortium leveraged opportunities to add value and increase the sustainability of the project by engaging other stakeholders in delivering a climate information service and training to beneficiaries, and aligning with existing policies and institutions. These provide additional layers that support the potential of COFREP to trigger resilience outcomes.



Climate information service

COFREP engaged with government and private sector stakeholders to deliver a climate information service. This enabled beneficiaries to prepare for climatic changes and events, and equipped them to make informed decisions. To deliver this service, DRC engaged a representative from the county level Kenya Meteorological Department to extract Kakuma specific climate information from the weekly county level climate information reports, and share this with the private company WeFarm, to distribute via SMS to COFREP beneficiaries. Recipient beneficiaries share the information with the wider community on a weekly basis, at meeting places, or 'climate centers', established under COFREP:

“Information from the town comes through the chief – when he gets this information he gathers us for a meeting, so we know if heavy rains are coming we should move to higher ground, or if there is drought we can decide where to take the animals” (Host community member).

Communities reported that they use this information system alongside their own system of reading goat intestines to understand upcoming weather changes. The Wapet community explained:

“Our source of climate information is animal intestines; we also get it from the meteorological centre but our first-hand information is intestines, we have people gifted in that and can study the information. Then the information comes from the meteorological centre and it just confirms what the goat intestines have told us” (Host community member).



DRR and agricultural training

Training and skills development support communities to respond to climate information, to develop their agricultural skills and engage in market activities. COFREP has brought together five disaster risk reduction (DRR) committees and provided training on how to use and respond to flood and drought. Committee members disseminate this information through their communities. Some of these groups have sub-committees for agriculture, water harvesting, afforestation and publicity. The relevant members receive training on dryland agriculture, under the agricultural component of COFREP. Training is delivered both by COFREP consortia members and by local government representatives, who have supported both the DRR and agriculture training – the latter using a Farmer Field School approach⁴.

This training and skills development supports beneficiaries in bringing together the different interventions, for example, using the agricultural training in response to climate information they receive. The skills and knowledge gained by communities is recognised by community, government and humanitarian stakeholders outside of the consortium:

“There are consortiums working in Kakuma – different organizations do different activities that can complement one another. For example, COFREP delivers on livelihoods, water and forestation so communities get a combination of interventions and it builds their capacity” (UNHCR interviewee).

During discussions with the community, they pointed to the skills and knowledge they had gained from the project as a key benefit that they can continue to use after the project ends:

“Even if the organization detaches we can maintain because what we didn’t have before we have now. If COFREP closes, we have the information and skills and will continue to use them, for example planting food crops to sustain lives here. Because we have the information we will continue sensitizing people to help them respond to floods” (Host community member).

Similarly, local government representatives indicated that they would continue this training as part of their normal work. Through COFREP, they had gone from providing a traditional extension service to delivering training through methodologies borrowed from Farmer Field Schools, and to new communities. Government and community interviewees indicated that, by sharing these approaches and introducing government representatives to new communities, COFREP had built their capacity.



Policy and institutional alignment

Existing policies and institutions provide the enabling environment for COFREP to be delivered and to bring multiple development efforts together towards similar aims. COFREP specifically aligns with the Turkana County Development Plan, the UNHCR Kenya Comprehensive Refugee Program (KCRP), and existing Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies related to building community resilience to shocks and stresses of floods (DRC 2017a; DRC, 2017b). The implementation and sustainability of COFREP is supported by these overarching institutions, which also determine the direction of other development efforts in the area, providing potential for their alignment and support. This can be understood as a high-level layer to the COFREP project.

In order to further leverage this layer of policy support, COFREP implements some ground level advocacy activities, engaging with local government to get their support, and working with the community to raise their awareness on the support available to them. Through this, COFREP encourages local government members to prioritize development activities that support flood resilience building.

Photo: Refugee community members engaged in agricultural activities on a shared farm in the Kakuma refugee camp



Linking to layers beyond COFREP

Activities contemporary with COFREP

Activities implemented simultaneously with COFREP contribute to the ecosystem within which COFREP is delivered. Those that align with COFREP act as layers that strengthen the opportunities for resilience building.

International attention on Kakuma, and associated Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) allocated due to this interest, means that many activities are implemented in the area, by both COFREP consortium partners and other stakeholders. These align with the same local development strategies and therefore contribute to shared objectives. Interviewees discussed a number of activities that i. support, and ii. build on COFREP activities. These can be understood to sustain, scale and further strengthen COFREP activities – positioning COFREP itself as a layer within a broader process of resilience building in Kakuma. One interviewee explained:

“A number of people are helping to build resilience – in building resilience, you can’t do it alone” (DRC interviewee).

It is not possible to map all activities, but we discuss here some identified as relevant to COFREP.

DRC activities

DRC implements a number of activities that directly contribute to the social and economic system in which COFREP operates. These include livelihood activities that support local economy and market interactions; skills development activities that provide literacy and numeracy skills for wider reach of the climate information SMSs; and peace-building activities that reduce tensions between host and refugee communities to support their socio-economic integration (DRC interview). DRC has established a farm in Kakuma camp to support collaboration between hosts and refugees, and enable agricultural skill sharing between the two communities (DRC, 2018; GoK interview).

UNHCR activities

UNHCR partner organizations provide livelihood support for local communities that directly complement the activities of COFREP. These include agriculture, water management, afforestation, agroforestry and pasture production interventions (UNHCR, 2017). Related learning is facilitated through UNHCR’s

Inter-agency Livelihoods Working Group, which meet to coordinate their activities and share best practice (UNHCR, 2017). Learning from COFREP and other projects can be fed back through this group to help implementers understand what works and why.

Resilience projects

Two projects implemented simultaneously with COFREP include USAid’s Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and DFID’s Support and Protection for Refugees in Kenya (SPRK). Similarly, these efforts bring together humanitarian support with development assistance, and support the shift towards comprehensive approaches to building resilient communities in Kakuma.

A shift to a more coordinated effort in Kakuma, by UNHCR and the Government of Kenya, increases the prospect of contemporary activities strengthening rather than duplicating one another. As such they each build into a shared system of support for people living in the host and refugee communities in the area.

Activities building on COFREP

Activities that build on COFREP can be understood as additional intervention layers that extend progress towards resilience, beyond COFREP.

DRC activities

DRC have set up a self-funded pilot project that builds on COFREP activities. This takes an ecosystem-based approach to building resilience, shaping the landscape to increase moisture retention and promoting sustainable agricultural practices (DRC interview; DRC regional interview). It engages local communities and uses only local resources. DRC have observed the community rapidly learning from this approach and tension between communities being alleviated. DRC are now developing a resilience strategy, which will draw on lessons from COFREP and the pilot project, and guide their future resilience activities (DRC interview).

Local government activities

Local government representatives involved in COFREP explained that they will continue their farmer extension services as part of their normal work, but, learning from COFREP, will now use the Farmer Field School approach to enable a wider reach. The COFREP consortium has been approached by the county government to support similar activities in additional local communities (DRC, 2018).

International stakeholder activities

Local government interviewees indicated that other organizations operating in the area started to deliver Farmer Field Schools. With one inviting participants from the COFREP committees to receive additional training through their field schools. The World Bank's National Agricultural and Rural Inclusive Growth Project was also flagged as a project that can support the activities of COFREP, with COFREP committees involved in proposal development to secure funds for the local government to deliver. Interviewees suggested that these funds can be used to fill gaps, drawing on community knowledge to support a bottom-up approach.

Photo: DRC pilot project activity to increase water retention in the landscape



Key learning

COFREP has established a system of interventions, which layer on one another and interact to strengthen progress towards resilience building. Activities surrounding and succeeding COFREP also feed into this system, representing external intervention layers, that further enable the communities reached to become resilient.

Such resilience projects differ from humanitarian projects in focusing on stakeholder capacity building and empowerment to sustain the benefits they gain after the lifetime of the project, thus providing longer lasting resources for beneficiaries to use. They evolve from traditional development projects, bringing several different strands of support together in an integrated way to provide more comprehensive support to beneficiaries while also transforming risks, in this case of flooding, into opportunities.

The deliberate integration of multiple activities has potential to strengthen the progress of individual or isolated activities. Value may be maximized by building on existing expertise, coordinating with concurrent projects and comprehensively sharing learning with multi-stakeholders to allow activities to be sustained after the project lifetime. At a higher level, sustained implementation and benefits can be supported by conducive policies and institutions.

Photo: Water pan built under COFREP



Some insight into approaches to sustaining and scaling projects such as COFREP is provided in the sustainability approach proposed in the Kakuma Integrated Livelihoods Strategy. This proposes that sustainability in the strategy will be achieved by implementing market driven interventions, by taking a community-centered approach and by integrating livelihoods projects into local development plans (UNHCR, 2017). To some extent COFREP has done these things, and at the very least it has provided a foundation on which to build through additional layers of activity. However, it has also served to bring greater attention to the risks and opportunities posed by flooding in the area in order to build the resilience of both host and refugee communities in Kakuma.

Notes and References

¹ In April 2018, Itad conducted a Formative Evaluation of the Global Resilience Partnership challenge rounds to draw out some key lessons for resilience programming. One of the key findings emerging from the grantees implementing these challenge rounds is that “implementing layers or waves of interventions is critical to resilience building. This could include building on previous or existing initiatives, implementing multiple interventions simultaneously or trialling a first set of intervention options and following with a second set based on learning from the first” (Robens, et. al., 2018). This finding is echoed in Itad’s Monitoring and Results Reporting work on the BRACED programme (see: Silva-Villanueva and Sword-Daniels, 2018), however there remains a lack of clarity on how and why a certain selection of interventions are layered to build resilience in a given context.

² These will be delivered by the consortium in their final report.

³ Including interviewees from DRC (Kakuma and regional office), NRC (Kakuma office), LOKADO, local government, Kenya Meteorological Department, UNHCR, Wapet community and Awarnaparan community. Quotes in this report are derived directly from these interviews and do not necessarily reflect the views of the respective organisations

⁴ The Farmer Field School approach was developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation over 25 years ago as an alternative to the top-down extension services traditionally used to provide agricultural support: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/ippm/programme/ffs-approach/en/>

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