May 2026, Publication

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

PROSPECTS Partnership Program
Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia

Funded by:
The Government of the Netherlands - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Acronyms

AAP – Accountability to Affected Populations

CoP – Community of Practice

DI – Disability Inclusion

FDPs – Forcibly Displaced Persons

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

GE – Gender Equality

HCs – Host Communities

IFC – International Finance Corporation

ILO – International Labour Organization

MEL – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

MHM – Menstrual Hygiene Management

OPDs – Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

PROSPECTS – Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities

RLOs – Refugee-Led Organisations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund

WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Netherlands, whose continued financial support makes the PROSPECTS Programme possible and enables innovative, inclusive programming across the region.

We acknowledge the leadership and technical contributions of PROSPECTS partner agencies; UNHCR, UNICEF, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Bank, and IFC, whose collaboration and dedication to joint programming underpins the success of this initiative.

Special appreciation to members of the Regional Community of Practice (CoP) on Cross-Cutting Priorities, co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF, for their guidance, coordination, and commitment to advancing learning, coherence, and accountability across the programme. The 2025 CoP members included: Eesha Moitra (ILO); Katie Ogwang, Lydia Atiema, Sabah Elbasha, Marije Van Kempen, Mark Nzano, and Deline Ramiro (UNHCR Regional Bureau for Eastern and Southern Africa – RBESA); and Gloria Kaberia, Chiedza Chinakwetu, Leobah Mudungwe, Faith Nyaboke, Mariam Mmbaga and Yetneberesh Molla (UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Region).

We wish to recognize the invaluable contributions of country-level teams, implementing partners, government counterparts, Organizations Led by Forcibly displaced persons, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and technical specialists across Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. Their insights, experiences, and continuous engagement were instrumental in identifying and validating the good practices documented in this report.

We also extend our appreciation to the communities of displaced persons and host populations, who generously shared their perspectives, experiences, and feedback. Their voices remain central to shaping more responsive, inclusive, and impactful programmes.

Finally, we acknowledge the efforts of the consultant, Ms. Ruwaydah Matete, and all contributors involved in the documentation process, whose dedication ensured the quality, depth, and rigor of this report.

Regional Community of Practice on Cross cutting priorities

Introduction

The PROSPECTS Partnership is a multi-year, multi-partner initiative funded by the Government of the Netherlands and implemented by UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, the World Bank and IFC.

Phase one (2019-2023) and phase two (2024–2027) of the PROSPECTS program covered four thematic areas: Education and Learning; Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion; Protection, Social Protection and Inclusion; and Critical Infrastructure, while intentionally integrating cross-cutting priorities to ensure inclusive, accountable and sustainable outcomes for forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

In the East and Horn of Africa region, the PROSPECTS programme is implemented in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. To strengthen learning, coherence and accountability across the partnership, a Regional Community of Practice (CoP) on cross-cutting priorities (co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF) was established.

As part of its mandate, the CoP commissioned a regional documentation exercise to capture and analyze good practices and lessons learned on cross cutting priorities including mainstreaming accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Gender Equality, Youth Engagement and Disability Inclusion across PROSPECTS pillars.

This report presents the findings of that documentation exercise. It synthesizes evidence from desk reviews, country consultations and a regional partners' review workshop, highlighting how cross-cutting priorities are operationalized in practice, the results achieved, and areas requiring further strengthening.

The report aims to inform adaptive programming, support scale-up of effective approaches, and contribute to stronger accountability and learning within the PROSPECTS Partnership.

Methodology

The documentation exercise was conducted between 12 November 2025 and 31 January 2026 by an independent external consultant.

To systematically collect, review, and analyse evidence of good practices across the programme, the documentation process adopted a qualitative, participatory and multi-source methodology aligned with PROSPECTS' joint ways of working.

The approach combined four complementary components:

Desk Review: A review of programme documents, MEL sessions outcome reports, lessons learned reports, cases studies, research and other relevant materials from PROSPECTS Phase I and Phase II.

The review focused on identifying concrete examples where AAP, gender, youth and disability inclusion were intentionally mainstreamed within pillar interventions.

Country-Level Consultations: Moderated consultations and key informant interviews were conducted with PROSPECTS partners in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda.

These consultations engaged technical staff working on cross-cutting priorities and pillar implementation, country coordinators, and selected implementing partners. Discussions focused on achievements, gaps, success factors and lessons learned in mainstreaming cross-cutting priorities.

While all country level consultations were conducted virtually, in person engagement was done through a field visit to Dadaab (conducted from 8 to 12 December 2025) that focused on discussions with refugees and host communities as well as partner organizations and government ministries and departments.

Regional-Level Consultations: A virtual consultation session was conducted with members of the regional community of practice. The consultation, including members from ILO, UNICEF and UNHCR deliberated on progress and challenges in implementation of the CoP terms of reference, support to country teams and good practice identification on mainstreaming AAP, gender equality, disability inclusion and youth engagement.

Regional Partners' Review Workshop: A two-day, in-person regional workshop held in Nairobi brought together regional and country teams, technical specialists, government counterparts, Refugee-led organisations and refugee youth. The workshop validated preliminary findings, enabled cross-country and cross-pillar learning, and generated joint recommendations and action points for strengthening mainstreaming under PROSPECTS.

Mainstreaming cross-cutting priorities across pillars

Education and Learning

Across countries, the education and learning pillar demonstrates relatively strong institutionalization of cross-cutting priorities, particularly AAP and disability inclusion. Good practice includes the systematic collection and use of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, including integration of refugee learners into national Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).

This has strengthened evidence-based planning, government ownership and sustainability.
AAP is embedded through school-based or learning space-based feedback mechanisms, such as digitised AAP registers (digitised through Kobo in Kenya and Sudan).

Making feedback mechanisms mandatory within school structures has improved responsiveness and accountability. Gender-responsive interventions (such as scholarships, menstrual hygiene management programmes and caregiver engagement) have addressed barriers faced by adolescent girls, while assistive devices and inclusive infrastructure have supported learners with disabilities.

Youth engagement is particularly evident in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programming, where peer-led models integrated into learning environments enable young people to support one another while remaining connected to adult safeguarding and referral systems.

A key lesson is that cross-cutting priorities are most effective when embedded in partner agreements and routine education systems, rather than treated as add-ons.

Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

The livelihoods pillar shows strong and intentional mainstreaming of gender equality, youth engagement and AAP, with growing attention to disability inclusion. Community-driven programme design is a defining good practice, particularly in Kenya and Uganda, where refugees and host community members are engaged from design through implementation and monitoring.

Youth are positioned as partners, mentors and trainers rather than passive beneficiaries, fostering ownership, leadership and peer learning.

Clear inclusion targets (such as minimum thresholds for women's and persons with disabilities' participation) combined with inclusive outreach, flexible schedules, accessible venues and adaptive learning materials have reduced participation barriers.

Gender and disability-sensitive market assessments have guided the selection of value chains with high participation and income potential for women and persons with disabilities.

AAP is operationalized through continuous feedback loops and participatory monitoring, enabling programmes to adapt to community priorities.

Partnerships with Refugee-led organisations and community-based organisations amplify reach, strengthen trust and enhance sustainability. Evidence across countries shows that livelihoods interventions are most effective when skills training is linked to real market demand and complemented by access to finance, equipment and enabling policies.

Protection, Social Protection and Inclusion

Protection programming demonstrates strong integration of AAP and community participation, with increasing attention to gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approaches. Community-based protection structures (such as women's groups, youth groups and protection committees) serve as trusted platforms for risk identification, feedback and two-way communication.

Embedding feedback mechanisms within familiar and safe community spaces has strengthened trust and uptake.

Engagement of Refugee-led organisations, including women-led, youth-led and disability-focused groups, as protection actors has improved access to hard-to-reach populations and strengthened community leadership.

In Sudan, gender-transformative safe spaces for women and girls have enabled disclosure of GBV, access to survivor-centered services and changes in community norms. Integrated approaches combining protection, psychosocial support and livelihoods for vulnerable youth have addressed protection risks and economic exclusion simultaneously.

System-level practices, such as aligning foster care for unaccompanied children with national protection systems in Kenya and clearing backlogs in refugee birth registration in Ethiopia, demonstrate how coordinated, child-centered approaches can strengthen inclusion, accountability and sustainability.

Critical Infractructure

Good practices under the critical infrastructure pillar illustrate the intersection of infrastructure delivery with livelihoods, protection and inclusion outcomes. Local sourcing of labour, materials and services(prioritizing women, youth and, where possible, persons with disabilities) has strengthened livelihoods, skills development and community ownership.

Market-based and community-managed WASH infrastructure, such as WASH Business Centres, represents a flagship practice that integrates AAP, youth employment and gender-responsive service delivery. These centres respond to community-defined priorities, link trained youth to income-generating opportunities, and build accountability through locally managed structures.

Gender-responsive and disability-inclusive design (such as disability-friendly schools, priority housing allocation and women-only committees) has addressed physical and decision-making barriers.

Menstrual hygiene management hubs have contributed to improved enrolment and retention of adolescent girls, demonstrating the importance of combining cash-based approaches with targeted in-kind support where gender-specific needs persist.

Good practices and lessons learnt

Good practices below were identified using agreed criteria, including demonstrable positive change, people-centered design, promotion of inclusion and participation, collaboration among partners, and potential for replication and sustainability.

The identified good practices span both Phase I and Phase II of the PROSPECTS programme, with a specific focus on how AAP, Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, and Youth Engagement systematically mainstreamed across the programme's pillars.

From Protection to Self-Reliance: Youth-Led Livelihoods for Vulnerable Adolescents in Shagarab

Location: Shagarab Refugee Camp, Kassala State, Sudan

Pillar: Protection

Lead Agency: UNHCR

Partners: Plan International - Sudan

Cross-cutting Priority: Youth engagement

The practice in brief

Prior to PROSPECTS, youth engagement in Shagarab focused mainly on basic protection services such as legal aid, MHPSS and medical support.

Vulnerable adolescents, particularly unaccompanied and separated children and GBV survivors lacked livelihood opportunities and marketable skills. Many were engaged in harmful child labour, exposed to protection risks, psychosocial distress, and economic dependency on humanitarian assistance.

Under PROSPECTS, UNHCR and Plan International implemented an integrated youth empowerment approach combining protection and livelihoods support.

Twenty-six vulnerable youths (8 female survivors of gender-based violence and 18 children previously engaged in harmful child labor) in alternative care received in-kind business start-up support, while 15 adolescents (8 boys and 7 girls) completed vocational training in mobile phone maintenance and makeup artistry.

Social workers provided continuous follow-up and psychosocial support. Social cohesion was strengthened through joint refugee-host community activities, including a football tournaments.

The collaboration between protection teams, livelihood specialists, and social workers ensured that the intervention addressed both economic vulnerability and protection risks.

Results and change achieved

The initiative led to increased self-reliance, improved psychosocial wellbeing, and reduced reliance on harmful coping mechanisms. Youth reported greater confidence and income security, while access to skills training and small businesses enhanced their economic inclusion. Community activities improved social integration between refugee and host youth.

> ***Tibyan Abdelrazig, a 16-year-old refugee living in Shagarab Camp, reported that through the PROSPECTS programme she acquired vocational skills in makeup artistry. The training enabled her to generate an independent income, contribute to the livelihood of her foster family, and build a regular client base within the community, strengthening her confidence and sense of self-reliance.***

Challenges

High levels of trauma, limited skills, and social stigma initially constrained participation. These challenges were addressed through a holistic protection-livelihoods model, market-relevant skills training, and routine follow-up by social workers complemented by community engagement activities that reduced stigma.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

Youth livelihood initiatives are most effective when combined with protection and psychosocial support. Market-aligned skills, continuous mentoring, and social cohesion activities are critical for sustainability. The model is replicable across refugee-hosting areas through market assessments, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and structured implementation guidance.

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Inclusive National Planning: Integrating Refugee Perspectives into Uganda's National Development Planning Process

Location: Uganda

Pillar: Protection & Inclusion

Lead Agency: UNHCR

Partners: Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

Cross-cutting Priority: AAP, Refugee Participation

The practice in brief

Uganda hosts close to two million refugees and has long pursued an inclusive refugee policy framework that promotes self-reliance and integration within national systems.

Since 2010, the Government of Uganda has implemented its long-term development vision through five-year National Development Plans (NDPs). While earlier plans (NDPI and NDPII) recognized refugee protection and durable solutions as policy objectives, these commitments were largely programmatic, with limited mechanisms or direct refuge participation in national planning processes, limiting accountability, alignment with non-state actors, and the ability to measure progress.

This gap became increasingly visible as Uganda transitioned toward development- oriented response under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which explicitly commits government and partners to inclusive, whole -of -society planning.

A systematic approach to refugee participation was institutionalized through the establishment of the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) in 2018, established under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister(OPM), with technical and operational support from UNHCR. The REF is a national platform composed of 37 elected refugee representatives from settlements and urban areas, mandated to consolidate refugee perspectives and engage directly with government-led coordination and policy processes.

During the development of National Development Plan IV (2025/26 - 2029/30), led by the National Planning Authority (NPA), a three-pronged, participatory planning process was adopted: (i) a nationwide review of NDP III, (ii) consultations with stakeholders across all regions and districts, and (iii) national-level validation involving key institutions and Parliament. Refugee-hosting districts were explicitly included in this process, and refugee representatives (primarily through the REF) participated alongside local governments, civil society, and development partners.

Through district-level consultations and national coordination platforms, REF representatives articulated refugee priorities, implementation challenges, and lessons learned from previous plans.

Refugees also participated in validation discussions, ensuring that their inputs informed both strategic priorities and implementation frameworks. This went beyond consultation through a single platform; refugees were engaged through multiple entry points embedded within the national planning architecture.

Results and change achieved

The inclusion of refugees as recognized stakeholders contributed to several tangible outcomes. NDP IV explicitly positions refugee protection and inclusion as shared responsibilities of state and non-state actors, embedding displacement considerations within Uganda's broader development agenda.

Importantly, a measurable indicator on poverty reduction among refugees and host communities was incorporated, enabling government and partners to track progress toward self-reliance and solutions. This marked a shift from largely normative commitments toward more measurable and accountable planning, while recognizing that implementation remains contingent on sectoral financing and coordination.

The practice reinforced Uganda's transition toward a government-led development -oriented refugee response, consistent with the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (Re-HOPE) and CRRF approach.

Challenges and how they were overcome

Ensuring meaningful refugee participation in Uganda's national development planning faced several challenges, including achieving inclusive representation, navigating the technical complexity of planning processes, and addressing time and resource constraints for sustained engagement.

These challenges were compounded by the long timelines of policy formulation, which risked frustration when refugee inputs did not translate into immediate, visible outcomes. Coordination across multiple consultation platforms also posed risks of duplication and consultation fatigue, potentially weakening the effectiveness of engagement.

These challenges were addressed by institutionalising refugee participation through elected refugee leadership structures under the Refugee Engagement Forum, supported by targeted capacity strengthening and simplified briefing materials. Embedding refugee participation within the existing NPA and OPM consultation schedules helped align engagement with national planning cycles and reduced parallel process. Clear communication and feedback loops helped manage expectations and maintain trust, while the REF served as a central coordination mechanism to consolidate refugee inputs across district and national levels, ensuring coherence and alignment throughout the planning process.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

Uganda's decentralized governance structure, progressivea refugee policy and long-standing collaboration between OPM, UNHCR and development partners created an enabling environment for this approach. Replication in other contexts may require adaptation where national systems are more centralized or where refugee legal status differs. Meaningful refugee participation is most effective when it is embedded within formal government planning processes rather than treated as a one-off consultation. Representation alone is insufficient; refugees require access to timely information, structured feedback and response systems, and genuine opportunities to influence priorities, indicators, and implementation mechanisms. Institutionalising participation therefore depends on sustained political commitment, clear coordination across sectors and levels of government, and recognition of refugees as legitimate stakeholders in national development.

This practice is highly replicable in other refugee-hosting contexts that operate national development planning frameworks. Key prerequisites include recognised and accountable refugee representative structures, strong government ownership of participatory planning, and development partners willing to invest in long-term engagement rather than short-term, project-based consultations. The Uganda experience has already demonstrated scaling potential by influencing regional policy discourse, including commitments by IGAD Member States to ensure the meaningful participation of refugees in the development of durable solutions.

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Resources/Links

Fourth National Development Plan 2025/26 – 2029/30
IGAD and Uganda's OPM Extend Refugee Engagement Forum to Local Governments
Refugee Engagement Forum - Uganda
Refugee Engagement Forum in Uganda- Good practice study
IGAD policy framework on refugee protection

Formalizing Community-Based Foster Care for Refugee Children in Dadaab

Location: Dadaab Refugee camps, Kenya

Pillar: Protection (Community-Based Protection)
Lead Agency: UNHCR
Partners: UNICEF, Save the Children International, State Department for Children's Services
Cross-cutting Priority: AAP, Refugee Participation

The practice in brief

Figure 3: A foster parent with her child at their home in Ifo, Dadaab Refugee Camps - UNHCR, Kenya

For many years, unaccompanied and separated refugee children (UASC) in Dadaab were placed in community-based foster care through humanitarian arrangements led primarily by NGOs. While these placements contributed significantly to children's immediate safety and well-being, they remained informal and were not fully aligned with Kenya's national alternative care framework. As a result, they often lacked standardized assessments, legal placement orders, and integration within government child protection systems.

With the enactment of the Children Act (2022) and the rollout of the Shirika Plan, aligning refugee foster care with national laws became essential for strengthening accountability, sustainability, and ensuring equal protection standards for refugee children.

UNHCR, together with UNICEF and in close collaboration with the State Department for Children Welfare Services, initiated a structured process to formalize community-based foster care for refugees in Dadaab. The initiative focused on bringing humanitarian foster care arrangements into compliance with national guidelines.

The process included:

a. Capacity Building

A comprehensive capacity-building framework was developed and rolled out for all stakeholders (UN agencies, child protection partners, and Sub-County Children's Officer). Training focused on national alternative care standards, casework procedures, and clearly defined roles across agencies.

b. Verification of Existing Cases

A verification exercise was conducted to review existing ("old") foster care placements. This included confirming each child's status, assessing current care conditions, and identifying compliance gaps with national procedures.

c. Prioritizing Regularization Over New Placements

Instead of initiating new foster placements, the process concentrated on regularizing the existing ones. Foster parents were supported to formally apply for foster care through government procedures.

d. Government-Led Assessments and Orders

Sub-County Children's Officers conducted official social inquiries and issued foster care placement orders. This step ensured that fostered refugee children were formally recognized within the national child protection database, establishing them within Kenya's statutory child protection system.

Results and change achieved

- 138 refugee children in Dadaab have been formally fostered under the national system to date.
- UNHCR, through Save the Children International and Terres de Hommes, continues to support government officers to register, assess, and certify foster parents.
- Legal safeguards and oversight structures have been significantly strengthened.
- Case management now adheres to national procedures, reducing reliance on parallel humanitarian systems.

The model has expanded beyond refugee households. Host community families are increasingly enrolling as foster parents, promoting social cohesion and shared community responsibility for child protection.

Challenges and how they were overcome

Funding shortfalls reduced the number of professional caseworkers available for follow-up and monitoring. In response, partners engaged refugee-led organizations (RLOs) and Child Protection Committees to support community-level monitoring and awareness raising.

Economic pressures linked to differentiated assistance also risked placement breakdowns, with some foster parents struggling to meet children's needs. Ongoing responses include integrating Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) support components as top-ups and coordinating with livelihoods actors to link foster parents to income-generating opportunities.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

- Anchoring foster care within national systems ensures sustainability and stronger protection outcomes compared to running parallel humanitarian models.
- Capacity building must target all actors, including humanitarian staff, to ensure consistent understanding and application of national standards.

Figure 4: Foster family carrying out household chores together, Ifo camp - UNHCR/Kenya

prerequisite before scaling up placements.

- Regularizing existing cases is a critical
- Linking foster care to social protection and livelihoods interventions enhances placement stability and long-term viability.
- The Dadaab experience demonstrates that refugee children can be fully included in national foster care systems, offering a replicable model for other refugee-hosting counties in Kenya and similar displacement contexts.

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Multi-layered, Community-Centred Coordination for Mainstreaming Cross-Cutting Priorities under Prospects in Sudan

Location: White Nile & Kassala States – Sudan
Prospects Focus: New Ways of Working / Coordination
Lead Agencies: UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO
Partners: Implementing partners, Government line ministries, community-based protection and sectoral networks
Cross-cutting Priority: AAP, Gender, Disability Inclusion, Youth Engagement

Context before practice

The Sudan operational context is characterised by insecurity, access constraints, limited donor field presence, funding volatility, and high levels of forced displacement affecting both refugees and host communities. These conditions made traditional coordination approaches insufficient to ensure alignment across Prospects pillars and to effectively mainstream cross-cutting priorities.

Prior to the introduction of this practice, coordination risks included:

- Fragmented engagement across pillars and partners
- Limited systematic integration of cross-cutting priorities in partner implementation
- Weak feedback loops between communities, implementers, and decision-makers
- Reduced donor oversight due to access and security limitations

There was a clear need for a coordination model that could operate effectively despite restricted access, while remaining grounded in community priorities and enabling real-time adaptation.

The practice in brief

1. **Community-Centred Coordination as the Foundation**

Coordination under Prospects in Sudan is deliberately anchored in continuous community consultation, rather than being limited to design-stage engagement. Community-based protection network and sector-specific community committees are engaged throughout implementation, monitoring, and prioritisation processes.

These structures:

- Represent both refugee and host communities
- Operate across different pillars (e.g. protection and child protection, WASH, education)
- Act as primary source of information on cross-cutting priorities
- Supports social cohesion by bringing different population groups together

Community feedback consistently highlighted cross-cutting concerns, which then informed programmatic adjustments across pillars.

2. **Multi-Layered Coordination Architecture**

UN agencies field team together with the national team to engage with the Netherlands embassy

- Partners jointly present PROSPECTS progress, challenges, and proposed solutions in that State. Partners develop together a unique presentation organized by pillars and presented directly by local partners (who present on behalf of the whole agencies/NGos working on that pillar).
- Due to the limited chance for the embassy to carry out field mission in Sudan, this practice provides them the opportunity to hear directly from field actors and usually also beneficiaries and representative of community-based protection networks are invited to be heard.

3. **Mandatory Integration of Cross-Cutting Priorities in Partner Agreements**

A key element in Sudan was making cross-cutting priorities mandatory components of all partner agreements, rather than optional or add-on elements.

Each partnership agreement:

- Requires inclusion of AAP, gender, safeguarding, and youth considerations. Undergoes multiple stages of review, including by technical staff on cross-cutting priorities
- Ensures partners are trained on AAP principles and tools prior to implementation

As a result, partners automatically integrated AAP mechanisms (such as feedback and complaints systems) across all child friendly spaces, learning spaces, including schools, alternative learning programmes, and learning centres (serving both displaced and host communities).

4. **Coordination for Adaptability in a Constrained Environment**

Given limited donor access to field locations, additional coordination mechanisms were introduced:

- Quarterly stakeholder meetings involving donors, government officials, social workers, partners, and community representatives
- Quarterly steering committees, with 2 representatives of the embassy and 2 per agency. A more high-level engagement for strategic reflections and to review progress, challenges, and risk mitigation.

While time and resource-intensive, these platforms strengthened transparency, accountability, and collective problem-solving - particularly during periods of funding cuts, where agencies coordinated to cover gaps and complement each other's interventions.

Results and change achieved

- Improved coherence and complementarity across Prospects pillars and within pillars among partners
- Systematic mainstreaming of AAP and gender through partner implementation
- Stronger accountability and feedback loops from community to decision-makers
- Enhanced social cohesion through joint refugee–host community structures
- Increased operational flexibility during funding and access constraints
- Strengthened donor confidence despite limited field presence

Challenges and how they were overcome

While the multi-layered coordination model strengthened alignment and accountability under Prospects in Sudan, it also introduced a high coordination burden, with multiple meetings required at field, inter-agency, and national levels.

To address the risk of meeting fatigue, ongoing efforts were made to streamline and rationalise coordination platforms, focusing discussions on decision-making, complementarity, and problem-solving rather than information-sharing alone.

Security and access constraints, which limited direct oversight and donor field presence, posed an additional challenge. This was mitigated through layered monitoring approaches that combined community engagement, field-level task forces, and structured reporting mechanisms, ensuring that implementation realities continued to inform coordination and decision-making despite restricted access.

Funding volatility further threatened the continuity of activities across pillars. Continuous, real-time information sharing among Prospects partners enabled agencies to identify emerging gaps quickly and step in to complement or sustain critical interventions, preserving coherence and momentum in programme delivery.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

The Sudan experience demonstrates that effective mainstreaming of cross-cutting priorities under Prospects depends on coordination models that are firmly rooted in community structures, rather than relying solely on institutional or inter-agency arrangements.

Continuous engagement with community-based networks ensured that accountability, gender, and other cross-cutting concerns were consistently identified, prioritised, and addressed across pillars, strengthening both programme relevance and social cohesion.

Embedding cross-cutting priorities as mandatory components of partner agreements proved critical in translating policy commitments into operational practice. By requiring partners to integrate AAP, gender, safeguarding, and youth considerations into implementation and reporting, mainstreaming became systematic rather than discretionary. This contractual approach reinforced shared accountability and consistency across diverse partners and learning spaces.

The practice further illustrates that multi-layered coordination (linking community structures, field-level task forces, inter-agency platforms, and national donor engagement) is essential in fragile and access-constrained contexts, even when resource-intensive. While demanding, this layered approach enabled real-time adaptation, strengthened complementarity, and mitigated risks associated with insecurity, limited access, and funding volatility. Informal trust-building among Prospects partners complemented formal coordination mechanisms, reinforcing collaboration during periods of heightened operational pressure.

These lessons offer clear pathways for replication and scaling in similar contexts. The approach can be adapted by establishing community-centred coordination that is built on reciprocal trust as a core design principle, embedding cross-cutting priorities as mandatory contractual requirements, and creating feedback loops must remain central to ensure structured links between field-level coordination and national decision-making platforms.

Coordination intensity should be calibrated to context, but accountability, transparency, and that programmes remain responsive, inclusive, and resilient in complex operating environments.

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Placing Youth at the Centre of Market-Based Sanitation: A Multi-Partner Co-Design Approach in Kebribeyah

Location: Kebribeyah, Somali Region - Ethiopia
Pillar: Critical Infrastructure
Lead Agency: UNICEF
Partners: Somali Regional Health Bureau (SRHB); Somali Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA); Shebelle Bank S.C.; Federal Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS); UNHCR
Cross-cutting Priority: Youth engagement, AAP

The practice in brief

Kebribeyah hosts both refugee and host community populations facing persistently low access to improved sanitation, limited livelihood opportunities, and weak engagement with formal financial systems.

Youth (despite having received vocational training through TVET institutions) remain largely excluded from economic opportunities due to lack of start-up capital, weak market linkages, and limited access to credit.

At the same time, sanitation service delivery has historically relied on short-term humanitarian subsidies, with minimal private sector participation and limited pathways for youth engagement.

Prior initiatives demonstrated that while technical skills existed, the absence of coordinated systems linking youth, financial institutions, government authorities, and communities constrained sustainable outcomes. There was no sanitation-specific financing mechanism tailored to the realities of refugee-hosting contexts, nor a shared framework to enable youth to operate as legitimate market actors. This context underscored the need for a different approach - one that placed youth at the centre of design and intentionally aligned multiple partners around a shared model.

Under the PROSPECTS partnership, UNICEF initiated a sanitation financing pilot that prioritizes process over immediate outputs, focusing first on co-design, partnership alignment, and youth inclusion before implementation. The practice centres on building a shared, youth-focused sanitation market system through deliberate collaboration among government institutions, financial service providers, humanitarian actors, and communities.

The project design phase began with an in-depth financial and sanitation market diagnostic in Kebribeyah, combining desk reviews, focus group discussions with refugee and host community members, and key informant interviews with youth, suppliers, banks, TVET institutions, and government counterparts. Youth (particularly unemployed TVET graduates) were engaged as a distinct stakeholder group, contributing insights on barriers to employment, preferred enterprise models, financing constraints, and market opportunities within the sanitation sector.

Building on this evidence, two structured co-creation workshops were convened with all partners to jointly design the sanitation financing model. These sessions enabled stakeholders to align on objectives, agree on risk-sharing arrangements, define roles and responsibilities, and adapt existing financial products to the sanitation context. Youth perspectives informed the decision to focus on group-based, Sharia-compliant financing and to link financing directly to sanitation service delivery rather than standalone loans.

The resulting project (the Nadif Sanitation Financing Pilot) will support youth-led micro and small enterprises composed of refugee and host community members to deliver sanitation services, including latrine construction and related services. The model will work with youth cooperatives made up of 3 to 5 refugee and host community members (many of whom have already received sanitation-related TVET training) who will be formally registered, screened, and supported to access financing and deliver sanitation services.

Youth are positioned not only as beneficiaries, but as co-designers, implementers, and future market actors, supported through access to finance, skills application, and institutional backing. Formal Letters of Understanding were developed and signed to operationalize collaboration, marking a critical transition from design to implementation.

Results and changes achieved

The project is at an early implementation stage; as such, tangible service delivery results are forthcoming. However, significant outcomes have already been achieved through the design and collaboration process.

First, the participatory research and co-creation process enabled the development of a sanitation financing model that is context-specific, youth-responsive, and institutionally anchored. Partners (government bureaus, financial institutions, humanitarian actors, and TVET systems) now share a common framework, agreed procedures, and clearly defined responsibilities.

Secondly, youth have been formally embedded within the sanitation ecosystem as economic actors. Their inputs directly shaped enterprise design, financing terms, and implementation modalities, ensuring the pilot reflects real constraints and aspirations. This has strengthened ownership and readiness among youth groups preparing to engage in the pilot.

Finally, the collaborative design process resulted in formalized agreements and operational tools, including Letters of Understanding and a shared working framework, which de-risk implementation and create conditions for sustainability and scale. The project is expected to expand access to sanitation, generate youth employment, strengthen local markets, and reduce reliance on humanitarian subsidies as implementation progresses.

Challenges and how they were overcome

Designing a multi-partner, youth-centred sanitation financing model involved navigating differing institutional mandates, risk perceptions, and levels of familiarity with market-based sanitation and refugee inclusion. Financial institutions raised concerns related to risk, repayment, and refugee mobility, while government partners emphasized alignment with existing policies and systems. Meaningfully centring youth in the design process also required time-intensive consultations to bridge gaps between skills training, finance, and market realities.

These challenges were addressed through sustained dialogue, evidence-informed discussions based on market research, and structured co-creation processes that enabled partners to collectively resolve concerns. Formal Letters of Understanding played a critical role in building trust, clarifying roles, and translating shared commitments into an implementable framework.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

The Kebribeyah experience demonstrates that investing time upfront in participatory research, co-creation, and agreement-building can significantly strengthen readiness, ownership, and alignment,particularly in complex refugee-hosting contexts.

Designing financing and service delivery models with youth, rather than for youth, enhances relevance and sustainability.

This approach is replicable in other contexts where sanitation gaps intersect with youth unemployment, provided there is commitment to inclusive design, willingness to manage complexity, and space to align financial, social, and technical systems around a shared vision.

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Mainstreaming AAP in Complementary Pathways under PROSPECTS Uganda

Location: Nakivale, Rhino, Imvempi, Kampala – Uganda
Pillars: Economic Inclusion, Education
Lead Agency: UNHCR
Partners: ILO, UNICEF
Cross-cutting Priority: AAP

The practice in brief

Uganda hosts one of the world's largest refugee populations in a context of declining humanitarian assistance and increasing pressure to deliver sustainable, rights-based solutions. Although complementary pathways for education, employment, and labour mobility have expanded, early implementation exposed challenges related to information gaps, limited community ownership, and perceptions of pathways as externally driven and difficult to access.

PROSPECTS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) reflections underscored the need to move beyond output-level reporting to better capture qualitative change, refugee agency, and shifts in decision-making, emphasizing that complementary pathways are only sustainable when refugees are informed, empowered actors and accountability mechanisms actively support self-reliance rather than dependency.

Complementary pathways programming in Uganda has increasingly mainstreamed AAP by deliberately shifting from provider-led delivery to community-enabled, feedback-responsive, and peer-driven models. Key elements of this practice include:

1. **Information as empowerment, not messaging**

Rather than one-off sensitization, pathways information is shared continuously through trusted channels, including settlement-level engagement platforms, alumni networks, and refugee-led organisations. Refugees receive clear, practical information on eligibility, timelines, risks, and responsibilities associated with education and employment pathways, enabling informed decision-making.

2. **Feedback loops shaping programme direction**

Although no large-scale perception surveys have been conducted, programme teams systematically analyse trends from pathway-related queries through the inter-agency community feedback mechanism, case follow-ups, alumni engagement, and community-level consultations. Increasing demand for education and labour pathways (over traditional aid or resettlement) has been used as a proxy indicator of changing aspirations and accountability outcomes. These trends are discussed internally and across partners to adapt outreach, targeting, and support modalities.

3. **Community ownership through peer-to-peer models**

Pathway alumni have emerged as primary facilitators of access. In 2024–2025, a majority of education pathways accessed by refugees in Uganda were facilitated by former beneficiaries, with UNHCR and partners playing a light-touch role focused on information provision and verification.

This peer-led approach strengthens trust, reduces dependency on agencies, and embeds accountability within the community itself.

4. **Private sector engagement aligned with AAP principles**

The expansion of third-country private sector engagement (particularly through the Train-to-Hire model) reinforces accountability by aligning skills development with real labour market demand. Refugees are informed upfront about expectations, training requirements, and employment conditions. Local training institutions and actors increasingly deliver upskilling, reducing reliance on international NGOs and fostering sustainable, accountable ecosystems.

Results and change achieved

While formal impact studies are still pending, several consistent outcomes have been observed. Refugees, particularly youth, increasingly prioritise education and employment pathways over direct aid, indicating a shift toward self-reliance. Uptake of education and labour pathways has grown, including access facilitated independently through refugee alumni networks. Community awareness of pathways, eligibility, and application processes has improved, reducing the need for direct agency facilitation.

Challenges and how they were overcome

- Limited formal evidence: The absence of large-scale perception surveys constrains attribution. This is being mitigated through improved use of qualitative methods (trend analysis, feedback logs, outcome harvesting).
- Risk of exclusion: Peer-led models may overlook the most vulnerable if not monitored. Partners continue to provide oversight, referrals, and safeguards.
- Information overload: Managing expectations remains critical; transparent communication on limitations and risks is emphasized.

Lessons learned and replication potential

Embedding accountability within programme processes,rather than treating it as a standalone mechanism,strengthens refugee agency, ownership, and sustainability of complementary pathways. Peer-to-peer models, supported by transparent private sector engagement and light institutional oversight, reinforce AAP by placing refugees at the centre of information and decision-making. The approach is highly replicable where MEL systems prioritise qualitative change, community-led accountability, and shared responsibility, demonstrating how AAP can translate into durable, self-directed solutions.

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Working with Refugee Central Committees in Clearing the Child Birth Registration Backlog in Ethiopia

Location: Refugee camps in Somali and Afar Regions, Ethiopia
Prospects Pillar: Protection
Lead Agency: UNICEF
Partners: Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), Immigration and Citizenship Service (ICS), UNHCR, Refugee Central Committees (RCCs)
Cross-cutting priority: AAP, Refugee participation

The Practice in brief

Ethiopia hosts more than 1.1 million refugees, nearly half of whom are children, many of whom lacked birth certificates despite being legally entitled to civil registration services. Disruptions caused by COVID-19, staffing shortages, limited outreach, and low community awareness resulted in a significant backlog of unregistered

births, increasing risks of statelessness, exclusion from essential services, and child protection concerns.

To address this gap, the practice placed Refugee Central Committees (established within camps and are composed of elected refugee representatives) at the core of backlog clearance efforts, recognizing their critical role in community trust, outreach, and inclusion. RCCs worked closely with civil registrars and trained refugee youth to conduct house-to-house identification and registration, supported by targeted awareness campaigns to ensure parents understood the importance of birth registration. A rapid assessment and headcount conducted across refugee camps in Afar and Somali regions revealed that 44,544 children under 18 (63 per cent) lacked birth certificates and, for the first time, produced disaggregated data on children with disabilities, identifying 1,128 children across 10 camps, most of whom were unregistered.

Based on this evidence, UNICEF, UNHCR, RRS, and ICS jointly developed SOPs to guide backlog clearance, clearly outlining roles, workflows, and quality standards, alongside training for civil registrars on the digital ME-CRVS system. A phased backlog clearance strategy was agreed, prioritizing children under five for completion by June 2025, while operational gaps such as staffing shortages, equipment maintenance, and certificate availability were addressed. Through joint monitoring and coordination, over 70 per cent of the backlog of unregistered births among children under five was cleared by mid-2025, significantly improving access to legal identity and essential services and generating evidence to inform more inclusive and sustainable civil registration programming.

Results and change achieved

The practice resulted in a substantial improvement in access to civil registration services, with over 70 per cent of the backlog of unregistered births among children under five cleared across refugee camps in the Jijiga and Afar regions, ensuring legal identity and improved access to essential services.

It also strengthened evidence-based decision-making by generating disaggregated data on refugee children with disabilities for the first time, highlighting intersecting vulnerabilities and informing more inclusive programming, while lessons learned guided plans to expand backlog clearance to children aged 5–11 years to ensure sustainability and broader impact.

These results were strongly reflected in the experiences of refugee families themselves. As shared by Ekram Bashir, a refugee mother living near Jijiga,

> ***"Now, my daughter has her name on paper. Our hope grows with every official document we receive – a birth certificate is more than recognition."***

Similarly, Muna Mohammed Abdi highlighted the forward-looking impact of the intervention, noting,

> ***"Once her birth certificate is issued, my daughter can access services. The paper will give my girl her future."***

Challenges and How They Were Overcome

Challenges included staff shortages, power and connectivity issues, and initial community mistrust. These were addressed through surge staffing, backup manual procedures, equipment replacement, and intensive RCC-led awareness campaigns that built confidence and demand.

Lessons Learnt and Replicability

The experience showed that refugee-led structures are essential for building trust and achieving comprehensive coverage, while clear SOPs ensure consistency and coordination across actors. When combined with strong community outreach, digital tools significantly accelerate and strengthen birth registration outcomes.

The practice could be strengthened and replicated by introducing digital data collection for house-to-house identification to improve accuracy, speed, and real-time monitoring, while further integrating disability-disaggregated data and tailored inclusion strategies to ensure equitable access during backlog clearance. Sustainability would be enhanced by strengthening systems for timely birth registration, investing in adequate resources and modern technology, reinforcing real-time monitoring and evaluation, and documenting and sharing good practices—including human interest stories—to support learning, advocacy, and replication in similar refugee contexts.

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Resources/links

A Name on Paper, a Future in Sight | UNICEF Ethiopia

From Small Plots to Collective Power: Advancing Women's Participation in Agricultural Value Chains in Sudan

Location: White Nile State, Sudan
Pillar: Economic Inclusion
Lead Agency: ILO
Partners: UNHCR, HOPE
Cross-cutting Priority: Gender Equality

The practice in brief

Women in Sudan are actively engaged in small-scale farming, food processing, and agri-based micro-enterprises, yet their participation has historically been constrained by structural and legal barriers, including limited land ownership, restricted access to financial services, and weak control over income. For refugee women, these challenges are compounded by legal identity, work permit, and banking access constraints.

Under the Prospects programme, women's participation in Sudan's agricultural value chains has been strengthened through a targeted, gender-responsive approach led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with UNHCR. The practice focused on deliberately targeting women within agricultural value chains and organizing them into women-led producer groups and cooperatives (6 cooperatives formed as of June 2025) . This collective model enabled aggregation of produce, improved market access, and strengthened bargaining power. Women were supported through adapted ILO entrepreneurship and market systems tools, including Gender Entrepreneurship Together (GET) and Start and Improve Your Business methodologies, delivered in collaboration with UNHCR. Financial education modules strengthened women's capacity to manage income, savings, and enterprise finances.

Recognizing that skills development alone was insufficient, the intervention also addressed systemic barriers. Advocacy and engagement with national stakeholders, including the Central Bank of Sudan, sought to expand financial inclusion frameworks for women and refugees. Parallel sensitization supported women to obtain documentation, understand banking processes, and prepare for access to tailored microfinance and loan products.

Results and change achieved

The practice resulted in increased participation of women in agricultural producer groups and cooperatives, improved access to markets, and enhanced technical, entrepreneurial, and financial skills. Women's visibility as economic actors increased, moving engagement beyond subsistence-level production. In contexts where cooperative models were strong, women began to exercise greater control over income generated from agricultural activities such as groundnuts, sesame and cowpea farming.

Challenges and how they were overcome

Persistent barriers related to women's limited land ownership, lack of legal identity, and exclusion from formal financial systems initially constrained progress, particularly for refugee women. These challenges were compounded by restrictive gender norms that reduced women's participation in mixed training and market-facing activities. To address these constraints, the programme prioritized collective approaches by organizing women into producer groups and cooperatives, enabling shared access to land, markets, and bargaining power. Financial education and tailored entrepreneurship support were integrated to build women's capacity to manage income and engage with financial institutions, while parallel advocacy and sensitization efforts supported access to documentation and inclusive banking arrangements. Gender-responsive tools were applied throughout programme design and delivery to identify hidden barriers and adapt interventions, ensuring women's participation translated into meaningful economic gains.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

Key lessons include the importance of combining economic inclusion with collective organization, embedding financial and legal inclusion alongside skills development, and using gender-responsive tools to identify and address invisible barriers faced by women. This practice is replicable in other fragile and refugee-hosting contexts where women already participate informally in agriculture. Critical success factors include strong humanitarian–development partnerships, gender-informed value chain assessments, collective producer models, and alignment of livelihoods programming with policy and financial inclusion advocacy.

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Resources/links

Empowered with ILO's training, women farmers in Sudan expand cooperative and market opportunities

Integrated enterprise and market systems assessment on the refugee and host community livelihoods in Sudan

Value chain assessments in Sudan

Youth-Led Mental Health and Psychosocial Support through Safe and Supportive Learning Spaces in Kakuma

Location: Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya
Pillar: Education
Lead Agency: UNICEF
Partners: Save the Children International, Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR
Cross-cutting Priority: Youth engagement; Youth Participation

The practice in brief

Children and adolescents in refugee-hosting contexts such as Kakuma face prolonged displacement-related stressors, including trauma, disrupted education, uncertainty about the future, and limited access to specialized mental health services. These stressors directly undermine both psychosocial wellbeing and learning outcomes, particularly for adolescents and over-age youth enrolled in Alternative Education Programmes (AEPs). Evidence from Kenya and globally shows that schools and learning spaces are among the most effective platforms for delivering mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) at scale when interventions are embedded in daily teaching practices and peer relationships rather than delivered as stand-alone services.

Building on this evidence, youth engagement in MHPSS in Kakuma was operationalized through safe, supportive learning spaces across schools, AEP centres, and child-friendly spaces, combining classroom-based psychosocial support with structured peer-to-peer approaches. Learning environments were intentionally designed to be emotionally safe and predictable, with trained teachers and facilitators integrating social-emotional learning, psychosocial first aid, and positive classroom routines into everyday instruction—recognizing wellbeing as foundational to learning.

A core component of the approach is I Support My Friends, a structured peer-based MHPSS programme for children and adolescents aged 9 to 17, developed by UNICEF in collaboration with partners including Save the Children. The programme equips young people with practical skills to recognize distress in their peers and provide basic support using Psychological First Aid principles (Look, Listen, Link), while clearly understanding referral pathways to trusted adults. Youth are positioned as active agents of support within their social networks, with safeguarding ensured through adult supervision. In Kakuma, the approach was adapted to include older youth remaining in basic education.

This peer-based model is complemented by the Better Learning Programme, implemented by Norwegian Refugee Council, which strengthens the psychosocial quality of classrooms by supporting teachers, caregivers, and learners to create structured, healing learning environments that promote emotional regulation, coping skills, and positive relationships. Together, these interventions form a layered MHPSS model that integrates peer support, teacher-led classroom practices, and referral mechanisms within education systems, ensuring psychosocial wellbeing is addressed systematically as part of everyday learning.

Results and change achieved

The integrated, school-based MHPSS approach has contributed to measurable improvements in learners' psychosocial wellbeing and learning engagement. Learners report a stronger sense of emotional safety, belonging, and peer support within schools and AEP centres, creating

environments where they feel able to express oncerns and seek help. Adolescents engaged through peer-support mechanisms demonstrate increased confidence, leadership, and social connectedness, reflecting strengthened youth agency rather than passive receipt of services.

Teachers and facilitators observe improved attendance, participation, and classroom interaction, particularly among learners who were previously disengaged due to psychosocial distress. At the same time, normalizing conversations around stress, emotions, and help-seeking within learning spaces has reduced stigma around mental health, enabling earlier identification of needs and more timely support.

Challenges and how they were overcome

One key challenge was the risk of over-burdening young people with psychosocial support responsibilities, particularly within peer-based approaches. To address this, clear boundaries were established through structured training, ongoing adult mentorship, and well-defined referral protocols. These measures ensured that youth provided basic, appropriate support while understanding their limits and the importance of linking peers to trained adults and services when needed.

A second challenge related to the diversity of age groups and learning pathways within schools and Alternative Education Programmes (AEPs), including younger adolescents alongside over-age learners. This was addressed by adapting programme materials and facilitation approaches to remain developmentally appropriate and relevant across age groups, while maintaining core psychosocial principles and safeguarding standards.

Finally, limited documentation and consolidation of evidence initially constrained the ability to demonstrate results and support wider learning. In response, partners committed to more systematic documentation, drawing on global guidance and established evidence bases to capture outcomes, lessons learned, and implementation processes. This strengthened the basis for learning, replication, and recognition of the intervention as a good practice rather than an ad hoc activity.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

Youth engagement in MHPSS is most effective when psychosocial support is embedded within everyday learning environments rather than delivered through isolated or parallel services. Peer-to-peer models such as I Support My Friends are particularly impactful when paired with strong adult facilitation and safeguarding mechanisms, while teacher-focused approaches like the Better Learning Programme are essential complements that ensure the wider learning environment consistently supports wellbeing. Planning for evidence generation and documentation from the outset is critical to enable learning, advocacy, and informed scale-up. This practice is highly replicable in other displacement-affected and fragile education contexts where schools, Alternative Education Programmes, or child-friendly spaces are in place. Key prerequisites include trained facilitators, clear referral pathways, alignment with national education and child protection systems, and deliberate investment in documentation and learning. The combined use of globally validated tools such as I Support My Friends and the Better Learning Programme provides a strong foundation for scale while allowing for contextual adaptation across diverse settings.

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Resources/Link

I support my friends
I support my friends resource kit
Mental health and psychosocial support in schools: Findings from NRC's Better Learning Programme in Kenya

Bringing Services Closer: Community Engagement in Critical Infrastructure under the Prospects Programme in Sudan

Location: White Nile State, Sudan
Pillar: Critical infrastructure
Lead Agency: UNHCR
Partners: ILO, UNICEF
Cross-cutting Priority: Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

The practice in brief

In Sudan, limited access to safe water, sanitation, and adequate shelter has posed significant public health, protection, and social cohesion risks for refugees and host communities, particularly in areas such as White Nile State. Women and girls, traditionally responsible for household water collection, were often required to travel long distances, exposing them to protection risks including sexual and gender-based violence. Flood-prone environments and recurrent cholera outbreaks further highlighted the need for climate-sensitive and inclusive infrastructure solutions.

Prior to Prospects interventions, infrastructure investments were often fragmented and camp-focused, with limited community involvement, weak ownership, and heightened risk of tension between refugee and host populations.

UNHCR adopted a community-engaged, area-based approach that placed refugees and host communities at the centre of infrastructure planning, implementation, and oversight. The area based approach entails looking at the needs, systems, and services of the whole area (including both refugees and host communities) so that infrastructure investments benefit everyone living there. Instead of parallel services that only target refugees, the programme strengthens shared WASH infrastructure and governance structures within White Nile State. In line with UNHCR's commitment to AAP, the practice focused on embedding infrastructure within local systems while strengthening community ownership and accountability. This includes:

- Improving access to safe water through the rehabilitation and construction of water networks, tanks, and distribution points, bringing services closer to households and significantly reducing health and protection risks.
- Climate-sensitive and gender-responsive sanitation infrastructure, particularly in flood-prone areas, designed to enhance privacy, safety, and usability for women and girls, while contributing to cholera risk mitigation.
- Durable shelter and housing construction, improving protection from extreme weather, enhancing dignity and privacy, , enhancing dignity and privacy, and strengthening household resilience.

The community engagement approach combines labour-based construction with inclusive governance to strengthen both livelihoods and sustainability. Youth are actively engaged in infrastructure works, generating short-term employment and income while building practical, market-relevant skills. At the same time, mixed refugee-host WASH committees are established to oversee implementation and maintenance, ensuring shared ownership. Women are deliberately represented in decision-making roles within these structures, reinforcing accountability, inclusion, and long-term sustainability of services.

Results and change achieved

Community engagement under this pillar led to

improvement in access to basic services and social cohesion. Over 37,000 people gained improved access to safe water, while sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion activities reduced public health risks, including cholera outbreaks. Durable shelters enhanced protection and resilience for refugee and host households. Youth participation in construction generated employment and strengthened local skills pathways. Community-led oversight improved transparency, reduced tensions, and strengthened long-term operation and maintenance of infrastructure assets.

Challenges and how they were overcome

The scale of WASH and infrastructure needs far exceeded available resources, creating risks of competition and tension between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. To address this, the programme emphasized early and continuous community engagement, transparent communication of selection criteria, and joint validation of beneficiaries by refugee and host community leaders. This participatory approach helped manage expectations, reduce conflict, and reinforce social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

- Community engagement is critical to ensuring equitable access, acceptance, and sustainability of infrastructure investments.
- Bringing services closer to communities delivers health, protection, and gender outcomes, beyond technical infrastructure gains.
- Inclusive governance structures, with women represented in decision-making, strengthen accountability and ownership.
- Labour-based and youth-inclusive approaches link infrastructure development with economic inclusion and resilience.

This practice is highly replicable in other displacement-affected and fragile contexts where infrastructure gaps intersect with protection and social cohesion risks.

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Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Child-Friendly Spaces

Location: White Nile & Kassala States - Sudan
Pillar: Protection (Child Protection)
Lead Agency: UNICEF
Partners: CDF and GDO NGOs; Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) social workers; COR; UNHCR
Cross-cutting Priority: Disability Inclusion

The practice in brief

In Sudan, children with disabilities face persistent exclusion from child protection and psychosocial services due to intersecting barriers, including stigma, negative social norms, lack of assistive devices, and inaccessible service environments. These challenges have been further intensified by ongoing conflict, displacement, economic collapse, and disruptions to supply chains, leaving many families unable to access or afford basic disability-related support. As a result, children with disabilities (particularly internally displaced and refugee children) have been at heightened risk of isolation, protection concerns, and exclusion from Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS), despite these spaces being designed as inclusive safe environments.

To address these gaps, UNICEF, under the PROSPECTS partnership, implemented a multi-layered good practice to systematically include children with disabilities in Child-Friendly Spaces. The approach combined sustained capacity building, inclusive programme design, strengthened child protection case management, and intensive community engagement.

Disability inclusion was mainstreamed across coordination, planning, contracting, and implementation processes, rather than treated as a standalone or parallel activity.

Capacity strengthening began at coordination level, with knowledge transfer from UNICEF Headquarters and the Regional Office to the Country Office through targeted trainings and presentations during Child Protection meetings. This was institutionalized through the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR), ensuring that NGOs and partners shared a common understanding of inclusive child protection. Within UNICEF, all staff were required to complete AGORA training on inclusive child protection, reinforcing minimum standards across the response.

At field level, implementing partners and social workers were trained to adapt activities, proactively include children with disabilities in CFS programming, and apply participation quotas where appropriate. Child protection case management systems were deliberately leveraged to identify children whose vulnerabilities were linked to disability, including those with non-visible impairments, and to provide individualized support. Where possible, this included facilitating access to assistive devices such as wheelchairs or hearing aids through local or alternative procurement mechanisms supported by UNICEF.

Community engagement was a central pillar of the practice. Parents, caregivers, children, and adolescents were engaged through awareness sessions, parenting discussions, creative activities, and facilitated dialogue within Child-Friendly Spaces. These efforts aimed to address stigma, shift social norms, and foster an enabling environment in which children with disabilities could safely and confidently participate alongside their peers, even amid displacement and crisis.

Results and change achieved

As a result of this practice, the inclusion of children with disabilities in Child-Friendly Spaces became more intentional, systematic, and visible across supported locations. Disability considerations were increasingly integrated at the design stage of programmes, leading to improved access, participation, and retention of children with disabilities, including internally displaced and refugee children.

Figure 5: Refugee children with disabilities with a social worker in UNICEF/CDF Child friendly space in Shagarab refugee camp, Kassala State. – UNICEF/ Sudan

"I'm so happy to see my son back to life, playing with the other children in the Child-Friendly Space. This was possible thanks to the provision of the wheelchair, as well as all the support we received from the CFS facilitators." - Amina, mother of Omer, White Nile

Strengthened child protection case management significantly improved the identification of children with disabilities and enabled tailored, needs-based support. Children who had previously been excluded due to mobility limitations, sensory impairments, or stigma were able to attend and actively engage in CFS activities. For many families, access to Child-Friendly Spaces provided not only psychosocial support for children, but also a renewed sense of dignity, safety, and belonging during crisis.

Key success factors included sustained investment in capacity building across all levels; deliberate embedding of disability inclusion into programme design, contracts, and monitoring frameworks; systematic use of case management to provide individualized support; and consistent community engagement to address stigma and social barriers. The alignment of these elements created reinforcing effects that improved both access and quality of inclusion.

"The Child-Friendly Space became a critical place of support for my whole family. Three of my children and I have disabilities. We came to Sudan from Eritrea to seek medical treatment, but due to the war this was no longer possible and we became stranded in Shagarab Refugee Camp. I bring all my children to the Child-Friendly Space every day, where social workers care for them and support our family, while my wife attends the Women and Girls' Safe Space. These spaces give us a sense of belonging, safety, and some normalcy in these very difficult circumstances." - Ibrahim, mother of 3 children, Kassala

Challenges and how they were overcome

The main challenges encountered were limited technical capacity on disability inclusion, persistent stigma within communities, and severe constraints in accessing assistive devices due to conflict, market disruptions, and resource shortages. These challenges were addressed through structured and repeated capacity building, intensive awareness raising with caregivers and communities, and the strategic use of case management to prioritize and mobilize available resources for the most vulnerable children. Despite these efforts, access to assistive devices remains a significant constraint, particularly in highly insecure and resource-constrained settings. Limited government capacity, especially within the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the ongoing conflict continue to affect the sustainability and scale of inclusive services.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

This practice demonstrates that disability inclusion in child protection is most effective when barriers are systematically identified and addressed through coordinated, multi-level action. Capacity building and community sensitization are foundational, as stigma and exclusion often present greater barriers than physical accessibility alone. Child protection case management is a critical enabler for identifying children with disabilities (particularly those with non-visible impairments) and linking them to appropriate support.

While sustainability remains challenging in fragile contexts, the practice shows strong potential for replication in other displacement-affected settings where Child-Friendly Spaces and case management systems are in place. Replication requires donor commitment to mainstream disability inclusion across funding frameworks, continued government engagement for system strengthening, and avoidance of parallel or segregated programming. The PROSPECTS partnership and donor leadership were instrumental in advancing this agenda, underscoring the importance of policy space and flexible support for inclusive programming.

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Resources/Links

https://www.instagram.com/p/DOsr_tEE_2v/?igsh=eWY5eWMweHQzeXN3

Dadaab Collective's RLO-led model for inclusive, accountable digital livelihoods in Dadaab

Location: Dadaab camp, Kenya
Pillar: Economic Inclusion
Lead Agency: Dadaab Collective Freelancing Agency (local refugee-led organization)
Partners: UNHCR, ILO, UNICEF, DRC, NRC
Cross-cutting Priority: Youth Engagement, AAP, Refugee Participation

The practice in brief

In Dadaab, access to dignified and sustainable livelihoods remains constrained by limited local labour markets, mobility restrictions, and structural inequalities affecting youth, women, and persons with disabilities. While digital livelihoods and online work have emerged as promising alternatives (particularly for young refugees) many programmes struggle to translate skills training into real income opportunities. Common gaps include weak accountability to communities, limited participation of women and persons with disabilities, and delivery models that position refugees as beneficiaries rather than partners. At the same time, PROSPECTS places strong emphasis on localisation, inclusion, and pathways from learning to earning, creating space for refugee-led actors to play a more central role in implementation.

Against this backdrop, Dadaab Collective, a registered Refugee-Led Organization (RLO), has worked closely with PROSPECTS partners to deliver digital livelihood initiatives that deliberately integrate accountability, youth engagement, gender equality, and disability inclusion as intersecting priorities rather than standalone components. The practice is anchored in a community-driven design and delivery approach. From the outset, refugees and host community members are engaged in shaping activities (such as digital skills training, mentorship, entrepreneurship support, and employment services) ensuring that programmes respond to real aspirations and constraints. Accountability to affected populations is operationalised not only through information sharing, but through continuous listening: open discussions, follow-up sessions, and direct engagement with participants create regular feedback loops. This allows Dadaab Collective and PROSPECTS partners to adjust implementation in real time and strengthens trust between communities and programme actors.

UNHCR facilitated the formal registration of Dadaab Collective Freelancing Agency through the relevant government departments of social services, enabling the group to operate as a recognized Refugee-Led Organization (RLO). Through PROSPECTS, UNHCR and partners (including DRC, ILO, NRC and UNICEF) provided targeted capacity-building support to strengthen the group's organisational governance, financial management, safeguarding, accountability to affected populations (AAP), and digital livelihoods delivery. This institutional support positioned Dadaab Collective not only as an implementing partner, but also as a co-designer of digital livelihood interventions and a trusted intermediary between refugees, host communities, and digital labour market actors.

Youth engagement is central to the model and closely intertwined with accountability and inclusion. Young people are treated as partners and co-implementers, not just trainees. Youth support mobilisation, facilitate peer learning, serve as mentors and role models, and in some cases contribute as trainers. Because these

mentors share language, lived experience, and context with participants, they are able to translate digital livelihood concepts into locally relevant solutions. Many programme ideas (particularly under digital entrepreneurship and employment initiatives) have emerged directly from youth who best understand the realities of displacement and the digital economy. Members of Dadaab Collective are formally engaged as mentors and peer trainers for refugee and host community digital skills learners supported under PROSPECTS. The group is assigned mentorship responsibilities, conducts coaching clinics, supports portfolio development, and provides guidance on online job applications and client management. This structured mentorship function bridges the gap between training and real income generation.

Gender equality and disability inclusion are addressed through practical, intersectional measures embedded in delivery. Working with PROSPECTS partners, Dadaab Collective deliberately identifies female youth and persons with disabilities during mobilisation and adapts training arrangements to reduce barriers to participation. This includes scheduling activities in ways that reflect care responsibilities, creating safe and supportive learning spaces, using inclusive facilitation methods, and adjusting venues and approaches where feasible for accessibility. Rather than focusing on limitations, the practice centres participants' abilities and aspirations, linking them to livelihood options that are realistic, dignified, and sustainable within the digital economy. Members of Dadaab Collective are formally engaged as mentors and peer trainers for refugee and host community digital skills learners supported under PROSPECTS.

The group is assigned mentorship responsibilities, conducts coaching clinics, supports portfolio development, and provides guidance on online job applications and client management. This structured mentorship function bridges the gap between training and real income generation.

Figure 6: A digital freelancer and youth peer trainer in Dagahaley, Dadaab Refugee Camps - UNHCR/Kenya

Results and change achieved

Evidence from digital livelihood initiatives linked to Dadaab and similar refugee/host digital freelancing pipelines shows tangible income generation and market entry when training is paired with mentorship and intermediation.

For example, youths interviewed in Dadaab reported earning a monthly income of between USD 1,000 to USD 5,000 from online jobs.

Learning from the MEL sessions also pointed to stronger "learning-to-earning" linkages (including transitions into the ILO digital mentorship/job transition track implemented through Dadaab Collective), showing complementarity across partners and reinforcing the role of RLOs in delivery pathways.

The approach has also contributed to improved inclusion outcomes, with increased participation of female youth and persons with disabilities in digital skills and freelancing pathways. Female mentors emerging from Dadaab Collective now act as role models for new cohorts, while adapted training arrangements have enabled persons with disabilities to access digital work opportunities that were previously out of reach.

Figure 7: A digital freelancer working in the shared space at the Dadaab Collective Service Freelancing Agency in Dagahaley, Dadaab Refugee Camps - UNHCR/Kenya

Challenges and how they were overcome

Dadaab Collective operates simple internal governance structures, including a leadership committee, regular member meetings, and transparent selection criteria for mentorship and training support.

Feedback from participants is documented and shared with PROSPECTS partners, ensuring two-way accountability and joint problem-solving.

Key challenges included female youth's limited participation in conservative and displacement contexts, the risk of excluding persons with disabilities, and the tendency for accountability to stop at information sharing.

These were addressed through practical and coordinated measures: creating safe and supportive learning spaces, scheduling activities to reflect care responsibilities, using inclusive facilitation approaches, and investing in safeguarding and community sensitisation to enable female youth's meaningful engagement.

Exclusion of persons with disabilities was mitigated by deliberately identifying them during mobilisation and adapting venues and training methods where feasible. To strengthen accountability, structured feedback moments (through discussions, follow-ups, and direct engagement) were embedded throughout implementation, coupled with a willingness to adjust delivery based on what participants identified as working or not working.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

This practice shows that digital livelihoods are most effective when community actors co-lead delivery, rather than being limited to outreach or mobilisation roles.

Treating youth as implementers, mentors, and peer trainers transforms engagement, strengthens relevance, and accelerates learning-to-earning pathways. Gender equality and disability inclusion also require deliberate operational choices around timing, space, facilitation, safeguarding, and accessibility; targets alone are insufficient without changes to how programmes are delivered.

The model is highly replicable in other displacement settings where a refugee-led or community-led entity exists or can be supported to emerge. Global evidence on digital labour platforms further reinforces that scalable digital livelihoods depend on trusted intermediaries, like RLOs, that can connect displaced talent to opportunities while also improving access, protection, and working conditions, rather than relying on short-term training alone.

Key preconditions for replication include: (i) early investment in RLO registration and institutional capacity; (ii) formal recognition of RLOs as delivery partners; (iii) linkages to market-facing actors and digital platforms; and (iv) sustained mentorship and intermediation beyond short-term training cycles.

The model enhances sustainability by progressively shifting functions (mobilisation, mentorship, peer training, and intermediation) to the RLO, reducing long-term dependency on external implementers.

Contact Information

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Resources/Link
Meet the refugees working as digital nomads
Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative: Building Solutions for Somali Refugees in a Fragile Protracted Displacement Scenario (RESI Dadaab II)
Empowering entrepreneurs and freelancers to leverage digital economy opportunities in Kenya

Restoring Access to Justice through Survivor-Centred Legal Aid for South Sudanese Refugees in White Nile State

Location: White Nile State – Sudan
Pillar: Protection (Legal Aid)
Lead Agency: UNHCR
Partners: Mutawinat (local legal aid organization)
Cross-cutting Priority: Gender Equality (Equal Access to Justice), Meaningful participation, Localization

The practice in brief

Prior to January 2025, South Sudanese refugees in White Nile State faced severe barriers to accessing justice. Limited legal awareness, widespread ethnic discrimination, reliance on informal dispute mechanisms, and fear of retaliation contributed to significant underreporting of legal violations, including gender-based violence (GBV). Many refugees had little understanding of their rights under refugee law, international human rights frameworks, or Sudanese legal procedures. As one male refugee reflected during a legal consultation,

> "We used to hear many things from people, but we did not know which was true under the law."

Women, children, and GBV survivors were particularly affected, often remaining silent due to stigma and lack of survivor-centred legal support.

In response, UNHCR, in partnership with Mutawinat (Women-Led local NGO supporting legal access for women and children), implemented a structured legal aid initiative under the Access to Justice and Legal Representation programme. The practice delivers survivor-centred, trauma-informed legal assistance across all ten refugee camps in Eastern and Western White Nile State. Services include legal consultations, legal representation, and community-based legal awareness sessions, provided directly within refugee locations to reduce access barriers. The intervention prioritises women, children, and GBV survivors, ensuring confidentiality, informed consent, and integration with protection and psychosocial referral pathways. By combining rights-based legal education with individual case support, the practice bridges the gap between refugees and formal justice systems while rebuilding trust and accountability.

Results and change achieved

Since implementation began, access to legal services has improved markedly. A total of 83 refugees received legal representation (26 women and 57 men), while 119 individuals accessed legal consultations (43 women and 76 men). Refugees who previously avoided formal justice mechanisms are increasingly seeking legal advice and pursuing remedies through safer, more accountable channels.

One of the most significant results has been the increased confidence and agency of refugees, particularly women and GBV survivors. A female survivor shared,

"Before, I was afraid to speak because I did not know my rights and I feared being blamed. After receiving legal advice, I understood that what happened to me was not my fault and that I had the right to protection."

This shift reflects how survivor-centred and trauma-informed approaches enabled individuals to engage with legal processes without fear. Legal awareness sessions have also strengthened refugees' understanding of their rights and Sudanese legal frameworks, contributing to more informed decision-making and earlier reporting of violations. As one male refugee noted,

"The legal sessions helped us understand Sudanese laws and our rights as refugees. Now I know where to go if I face a legal problem."

Key success factors underpinning these results include comprehensive coverage across all ten camps, reducing physical and social barriers to access; culturally sensitive, community-based outreach that built trust over time; and strong coordination with protection actors to ensure effective referrals and holistic support. The consistent presence of trained legal personnel helped normalise legal aid as a trusted protection service. As one refugee explained,

"Having someone explain the process and stand with me during my case gave me confidence. I no longer felt alone, and I felt that my voice mattered."

Challenges and how they were overcome

A major challenge was low legal awareness and deep mistrust of formal justice systems, shaped by previous experiences of discrimination and exclusion. Many refugees initially feared reporting violations or engaging with legal actors. This was addressed throughsustained community engagement, repeated legal awareness sessions, , and clear messaging around confidentiality and survivor safety. Over time, these efforts helped reduce stigma and encouraged more open engagement.

A community member observed that,

"people in the camp are now more willing to ask questions and seek legal help, especially women."

Operational constraints, including limited resources, economic deterioration, and security-related mobility restrictions, affected service delivery. These challenges were mitigated through prioritisation of the most vulnerable cases, flexible implementation modalities, and strengthened coordination with protection partners to maximise available resources and maintain continuity of services.

Lessons learnt and replication potential

The practice demonstrates that legal aid in refugee contexts must be rights-based, survivor-centred, and community-embedded to be effective. Trust-building is as critical as technical legal expertise, particularly for GBV survivors and marginalised groups. Integrating legal awareness with individual case support empowers refugees to understand and claim their rights, while linking legal assistance with psychosocial and protection services ensures more meaningful outcomes. This model is highly replicable in other displacement settings where refugees face legal exclusion and rely heavily on informal justice mechanisms. Replication would be strengthened by investing in community-based refugee paralegals, formalising coordination with national legal institutions, and adapting delivery modalities to security constraints. By restoring confidence, dignity, and access to justice, this practice offers a sustainable and scalable approach to strengthening protection outcomes for refugees in fragile contexts.

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5. Analysis of Mainstreaming Cross-Cutting Priorities

This section provides an analytical synthesis of how the cross-cutting priorities have been mainstreamed across PROSPECTS pillars. The analysis integrates documented good practices, country consultations, and findings emerging from the regional workshop discussions, with a focus on identifying systemic strengths, persistent gaps, and implications for programme quality and accountability.

Across all pillars, the documentation highlights that mainstreaming of AAP, gender, youth and disability inclusion is most effective when it is intentional, resourced and embedded from the design stage. Common success factors include early community engagement, clear roles and targets, partnerships with refugee-led and community-based organisations, and practical adaptations to time, space, communication and accessibility.

However, mainstreaming remains uneven across pillars and countries. Key challenges identified include uneven technical capacity across countries and pillars, limited harmonisation of tools and indicators, weak use of disaggregated data in some sectors, and constraints related to funding, staffing and operating contexts (particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings).

5.1 Accountability to Affected Populations

Workshop discussions and country consultations confirmed that AAP is widely recognized as a core principle under PROSPECTS and is actively operationalized across all pillars. Community consultations, refugee welfare committees, peer mentors, alumni networks, and refugee-led organizations contribute to programme delivery. In several contexts, refugees co-design information flows and support outreach, strengthening ownership and improving uptake of services. However, AAP remains unevenly institutionalized. While feedback mechanisms exist, documentation of feedback closure is inconsistent, and structured processes are not systematically embedded within MEL frameworks. Community-Based Organizations reported limited access to programme-generated data despite being expected to plan and implement activities, which constrains shared accountability and community data ownership. AAP is therefore strongest at implementation level but less visible in strategic decision-making and planning cycles. Without formal data-sharing protocols, structured feedback integration, and explicit inclusion in results frameworks, AAP risks remaining procedural rather than transformative.

5.2 Gender Equality

Gender equality is systematically referenced across PROSPECTS pillars and is frequently operationalized through clear participation targets, flexible scheduling, gender-sensitive outreach, and supportive measures such as childcare. These approaches have significantly improved women's access to education, livelihoods, and protection services, particularly among female-headed households and marginalized groups. Gender-sensitive market assessments have informed value chain selection in economic inclusion programming, demonstrating stronger alignment between gender analysis and sectoral interventions. Nevertheless, workshop reflections highlighted that while gender-sensitive programming is strong, evidence of gender-transformative change remains limited. Measurement frameworks rarely capture shifts in intra-household decision-making, leadership roles, income control, or structural barriers. Budget allocation for gender-responsive measures is not consistently tracked, and gender analysis is not always explicitly linked to pillar-level outcome indicators. Moving forward, the transition from gender-sensitive to gender-transformative programming will require deeper integration into MEL systems, clearer articulation of structural change objectives, and more deliberate linkage to durable solutions and systems strengthening outcomes.

5.3 Disability Inclusion

Disability inclusion is increasingly visible within PROSPECTS programming but remains the least systematically mainstreamed of the four cross-cutting priorities. In several documented practices, inclusion targets were set and accessible venues, adaptive learning materials, and inclusive outreach strategies were employed. These measures have contributed to improved access for persons with disabilities across sectors. However, disability-disaggregated data collection is inconsistent, limiting the ability to assess outcomes beyond participation rates. Inclusion efforts often prioritize physical access rather than meaningful participation, leadership, or long-term socio-economic outcomes. Budget allocations for reasonable accommodation are frequently insufficient or not explicitly earmarked, and technical capacity on disability inclusion varies significantly across partners and pillars. Partners emphasized that system-level alignment, standardized guidance, and dedicated resource allocation are necessary to move from intentional inclusion to systemic and measurable disability-inclusive programming.

5.4 Youth Engagement

Youth engagement represents one of the most dynamic areas of innovation under PROSPECTS. Youth-led digital livelihoods initiatives, peer mentorship models, and youth-centered MHPSS approaches demonstrate strong ownership, leadership, and aspirational shifts among young people. Youth engagement is most effective where young people act as mentors, facilitators, and co-implementers rather than passive beneficiaries. Structured adult mentorship and safeguarding mechanisms are critical to prevent over-burdening youth while sustaining safe participation. Despite strong operational models, youth engagement remains less institutionalized within strategic planning and coordination platforms. Evidence generation on youth-led impact is not consistently embedded from programme inception, limiting the ability to demonstrate contribution to pillar-level outcomes. Institutionalizing youth leadership within governance structures and MEL systems will be essential for sustaining and scaling transformative results.

5.5 Coordination of cross-cutting priorities

Reflections from country offices indicate that, while Prospects programmes are achieving strong results on the ground, country level coordination among partners often remains insufficiently outcome-oriented, which undermines effective mainstreaming of cross-cutting priorities such as gender equality, youth engagement, AAP and disability inclusion. Coordination tends to be activity-focused, with partners operating in parallel due to differences in mandates, tools, and data systems. Although field-level collaboration is relatively strong, these efforts are not consistently linked to country-level planning and strategic decision-making, limiting opportunities to embed cross-cutting priorities into shared results frameworks.

The Sudan experience demonstrates that more effective outcomes are possible when coordination is intentionally structured across community, field, and country levels, and when cross-cutting priorities are integral to partner agreements rather than optional components. These approaches moved coordination beyond information-sharing towards collective problem-solving and adaptive implementation.

At the regional level, coordination of cross-cutting priorities under the PROSPECTS programme has been strengthened through the Regional Community of Practice (CoP), which has created a structured platform for technical exchange, peer learning, and alignment across country operations. The CoP has successfully elevated cross-cutting priorities as shared responsibilities rather than partner-specific mandates, fostering greater coherence in tools, reporting approaches, and good practice documentation across Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Strengthen PROSPECTS M&E Methodologies to Capture Cross-Cutting Contributions to Pillar Outcomes

PROSPECTS should further strengthen its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework to systematically assess how cross-cutting priorities (AAP, gender equality, youth engagement and disability inclusion) contribute to outcomes across each pillar. This requires moving beyond activity-level reporting towards methodologies that capture changes in participation, agency, access, and systems-level outcomes. Recommended actions include:

- Integrating qualitative methodologies such as outcome harvesting, participatory case studies, Most Significant Change (MSC) stories, and contribution analysis to document how cross-cutting approaches influence education, livelihoods, protection and infrastructure outcomes.

- Standardising the use of sex-, age-, disability- and displacement-disaggregated data across all pillars and partners, with clear guidance on minimum datasets and indicators linked to the PROSPECTS Theory of Change.

- Strengthening feedback loops between community-generated evidence and programme decision-making, ensuring that learning from AAP mechanisms and participatory monitoring informs programme adaptation, advocacy and reporting.

- Building partner capacity to analyse and use qualitative and participatory data, particularly at country level, to demonstrate the added value of inclusive and accountable programming.

6.2 Reinforce the Role of the Regional Community of Practice (CoP) in Supporting Pillar Outcomes

Community-based organisations (CBOs) and refugee-led organisations (RLOs) play a critical role in enabling meaningful refugee participation, accountability and sustainability of PROSPECTS interventions. Consultations and feedback from RLOs highlighted a significant gap between expectations placed on them to plan and implement activities and their access to data generated through PROSPECTS programmes. To address this, PROSPECTS partners should:

- Recognise CBOs and RLOs as co-producers and co-owners of community data rather than solely implementers or outreach actors, particularly where data is generated through participatory assessments, feedback mechanisms and community consultations.

- Establish clear protocols for data sharing, transparency and ethical use of community data, ensuring that RLOs have timely access to relevant findings to inform their planning, advocacy and implementation.

- Integrate RLOs and CBOs into MEL processes, including participatory data collection, validation of findings, and joint interpretation of results, to strengthen accountability and trust.

- Invest in capacity strengthening for community actors on data literacy, analysis and evidence-based advocacy, enabling them to use data to influence programme design, monitor outcomes and engage constructively with partners and government counterparts.

7. Conclusion

The PROSPECTS Partnership demonstrates that meaningful mainstreaming of AAP, gender equality, youth engagement and disability inclusion is both achievable and impactful when grounded in community participation, partnership and systems thinking.

The good practices documented in this report provide a strong foundation for scaling inclusive, accountable and sustainable approaches across countries and pillars.

Addressing remaining gaps (particularly in disability inclusion, evidence generation and institutionalization) will be critical to maximising impact during the remainder of PROSPECTS Phase II and beyond.

8. Annexes

Prospects CoP AAP TIP SHEET 2026
Prospects Disability Inclusion Tipsheet 2026
Prospects Gender Equality Tipsheet

PROGRAM: PROSPECTS 2.0
ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP) TIPSHEET

PARTNERS: UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, ILO – International Labour Organization, World Bank – The World Bank Group, IFC – International Finance Corporation

YEAR: 2026

1.0 INTRODUCTION

About PROSPECTS 2.0 program

PROSPECTS 2.0 is a four-year, multi-partner initiative (2024–2027) funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

It is implemented by UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, the World Bank, and IFC across Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

The program aims to strengthen protection and advance durable solutions for displaced populations through inclusive, multi-sectoral approaches.

The program aims to enhance protection and durable solutions through inclusive, multi-sectoral programming structured around four core pillars:

- **Education and Learning:** Expanding access to quality education, skills development, and learning opportunities for both displaced populations and host communities.
- **Economic Inclusion:** Promoting livelihoods and dignified economic opportunities through improved access to employment and entrepreneurship.
- **Protection, Social Protection, and Inclusion:** Strengthening government-led protection and inclusion of forcibly displaced persons and host communities within community-based, local, and national social protection systems.
- **Critical Infrastructure:** Enhancing essential services, facilities, and information systems that support the well-being and resilience of forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

PROSPECTS 2.0 program cross-cutting priorities

Prospects program integrates several cross-cutting priorities across all programmatic pillars to ensure inclusive and equitable outcomes.

These include Gender Equality and Diversity Sensitivity, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Meaningful Refugee and Youth Engagement, Disability Inclusion and Localization of Responses.

To support coordination and learning on cross-cutting themes, the Prospects program partners in East Africa region established a Regional Community of Practice (CoP)/Working Group on Cross-Cutting Aspects, co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR.

This platform fosters collaboration by introducing new ways of working, enhancing coordination, and promoting knowledge exchange.

It enables sharing of good practices and innovative approaches to ensure critical dimensions are embedded in programming, strengthening impact and building resilience for displaced populations and host communities.

The platform also supports alignment of strategies and joint advocacy across the four targeted countries.

Why the AAP tip sheet

This AAP tip sheet has been developed as an initiative of the Regional Cross-Cutting Aspects Community of Practices to provide guidance to staff and partners engaged in the Prospects 2.0 program on effectively mainstreaming Accountability to Affected People (AAP) across all program pillars.

The tip sheet equips partners with practical guidance to consistently apply accountability principles across program activities and helps strengthen their capacity to engage affected populations effectively, ensuring feedback and participation are integrated into decision-making.

This resource also promotes alignment with organizational and donor commitments to transparency and inclusion

AAP building blocks

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is grounded in four key pillars: participation and inclusion; communication and transparent information sharing;

feedback and response mechanisms; and organizational learning and adaptation. These pillars are supported by efforts to strengthen partner capacity, promote evidence-based advocacy, enhance coordination, and foster strategic partnerships to ensure more inclusive and responsive programming.

2.0 GUIDANCE FOR PARTNERS ACROSS THE AAP BUILDING BLOCKS

AAP BUILDING BLOCKS	KEY ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS ACTIONS
1. Participation and Inclusion	**Objective:** Enables all communities to take part in all phases of program management cycle • Assess and prioritize existing capacities and structures that enable par ticipation • Assess participation barriers and opportunities • Meaningful and targeted community engagement • Observe diversity and inclusivity

AAP BUILDING BLOCKS	KEY ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS ACTIONS
2. Communication and transparent information sharing	**Objective:** Build trust and accountability, ensuring stakeholders receive accurate, timely information to make informed decisions • Seek community opinions on preferred communication channels and ensure inclusiveness • Establish/adapt multiple two-way communication channels • Codevelop and test community key messages across program pillars with affected populations • Develop targeted messages on selection criteria, available services and opportunities, changes in implementation etc. • Conduct Regular community review forums
3. Feedback and response mechanisms	**Objective:** Ensure community concerns are acknowledged, addressed, and integrated into decision-making processes • Seek community opinions on feedback channels and ensure mechanisms are inclusive. • Set up a structured Feedback and Response System (FRS) with clear SoPs and referral pathways for sensitive and non-sensitive feedback. • Record all feedback, including misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech, and maintain proper documentation. • Analyze feedback trends and disseminate findings to inform program decisions and improvements. • Close the feedback loop by responding to communities and consider interagency coordination for a unified FRS.
4. Organizational learning and adaptation	**Objective:** To continuously improve programs and respond effectively to changing community needs and contexts • Document good practices and lessons learned across all program pillars. • Analyze community feedback regularly and identify emerging trends. • Use feedback to adapt programming and improve interventions across pillars. • Incorporate community voices from research and assessments into advocacy and policymaking. • Share feedback with partners to enable collective Inter-agency approaches for program adaptation.

2.0 AAP CONSIDERATIONS ACROSS PROSPECTS 2.0 PROGRAM PILLARS

PILLAR	AAP CONSIDERATIONS
Education & Learning	• Ensure learners, parents, and education stakeholders, including marginalized groups, participate in school planning and governance processes. • Share clear and accessible information on curriculum, academic calendars, roles, rights, and available support services through multiple formal channels. • Establish safe and confidential feedback mechanisms within schools for reporting concerns, complaints, and suggestions. • Respond promptly to feedback and close the loop through formal communication structures such as school boards or parent-teacher associations. • Use feedback and learner input to adapt teaching methods, learning materials, and school programs for improved quality and inclusivity. • Advocate for policy improvements based on community voices and evidence.
Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion	• Engage affected communities and Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) in identifying livelihood priorities, selection criteria and co-designing interventions to ensure relevance and ownership. • Share clear, accessible information on eligibility criteria, selection processes, timelines, and available support services through multiple channels. • Establish safe and confidential feedback and response mechanisms and ensure timely responses to close the feedback loop. • Use community feedback and market assessments to adapt livelihood strategies and promote inclusivity (gender, youth, persons with disabilities). • Integrate Learning to Earning pathways in a way that is transparent, inclusive, and responsive to community input, ensuring equal access to skills development, fair selection criteria, and clear communication on job opportunities.

PILLAR	AAP CONSIDERATIONS
Protection & Social Protection	• Convene protection committees and include RLOs to jointly identify risks, design assistance modalities, and agree on safeguards. • Provide clear, multilingual guidance on rights, eligibility, referral options, case timelines, and data use, shared through trusted, low-risk channels. • Identify, support and complement existing government Grievance/Feedback Mechanisms. Eg. Beneficiary Welfare Committees within the National Safety Net Programme • Operate survivor - centered, confidential feedback mechanisms with mapped referral pathways for GBV, child protection, and other sensitive cases. • Regularly synthesize community feedback with protection risks analyses and adjust targeting, delivery mechanisms, and outreach to reach those most at risk (PWDs, older persons, adolescents, minorities). • Advocate for inclusive policies and enforcing Do No Harm, data protection, and clear case closure/appeal processes
Critical Infrastructure	• Engage communities, Institutions and Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) in site selection, design, prioritization and implementation of WASH, shelter, and connectivity services to ensure relevance and safety. • Share clear, accessible information on construction timelines, service standards, roles, and complaint mechanisms through trusted channels and in local languages. • Establish safe and confidential feedback systems for reporting infrastructure issues, safety concerns, or exclusion, and ensure timely resolution and communication back to the community. • Use community feedback and technical assessments to adapt infrastructure plans, ensuring inclusivity for vulnerable groups (women, children, persons with disabilities) and compliance with protection standards.

3.0 GUIDANCE FOR PARTNERS ACROSS THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CYCLE

PROJECT PHASE	KEY ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS ACTIONS
PHASE 1: Assessment & Analysis	**Objective:** Understand community priorities, context, and risks through inclusive, participatory methods. • Engage displaced people and host communities of all age, gender, diversity in the assessment process • Collect community concerns and priorities across all program pillars (Education, livelihoods, protection and critical infrastructure) • Assess community information and communication needs • Assess existing community capacities and structures • Analyze barriers to participation (language, literacy, trust, culture etc.). • Disseminate assessment findings to the communities in accessible formats
PHASE 2: Program Design	**Objective:** Co-create inclusive and responsive interventions with affected populations. • Co-design activities with communities, including youth, women, men and persons with disabilities. • Integrate community-identified priorities across all program pillars eg: ◦ **Education:** Align learning methods with community needs (e.g., mobile learning, language support). ◦ **Economic Inclusion:** Reflect market realities and local aspirations. ◦ **Protection:** Build on local protection networks. ◦ **Infrastructure:** Prioritize what communities consider most urgent. • Establish or adapt community reference groups for continuous consultation. • Design/adapt preferred communication and feedback mechanisms • Define clear staff and partners roles for integrating AAP into project initiatives

PROJECT PHASE	KEY ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS ACTIONS
PHASE 3: Implementation & Monitoring	**Objective:** Deliver activities transparently and adapt based on community feedback. • Set up or strengthen multiple inclusive community communication, feedback and response mechanisms and explore interoperability with partners • Train staff and partners on AAP principles including feedback management • Regularly share updates to communities on implementation, including successes and delays, through community-preferred channels. • Collect disaggregated data and Monitor whether interventions are meeting the needs of diverse groups • Jointly implement the program with communities
PHASE 4: Review, Learning & Adaptation	**Objective:** Reflect, adapt, and strengthen accountability practices. • Include trusted community representatives in project reviews • Use feedback data and participatory evaluation results to inform program adjustments . • Close the loop by reporting back to communities on how their input influenced decisions . • Integrate AAP indicators into monitoring frameworks (e.g., % of feedback resolved, # of community consultations held, % of participants who feel heard). • Include AAP progress and gaps in project performance reports, monthly sitreps, and donor reports.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Accountability to Affected Populations is not a one-off activity, but a continuous commitment rooted in respect, inclusion, and transparency.

By systematically integrating AAP across every phase of the program cycle and within each program pillar, we ensure that our work remains responsive to real needs, inclusive of diverse voices, and trusted by the communities we serve.

Documenting and reporting on AAP is how we demonstrate impact accountability.

It builds community trust, promotes transparency, and provides tangible evidence of how programs adapt to feedback.

4.0 REFERENCES

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- UNHCR Accountability to Affected People Operational Guidance (2022) https://www.unhcr.org/publications/manuals/625fe6ec4/unhcr-operational-guidance-on-accountability-to-affected-people.html
- UNHCR Feedback and Response Mechanisms Guidance (2020) https://www.unhcr.org/publications/manuals/5fa2fa764/unhcr-guidance-feedback-response-mechanisms.html
- CHS: Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard
- CDAC Network: How To Guide on Communication and Community Engagement https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/

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PROGRAMME: PROSPECTS 2.0
DISABILITY INCLUSION TIP SHEET

Par tners : UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, World Bank, IFC

Countries: Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia

Year: 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

PROSPECTS 2.0 is a four-year, multi-partner initiative (2024–2027) funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

Implemented by UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, the World Bank, and IFC, the programme aims to strengthen protection and advance durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons and host communities through inclusive, multi-sectoral approaches.

The programme is structured around four core pillars: Education and Learning; Economic Inclusion; Protection, Social Protection, and Inclusion; and Critical Infrastructure. Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority across all pillars and is essential to achieving equitable, sustainable, and accountable outcomes.

Disability Inclusion in PROSPECTS 2.0

Disability inclusion is a core cross-cutting priority of PROSPECTS 2.0, alongside Gender Equality, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Meaningful Refugee and Youth Engagement, and Localization.

Disability inclusion ensures that persons with disabilities can equally access, participate in, and benefit from all programme pillars.

Purpose of the Disability Inclusion Tip Sheet

This tip sheet provides practical guidance to PROSPECTS partners on mainstreaming disability inclusion across the programme management cycle and pillars, aligned with the Gender and Disability Continuum (GDC) and REACH framework.

Key concepts

Disability inclusion: Ensuring equal rights, access, participation, and outcomes for persons with disabilities. **Gender and Disability Continuum (GDC):** From discriminatory and invisible approaches to responsive and transformative programming.

REACH: Resource, Engage meaningfully, Advance targeted interventions, Capacitate, Have accountability mechanisms.

2. GUIDANCE FOR PARTNERS ACROSS THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CYCLE

PROJECT PHASE	KEY DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTIONS
PHASE 1: Assessment & Analysis	• Identify persons with disabilities using inclusive assessment tools (e.g. Washington Group Questions) • Assess barriers related to accessibility, stigma, safety, and communication • Engage Organizations for Persons with Disability (OPDs) and caregivers • Share findings in accessible formats
PHASE 2: Programme Design	• Co-design interventions with persons with disabilities • Budget for accessibility and reasonable accommodation • Integrate disability inclusion indicators • Define staff responsibilities for disability inclusion
PHASE 3: Implementation & Monitoring	• Ensure accessible service delivery, facilities, and communication • Partner with OPDs and disability service providers • Monitor participation and outcomes using disaggregated data • Address exclusion through adaptive programming
PHASE 4: Review, Learning & Adaptation	• Include persons with disabilities in reviews and evaluations • Use feedback to adjust interventions • Document lessons and good practices • Report on disability inclusion results

3. GUIDANCE ACROSS PROSPECTS PILLARS

PILLAR	KEY DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTIONS
Education & Learning	• Ensure inclusive education planning • Provide assistive devices and accessible learning materials • Train teachers on inclusive pedagogy
Livelihoods & Economic Inclusion	• Remove discriminatory eligibility criteria • Support accessible skills training and workplaces • Promote inclusive Learning-to-Earning pathways

PILLAR	KEY DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTIONS
Protection & Social Protection	• Ensure accessible protection services and feedback mechanisms • Include persons with disabilities in protection committees • Strengthen referral pathways
Critical Infrastructure	• Apply universal design principles • Engage persons with disabilities in site selection and design • Monitor accessibility and safety

4. CONCLUSION

Disability inclusion is fundamental to achieving equitable, sustainable outcomes under PROSPECTS 2.0.

By moving towards GDC-responsive and transformative approaches, partners contribute to systemic change and durable solutions.

PROGRAMME: PROSPECTS 2.0

GENDER EQUALITY TIP SHEET

Par tners : UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO, World Bank, IFC

Countries: Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia

Year: 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

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The programme is structured around four core pillars: Education and Learning; Economic Inclusion; Protection, Social Protection, and Inclusion; and Critical Infrastructure. Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority across all pillars and is essential to achieving equitable, sustainable, and accountable outcomes.

Gender Equality in PROSPECTS 2.0

Gender inequality intersects with displacement, poverty, age, disability, and legal status to shape unequal access to education, livelihoods, services, and decision-making.

Women and girls (particularly adolescent girls, women with disabilities, female-headed households, and survivors of violence) face systemic barriers that limit their participation and outcomes.

Within PROSPECTS, gender equality goes beyond numeric parity. It requires intentional design choices, institutional accountability, and continuous adaptation to address power relations, gender norms, and structural barriers across the programme cycle.

Purpose of the Gender Equality Tip Sheet

This tip sheet has been developed by the Regional Community of Practice (CoP)on Cross-Cutting Aspects to support PROSPECTS partners in systematically mainstreaming gender equality across all pillars and phases of programming.

It provides:

- Practical guidance for staff and partners;
- Clear entry points across the project management cycle;
- Pillar-specific gender considerations; and
- Alignment with donor accountability, learning, and reporting expectations.

This document complements the AAP Tip Sheet and should be applied together with disability inclusion and youth engagement guidance.

2. GUIDANCE ACROSS THE GENDER EQUALITY CONTINUUM

Gender-Blind → Gender-Sensitive

Avoid assumptions of "neutral" impact.
Use gender analysis to understand differential needs and risks.

Gender-Responsive

Actively address gender-based barriers.
Allocate resources and adapt delivery modalities.

Gender-Transformative

Challenge harmful gender norms.
Promote women's leadership, agency, and decision-making power.
Engage men and boys as allies.

> ***Partners are encouraged to progress along the continuum rather than remaining at minimum compliance.*

3. GUIDANCE FOR PARTNERS ACROSS THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CYCLE

PHASE	GENDER EQUALITY ACTIONS
PHASE 1: Assessment & Analysis	**Objective :** Understand gendered needs, risks, roles, and power dynamics • Conduct gender-responsive assessments that capture differences by sex, age, disability, and displacement status. • Analyze gender roles, care burdens, safety risks, and access to resources across all pillars. • Identify barriers to participation (mobility, norms, literacy, unpaid care, safet y). • Map existing women-led, Refugee-led, and community-based organizations. • Share assessment findings with women, men, girls, and boys in accessible and culturally appropriate formats.

PHASE	GENDER EQUALITY ACTIONS
PHASE 2: Programme Design	**Objective :** Design interventions that address gender gaps and promote equitable outcomes. • Co-design interventions with women, girls, men, and boys, including those with disabilities. • Integrate gender-specific objectives and indicators across all pillars. • Allocate budgets for gender-responsive measures (childcare, accessibility, outreach). • Define clear roles and accountability for gender equality within partner agreements. • Ensure safeguarding and GBV risk mitigation are embedded from the outset.
PHASE 3: Implementation & Monitoring	**Objective :** Deliver gender-responsive interventions and track results . • Implement activities in ways that reduce participation barriers (flexible schedules, safe venues, proximity). • Ensure staff and partners are trained on gender equality and safeguarding. • Monitor participation and outcomes using sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD). • Track unintended negative effects (e.g. backlash, increased care burden). • Engage women's groups and RLOs in delivery and monitoring
PHASE 4: Review, Learning & Adaptation	**Objective :** Learn from results and adjust programming. • Include women and girls in programme reviews and learning forums. • Analyse outcome data to assess whether gender gaps are narrowing. • Document good practices and lessons learned on gender equality. • Adapt interventions based on evidence and community feedback. • Report gender equality results transparently to donors and communities.

4. GENDER EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS ACROSS PROSPECTS PILLARS

PILLAR	KEY ACTIONS
Education & Learning	• Promote retention and transition of girls, especially adolescents. • Address safety, dignity, and menstrual hygiene needs. • Engage mothers and female caregivers in school governance. • Support pathways for re-entry and alternative education.
Livelihoods & Economic Inclusion	• Promote access to non-traditional and higher-value skills for women. • Address care constraints through flexible modalities. • Support women's entrepreneurship and access to finance. • Prevent exclusion through transparent selection criteria.
Protection & Social Protection	• Integrate GBV risk mitigation across all interventions. • Ensure survivor-centred referral pathways. • Strengthen women's access to legal identity and social protection. • Support community-based protection mechanisms led by women.
Critical Infrastructure	• Design infrastructure that improves safety, privacy, and accessibility. • Prioritise women's input in site selection and design. • Promote women's participation in governance and maintenance structures. • Link infrastructure investments to protection and livelihoods outcomes.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY, MONITORING, AND REPORTING

To demonstrate accountability and learning gender equality, partners should:

- Use sex, age, and disability disaggregated indicators.
- Track both participation and outcome-level change.
- Document how gender considerations influenced programme decisions.
- Integrate findings into donor reports, learning products, and CoP exchanges.

> ***Gender equality is not an "add-on" but a core measure of programme quality and impact.*

6. CONCLUSION

Gender equality in the PROSPECTS program requires deliberate, sustained, and well-resourced actions across all pillars and programme phases.

When gender equality is mainstreamed effectively, programmes are more relevant, safer, and more impactful for displaced populations and host communities alike.

By embedding gender equality into analysis, design, implementation, and learning, PROSPECTS partners contribute not only to equitable outcomes, but also to durable solutions grounded in rights, dignity, and shared accountability.

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