GLOBAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Implementing Dual-Generational Programming in Refugee Settings:

Emerging Insights from a Community of Practice

Children in Crossfire

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Glossary

1. **Caregiver-** Any individual who looks after safety, development and ongoing care for the child. This role can be filled by family members, teachers, volunteers or professional health workers. Family members are referred to as primary caregivers.

2. **Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED)-** Includes formal and informal learning, care, and nurturing of children from birth to when children enter primary school (roughly around ages 7 or 8). Childcare is considered within this.

3. **Frontline organisations-** These include refugee and youth-led organisations, faith-based organisations or family run programmes. This is used interchangeably with grassroot organisations.

4. **Humanitarian emergency-** These affect the safety, security and well-being of a large number of populations stemming from armed conflict, generalised violence, natural disaster, pandemics/ endemics and environmental degradation. It results in the movement of children and caregivers within their own countries or across international borders for safety and protection. This also includes children and caregivers from the affected host population.

5. **Livelihoods-** This refers to the ability to meet basic needs and strengthen families' resilience to short-term stress and shocks, while also ensuring long-term well-being.

6. **Mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) -** Refers to any type of local or outside support to promote and respond to mental health and wellbeing of caregivers while also addressing social dimensions such as relationships, community networks, social values, and cultural practices.

7. **Protracted crises-** Crises which go on for long durations affecting significant population and making them vulnerable and reliant on humanitarian assistance over a prolonged period.

8. **Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)-** VSLAs are community-based financial groups that play a crucial role in empowering communities, especially women living in poverty, to increase their financial skills, gain access to and control over resources, and generate economic opportunities and income. These self-managed organisations provide their members with a secure platform for savings, access to small loans and basic social capital.

Background

Over the past decade, emergencies have become frequent, affecting millions of people worldwide. Young children are the most affected by these crises.

Between 2018 and 2021, over 1.5 million children were born in refugee settings, representing an estimated 380,000 young children born into displacement each year.

Emergencies are detrimental for both children and their caregivers due to limited access to preventive and curative health services, high risks of malnutrition, elevated levels of insecurity and violence, and socioeconomic adversity.

A crucial element in safeguarding young children ages 0 to 6 from the effects of severe adversity is a positive, and responsive relationship with a parent. However, existing interventions focus on either adults or children. Interventions that address both children and their caregivers simultaneously have a higher potential to show sustainable impact compared to interventions targeting only one of these two groups.
Dual generation theory for early childhood development advocates for this type of innovation across policy, practice, and research.

However, the discussion of dual-generation theory is limited to the US context, and there is a need to consider the relevance of the theory for different settings. Most pertinently, applying the dual-generational theory in the context of forced displacement presents a unique opportunity, recognising that forcibly displaced children are among the world's most vulnerable, underserved, and under-researched populations.

To bridge this crucial discourse gap, in 2024, the Global Schools Forum launched an online Communities of Practice (CoP) of grassroots organisations who are working directly with children and families in displacement settings. The programmes primarily work with displaced families and children ages 0 to 6 years of age in protracted crises i.e. contexts in which refugees have been living in exile for a prolonged period. The focus of the CoP is on East Africa and South America as both regions experience protracted conflicts leading to widespread displacement, loss of lives, and disruptions to essential services, due to political instability, health outbreaks, and natural calamities in the region. These regions have a massive inflow of refugees and are known for their relatively open and progressive policies aimed at improving the self-reliance of refugees.

The objectives of the CoP were to:

- Understand the current state of the sector and codify models of dual-generational programming approaches implemented by practitioners in humanitarian settings.
- Document opportunities that practitioners leverage and gaps they face in designing and implementing dual generational programming in humanitarian settings.
- Build a space for high-impact collaborations and dialogue between frontline practitioners, experts, and other sector leaders by creating opportunities for engagement.

In this guidebook, we will first understand the origins and background of the dual generational theory and explore this approach's applicability to humanitarian settings. The guidebook will then present models and explore key components of dual generational programming as identified through deep dives during the CoP. We will first understand the relevance, and features of individual components, and then proceed to understand how all components can be integrated. The guidebook will present various case studies to help demonstrate practical application. We will then conclude with key reflections, lessons learned, and the way-forward on advancing dual-generational approaches in humanitarian settings as shared by our practitioner community.

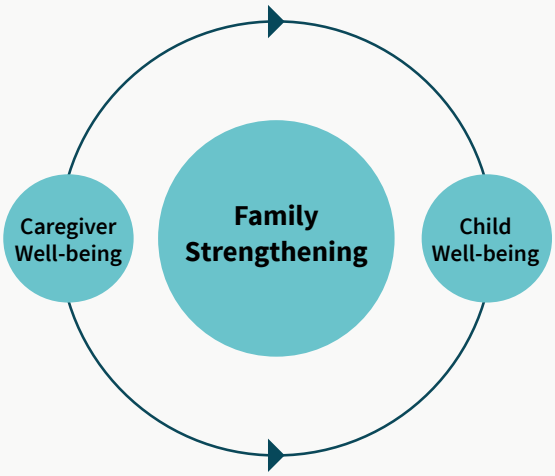
01

Understanding dual-generational theory in humanitarian settings

1.1 Introduction to the theory

The recognition of family as a unit for child development and the term "2Gen" was first coined by The Foundation for Child Development in the late 1890s. At present, the dual-generational movement is front-led by the Aspen Institute Ascend Network.

Figure 1: Interconnection between child and caregiver well-being



At the core, the dual generational approach considers the family as a whole and uses a holistic, family-centered lens to promote positive outcomes for children. This approach is rooted in the perspective that the well-being of caregivers and children is deeply interlinked. Enhancing parents' economic stability, mental health, and physical safety directly benefits children's development. Conversely, concerns for a child's well-being impact adults' livelihood opportunities and well-being.

This understanding is backed by research like the Family Systems Theory, developed by Dr. Murray Bowen in the 1960s which outlines that families are complex, interconnected systems where each member's actions and well-being profoundly affect the others, and Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner & Morris in 1998, that elaborates on how child's development is influenced by the multiple layers of their environment, with the family serving as the most immediate and influential layer.

1.2 Forms of dual-generational programming

Dual generational programming currently takes various forms and holds different definitions. The section below illustrates how our community members from the CoP defined dual-generational programming:

learn to play™

"Uses a mindful play approach that simultaneously addresses the well-being needs of young children and their parents or caregivers in crisis or displacement settings. It fosters resilience through comprehensive and culturally sensitive programming.

Children in Crossfire

"Programmes that address the needs of two generations of the same family in such a way that both children and adults in the family feel supported, secure and stable.

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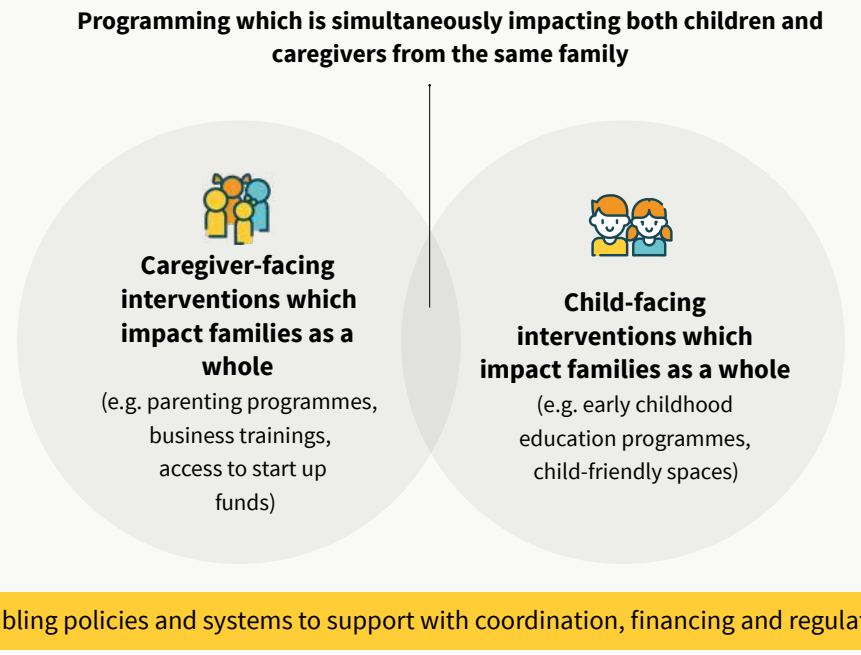
"Works with both children and parents so that the result of the intervention with children is more comprehensive. In crisis, positive interventions can be undermined if children return to homes with inadequate income and limited opportunities, perpetuating cycles of violence affecting children. In crisis, it is important to take an approach that extends to taking care of other people in the family, including issues related to livelihoods, and mental health.

MAKASI RESCUE FOUNDATION

"Programmes that intentionally serve parents and children together as a family unit. It improves livelihoods for parents and access to ECED for children. It enhances emotional support between children and parents and improves social capital of families. These have a cumulative impact on childcare.

Some dual-generational efforts emphasise focusing on supporting caregivers and children simultaneously. Others stress the need for targeting one group exclusively but impacting outcomes for the whole family. While they fall on a continuum, the goal for each programming is to break the cycle of poverty and promote long-term success for the entire family by investing in the development and well-being of both generations together. It is important to note that some dual generational programmes can include caregivers like grandparents thereby serving multiple generations at the same time.

Figure 2: A visual representation of forms of dual-generational approach



Additionally, to facilitate successful implementation and scaling of various dual-generational programming models, a strong foundation of public systems and policies is essential. This supportive ecosystem, as depicted in Figure 2, includes effective mechanisms for coordination, financing, regulation, and other elements, enabling both generations to thrive effectively. For example, **effective coordination** ensures that various stakeholders, including local and international NGOs, government agencies, and community organisations, work together and reduce duplication of efforts to ensure all aspects of family well-being are addressed. Similarly, **supportive policies** in host countries play an important role in enabling refugee caregivers to work legally, access services like education and health, and achieve financial inclusion. Similarly, **financing** is crucial to help families and communities to build long-term resilience and create market linkages.

A detailed description of each aspect of Figure 2 is provided below:

01 **Programming which is simultaneously impacting both children and caregivers:** These programmes directly engage with both children aged 0-8 and their caregivers concurrently. Services can be delivered at the household levels, or within school and community settings as long as there is a direct familial link between the children and adults receiving services. While rigorously evaluated models of integrated programming are limited in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly in humanitarian contexts, a few emerging models that show promise and are currently undergoing testing are below:

a. **Childcare**
b. **ECED + Parenting + VSLA support including business training**
c. **ECED + Parenting + Cash grant to start businesses**

More details about the models along with detailed case studies can be found in section 6 of the resource.

02 **Caregiver-facing interventions that impact families as a whole:** These programmes directly engage with caregivers and produce indirect outcomes for children aged 0 to 8. The services are usually related to improving livelihoods, well-being, and social integration of families. These interventions recognise caregivers as key change agents in shaping family outcomes. They are mostly delivered in group format, sometimes

complemented with 1:1 support. Services are typically delivered at the community and sometimes at household or school levels.

Our research has led us to identify four key models. Each model targets different aspects of caregiver well-being and capacity building. It's important to note that while these are presented as distinct models, in practice, programmes sometimes combine elements from multiple models to create more comprehensive interventions.

a. **Parenting and mental well-being programmes**
b. **Skills training and/ or business coaching**
c. **Skills training and/ or business coaching+ Access to capital**
d. **Job Matching support and social integration**

More details about the models along with detailed case studies can be found in section 4 and 5 of the resource.

03 **Child-facing interventions which impact families as a whole:** These programmes directly engage with children aged 0 to 8. The services are usually related to improving the cognitive, social emotional, health, and nutrition outcomes of children. These interventions recognise children as key change agents in shaping family outcomes. While these interventions are directed at children, they aim to create ripple effects that benefit the whole family and indirectly result in social and economic payoffs for families. Services are typically delivered at the community and school levels and sometimes at household level. Key models which emerge are:

a. **Home-based early learning programmes**
b. **Community- based ECED models**
c. **Remote models**
d. **Child-friendly spaces with integrated health and nutrition components**

1.3 Relevance of dual-generational programming in humanitarian contexts

The dual-generational programming is particularly critical for families in displacement with young children.

Children under 5 account for 16% of the forcibly displaced population. Research highlights that the first years of life are the most important for a child's development, laying the foundation for years to come.

Early childhood programmes for children between birth and five years can yield a 13 percent yearly return on investment per child.

However, young children living in displacement, are unable to access quality childcare and ECED. This is due to various factors, including but not limited to, loss of income-generating activities affecting families' ability to afford school fees, the closure of schools or their repurposing into relief spaces, and the compromised mental well-being of caregivers which indirectly jeopardises the well-being of the child. Children living in conflict and crisis settings are at increased risk for developmental difficulties that can follow them throughout their lives. Given this context, the application of the dual-generational

theory for child development in early years is extremely powerful.

In this section, we explored the dual-generational continuum and its critical importance in refugee contexts. The following sections will delve deeper into this concept by presenting illustrative examples of models across the dual-generational spectrum. We will also examine the key programmatic components that form the foundation of these approaches.

02

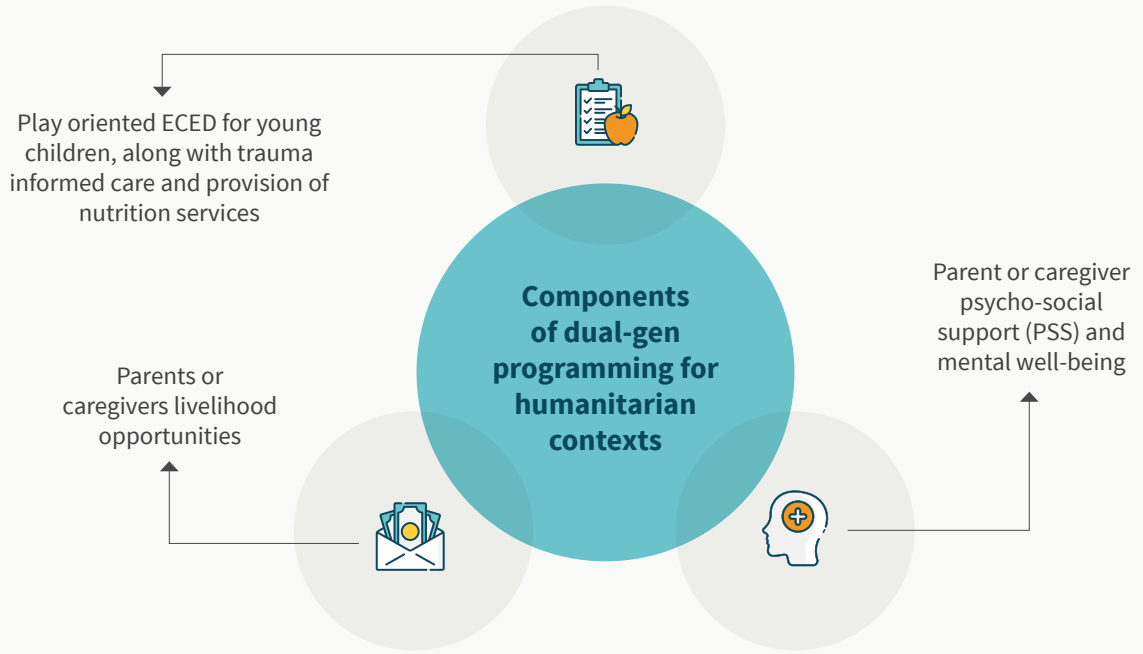
Foundational components for dual-generational programming

In the previous section, we discussed that while dual-generational programmes can take various forms, all reinforce a familial link between the children and adults promoting long-term success for the entire family.

In this section, we will learn more about three key components essential to dual-generational model as identified through desk research and our exploration in the CoP sessions.

2.1 Description of key components of dual-generational programming in humanitarian settings

Figure 3: Key components of dual-generational programming in humanitarian contexts



a. **Play oriented ECED for young children, along with trauma-informed care and provision of critical services like nutrition:** For children in the early years who have been affected by conflict, disaster, or displacement, access to a safe and conducive ECED center or school is critical. A strong ECED space offers children opportunities to learn through play. Learning through play helps children develop social, emotional, creative, physical, and cognitive skills, strengthens their brain connections essential for future development, and most importantly gives children the opportunity to build resilience and overcome deeply distressing experiences associated with displacement.

An ECED center also as a natural entry point for delivering trauma-informed care, and nutrition services which contribute to promoting healthy development of young children. Trauma-informed care ensures that children's emotional needs are sensitively addressed, supporting those who have experienced adversity. Meanwhile, nutrition services play a crucial role in providing essential nourishment that enhances both physical health and cognitive development of young children.

b. **Supporting parent or caregiver to improve emotional and mental well-being:** When a caregiver's own mental health is compromised, they struggle to provide their children with nurturing and supportive care and become an indirect source of risk for their child's well-being. Therefore, the support to caregivers to cope with own mental health and psycho-social challenges is essential. The support can be in the form of providing group or one-to-one workshops for caregivers, sharing stress management resources, creating safe spaces for them to connect with other families or play with their own children etc. Building community spaces which naturally facilitate social integration serve as crucial support systems for refugee families navigating displacement.

c. **Enhancing parents or caregivers livelihood opportunities:** Enhancing income generation is key to improving the financial security of families and to strengthening their capacity to provide for the educational, healthcare, and nutritional needs of children. In displacement contexts, refugee parents struggle to find jobs in host countries. This stems from various factors, including limited job opportunities, language barriers, inadequate awareness among private sector employers about refugee rights, difficulties in obtaining job references, non-recognition of qualifications from their home countries, lack of basic services like reliable electricity for entrepreneurial ventures, and barriers to accessing capital due to the absence of identification or collateral. Promoting income-generation activities, such as providing training on business startup, offering seed capital to refugee families, and implementing VSLAs in local communities, is essential. These efforts not only support refugee families in achieving economic independence but also contribute to their long-term resilience and integration into local economies. Creating livelihoods also facilitates access to basic services, helps build peer support and creates a sense of normality.

Each of these components directly aligns with the forms of dual-generational programming outlined in Section 1. In the following sections, we'll explore this mapping in greater depth. We will also delve into each component with practical examples and reference resources to help practitioners design and implement more effective dual-generational programmes in humanitarian contexts.

03

Promoting mindful play for young children

3.1 Introduction to the theory

Play is an essential part of a child's development, and it is particularly important in early childhood when children are growing and learning most rapidly. The benefits of learning through play are well-established in the scientific literature which states that opportunities for play can support neural development, executive function, and emotional regulation for young children. For this reason, environments that promote play, exploration, and hands-on learning are at the core of effective early childhood programmes. Central to understanding play is its multifaceted nature. As per a report by The Lego Foundation, play interventions have the following key characteristics.

(a) iterative- allowing children to try out new possibilities, revise hypotheses and discover new questions

(b) meaningful- supporting children to link new experiences to familiar ones

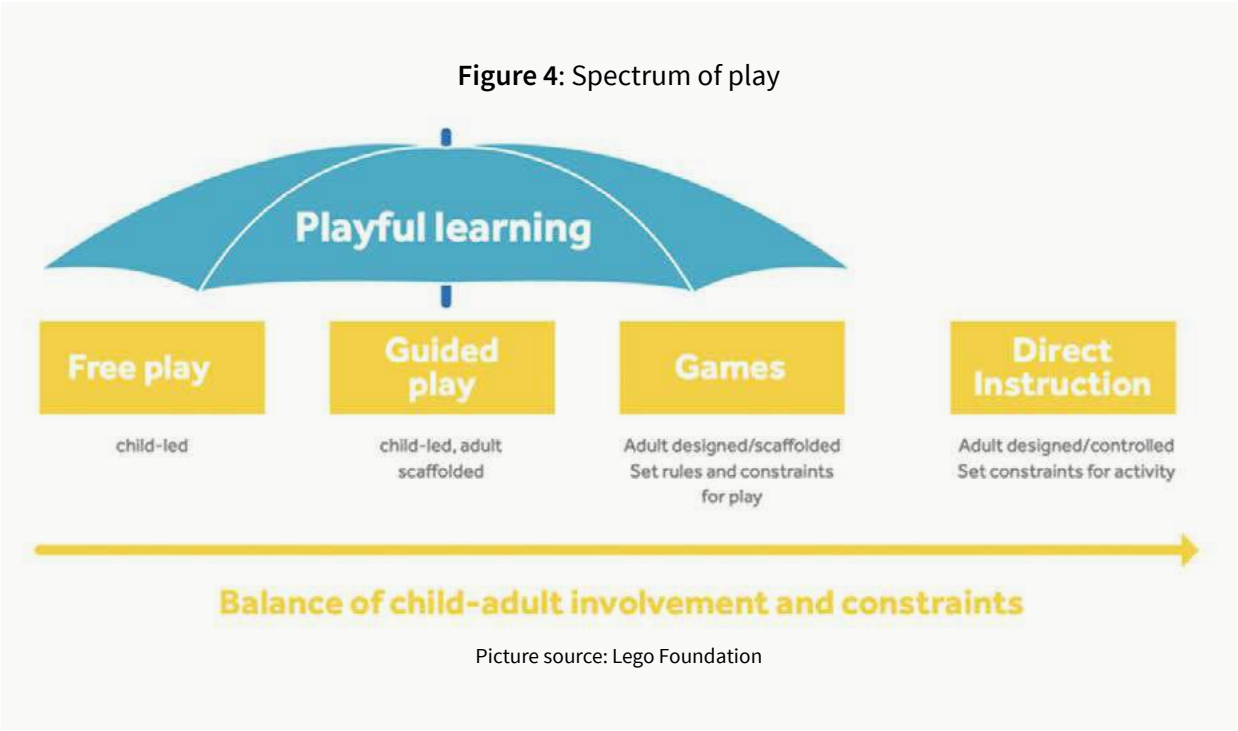
(c) joyful- promoting discovery and curiosity in young children

(d) socially interactive- facilitating interactions and promoting communication of thoughts, and sharing ideas to understand others and build stronger relationships, and

(e) actively engaging providing young children with choices—big or small—to make about the content or processes involved in their learning.

The report also explains that "playful learning" is an umbrella term- one that includes both free play by children as well as more structured teacher-directed and teacher-guided play contexts. Conducting play activities on a spectrum is important as it helps children build agency by allowing them to take an active role and ownership in their experiences, and makes them into empowered and self-actualised learners. For the purposes of this section, we adopt the scope of playful learning outlined below:

Figure 4: Spectrum of play



Picture source: Lego Foundation

3.2 Importance of play in humanitarian settings

Conflicts can significantly impact the socioemotional well-being of a child, and lead to a loss of identity - creating long-term consequences for a child's fulfillment, balance, and development. Exposure to conflict and the trauma of displacement also increases the risk of toxic stress for young children, making them more prone to developing emotional, cognitive, and behavioural issues, leading to a higher likelihood of school drop-out and social aggression.

There is growing evidence that learning through play has significant benefits for children in early childhood education settings growing up in humanitarian contexts. Play offers a crucial pathway to:

Mental health and emotional development: Play helps children growing up in humanitarian context process traumatic experience, cope with stress, anxiety, and other harmful emotions, and express themselves through difficult feelings. The social nature of many play activities encourages young refugee children to

interact with their peers, fostering the development of important skills like cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution.

Language and cognitive development: Play allows children growing up in humanitarian contexts to develop communication, problem-solving, and creativity. Through play, children get opportunities to make connections between their experiences and the world around them which further facilitates the development of language, curiosity and other essential skills.

Relationship-building and a sense of safety: Play in humanitarian contexts allow for the fostering of strong bonds between children and adults, as well as help build peer connections. This supports children regain a sense of security and belonging, which is crucial for their well-being. Play also provides the much-needed space for a child to simply be a child, engage in joyful activities, and reclaim their childhood.

Social connections and integration: Participating in play helps children in humanitarian settings to build relationships, cooperate with peers, and feel a sense of belonging in their new environment. Play can facilitate cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and inclusion -- which can aid in the integration process for refugee families.

Physical development: Engaging in simple games, movement activities, and play supports improving motor skills, coordination, and overall confidence of young children.

In the CoP meetings, we discussed the key learning domains of play programming. They were broadly categorised into:
(a) physical development including gross and fine motor skills,
(b) socio-emotional learning and identity development,
(c) language and communication,
(d) cognitive including problem-solving, exploration, creativity and imagination, and
(e) early literacy and numeracy skills.

3.3 Play as a lever for promoting family outcomes under the dual-generational framework

While achieving learning outcomes remains crucial for enhancing children's school readiness and well-being, the focus on play takes on added significance in humanitarian contexts due to its role inbuilding family-level resilience.

Play helps enable positive parent-child interactions, enhancing communication within families, and supporting caregivers in managing stress and trauma.

In humanitarian settings, these benefits are critical for helping families navigate the challenges of adapting to new environments, processing traumatic experiences, and developing resilience to support each other

effectively. This means that not only do children benefit from play, but caregivers also gain the emotional resources and resilience to better support their families. It also helps improve social integration and reduced parental isolation as caregivers get an opportunity to engage with other parents and community members.

Programming organisations which have been operating in crisis contexts recognise these benefits and have observed that integrating play supports children and families alike. With this background, we highlight play as a critical lever to yield dual-generational impact.

3.4 Modalities of delivering play in refugee settings

Given the unique nature of each refugee setting and the varying policies to access formal schooling, practitioners have adapted various modalities to deliver play-based programming. Detailed description for each model along with an example is elaborated below:

Model	Who delivers?	An example:
Home models: In this model, play-based learning activities are conducted either at the home of the children or the home of the caregiver. Home models are often used to support children up to ages 3 or 4.	Activities are facilitated either by parents themselves and/ or caregivers like siblings or community volunteers etc. The NGO staff often support with training and capacity-building interventions.	**iACT's Little Ripples** programme delivers preschool in home-based settings in the community. It employs refugee women to manage in-home preschools and improve the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of refugee children. It runs operations in 5 countries, including Darfuri refugees in Chad, Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Central African refugees in Cameroon, and refugee and displaced community members in Greece and the Central African Republic. More can be read about the programme here.
Community or outdoor models: In this model, play-based learning activities are conducted wherever children are in the community, such as churches, playgrounds, and outdoor spaces. The goal is to provide access to quality early learning and development for refugee children who lack access to formal pre-schooling.	Activities are primarily facilitated by refugee volunteers and facilitators who are often women and adolescent children from the community itself. The NGO staff often support with training and capacity-building interventions.	**Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE)** in Uganda trains young facilitators from the local community to teach seven to twenty-eight children aged 3-5 about healthy eating habits, hygiene, and basic reading and writing skills. The young facilitators are students with a passion for supporting their community. More can be read here.

Model	Who delivers?	An example:
Remote models: Remote delivery models provide play-based learning to refugee children who cannot access in-person formal or informal early years programmes. The mode of delivery typically includes phone calls, radio broadcasts, and interactive voice response helplines.	Delivered often by parents, and/ or caregivers with some models involving community volunteers. NGO staff often support with training and capacity building support.	**The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in collaboration with Sesame Workshop** in Lebanon designed a remote early learning program (RELP), a 1-week WhatsApp-based ECED program for children ages 5-6 years old in which teachers supported children's primary caregivers and families. A randomised controlled trial found large gains – in children's overall development, early numeracy, early literacy, and social-emotional skills and smaller impacts on motor skills in comparing those receiving the programme to a wait-list control group. More details can be read here.
Child-friendly spaces with integrated health and nutrition components: These are environments where children can play, learn, receive psychosocial support and counselling services while also addressing their physical well-being and WASH needs.	Local communities and governments implement these services with support from international NGOs and UN agencies. Local NGOs frequently take on operational roles. Government agencies, particularly those responsible for child welfare and education, are involved in coordination and support.	**UNICEF's Makani programme** in Jordan offers comprehensive support to all- toddlers, adolescents and youth. Makani is a safe space for children to learn and promote their wellbeing, get access to integrated and inclusive non-formal education, and receive child and social protection components.

It is important to note that practitioners often implement a combination of play models in refugee settings. For example, a community model which may be used to offer opportunities like structured group play, and peer learning for children, can be complemented by an at-home model that supports children's play at home and helps parents build stronger connections with their children. The choice of models will depend on various considerations like available resources and infrastructure, feasibility of different play spaces, level of caregiver time and engagement, etc.

3.5 Promising features of promoting play in refugee settings

Play programmes in refugee settings have some specific play features. An analysis of various promising play models in refugee contexts through interviews with practitioners and discussions in the online CoP highlights the following principles:

Figure 5: Promising features of promoting play

A brief description of each category is given below:

Culturally responsive practices and community engagement

- **The cultural practices and traditions of the affected communities are critical to prioritise when programming for refugee contexts.** Play activities should incorporate elements of the refugees' cultural traditions, songs, stories, and games, etc. This is underpinned by the assumption that using activities taken from their own culture gives children - who have been uprooted from their homes - a sense of pride and belonging, which in turn helps them heal, build a positive self-identity, and develop resilience.

- **Parents, caregivers or members from the refugee communities should be actively involved in the design and implementation programming:** Having a trusted adult is crucial for children, especially in a refugee context, as it offers emotional stability, security, and a sense of continuity amidst upheaval and displacement. It helps foster a safe environment where children can express their feelings, process trauma, and develop coping mechanisms effectively. It also helps build ownership amongst the refugee communities about the programme and improve adoption. Many programmes engage members from the community to deliver play activities to children.

- **Given resource constraints in refugee contexts, low- and no-cost locally available materials should be used to develop play resources or design play spaces.** By leveraging locally available resources, play spaces and activities can be created at a fraction of the cost of more resource-intensive approaches. This not only makes the programme more financially sustainable, but also promotes community ownership and involvement, as refugees' families can directly contribute to the design and construction of the play spaces. Additionally, using locally available resources helps ensure that play is contextual.

Trauma-informed play and psycho-social support

- **Play activities in refugee contexts should focus on providing trauma-informed care and safeguarding the psychosocial well-being of children.** Recognising the widespread impact of trauma, play activities in refugee settings should help children process traumatic experiences, cope with stress and anxiety, and express difficult emotions in a safe, and supportive environment. These can be in the form of mindfulness activities, music and movement, art therapy exercises, free play, storytelling, and role-playing etc. Ensuring adequate training of caregivers and facilitators in trauma-sensitive practices is also key to help children feel secure and supported throughout their participation in play activities.

Child protection, safe and resilient play environment

- **Using local resources helps bring resilience in play spaces.** In CoPs, practitioners pointed out that often the areas where the camps are located are prone to heavy rains, floods, and mudslides for several months each year. Using adaptable, and low-cost materials increases the likelihood of making play spaces resilient and suitable for challenging environmental conditions.

- **In a refugee setting, integrating playful learning with child protection is paramount.** In camps and settlements, children are more prone to be exposed to various forms of violence, neglect, abuse, and exploitation. It is therefore important that there is necessary infrastructure, policies, and trained personnel to provide comprehensive child protection to young refugees. For example, programmes should ensure that play spaces are in central, accessible location within the refugee community and are safe, clean, and child friendly. There should be clear policies and procedures, including codes of conduct, reporting mechanisms, and protocols for thorough background checks for staff and volunteers. Referral pathways should be present to connect children and families with specialised services like healthcare, counseling, and legal aid when needed.

Caregiver support and training

- **Structuring play for refugee caregivers is essential to eventually promote play-based learning in children.** In refugee contexts, it is beneficial to structure and plan play activities for caregivers, who often juggle multiple responsibilities and may lack dedicated time to prepare and organise effective play activities. Many educators are also unfamiliar with using play as a learning tool which also calls for additional support. Another limitation is the low literacy levels of caregivers which further underscores the need to provide tools and training to caregivers to structure play activities.

  Since play falls on a spectrum, caregivers need to be given additional support to structure play across caregiver-directed activities to child-led play. In child-led play, caregivers must understand that they have a significant role like acting as observers and narrators of experiences, encouraging children's efforts, and providing feedback to help children build their confidence and self-esteem.

3.6 Challenge on promoting play in refugee settings

This section synthesises key challenges, and future support areas based on our discussions with practitioners during the CoP and individual consultations.

1. **Play is not considered as a valid avenue for learning:** Despite communities having their own unique play activities, the concept of learning through play is unfamiliar to many refugee caregivers. Concepts such as the value of physical activities or messy play are not always appreciated, and activities are not always considered to be valuable by caregivers due to unfamiliarity with the approach. The idea of play and learning are dichotomised which negates that play itself is educational and that children can learn through play.

2. **A significant gap exists in the availability of affordable and easy-to-use assessment tools that effectively measure learning through play.** Practitioners highlighted that existing tools often lack a playful approach and can disrupt children's comfort by removing them from familiar settings and placing them under the supervision of unfamiliar adults during assessment. This makes it difficult to accurately gauge the impact of play-based learning activities on children. There are opportunities to further innovate and test in this area.

3. **There is a lack of standards, and activities to help young children build socio-emotional skills through play.** Refugee children face significant trauma, instability, and cultural differences that require specialised socio-emotional learning support in educational settings. Activities which exist are often rooted in Western perspectives, which may not fully resonate with the cultural and contextual realities of refugee communities in low-middle-income contexts.

4. **Engaging male caregivers in play activities with children, especially at home, is a major challenge.** Traditional gender norms and roles create barriers for involvement of male caregiver in childcare and play activities. While this is a case even outside crises contexts, the challenge is pronounced in refugee settings, where additional factors such as trauma and navigating unfamiliar environments further complicate involvement of male caregivers. There is a pressing need to develop specific strategies that encourage and support male caregivers in actively participating in play.

5. **The significance of family strengthening through play is often overlooked.** As elaborated earlier, play facilitates bonding and communication within families and serves as a powerful tool for promoting resilience and coping mechanisms among both children and caregivers. Despite this, it is often not priortised. Practitioners highlight that securing funding for play-based programmes that focus on family strengthening is sometimes challenging, especially when funding organisations prioritise more tangible or immediate outcomes. There is also consensus amongst practitioners that demonstrating the impact and effectiveness of play-based programming on family strengthening

programmes can be complex. Many programmes recognise that they find it challenging to measure outcomes related to family dynamics, resilience, and social-emotional well-being, which are less tangible and harder to quantify.

6. **Measuring the long-term impacts of promoting learning through play on children's development and life outcomes is a gap in refugee contexts.** A key issue is the difficulty in tracking children longitudinally, as they often relocate or are otherwise difficult to follow over extended periods. This makes it challenging to assess the sustained benefits of play-based interventions. Filling this evidence gap is crucial for building a robust evidence base to demonstrate the benefit of play. One promising strategy is to integrate play-based programming into pre-existing institutions, such as schools, healthcare centers, and community organisations. This can help provide greater continuity of support and enable more effective longitudinal tracking of children's outcomes over time. However, this may not be replicable in many refugee contexts, due to varying policies in terms of access to schools in camps and settlements.

FUDELA

3.7 Case studies

learn to play™

About the organisation

Learn To Play (LTP) uses mindful play as a cornerstone for delivering culturally relevant early childhood education across 11 communities in 7 districts of Botswana, including the Dukwi Refugee Camp. They primarily work with mothers as the key change-agents in the communities.

Context

Situated in Botswana's Central District, Dukwi hosts refugees from across Africa, particularly of Somali and Congolese origin, along with asylum seekers from Rwanda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, and Eritrea.

Botswana lacks a formal provision for Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) at the national level, although starting ECED at age 5 is recommended. The national government's role in ECED is primarily regulatory. Within the camp boundaries, education up to primary levels is accessible to all refugees. Leaving the camp for further education or employment necessitates extensive permissions.

To start a centre in Botswana for ECED, practitioners need to secure a license from the government. Once the license is received, the practitioner needs to continuously work with the camp management which is governed by the Government of Botswana, and coordinate with UNHCR for social services.

Key interventions

The programme offers two key interventions:

Playgroup for children aged 2 to 5

Parent Playbox for families with children aged 0 to 6

Playgroup for children aged 2 to 5:

Playgroups are led by mothers from the community, known as Maatla Mamas, in safe community spaces such as community halls and youth centers. Mamas are initially trained in areas of Early Childhood Education, First Aid, and Child Protection which sets them up to run the playgroups daily. Mamas are supported from LTP in an ongoing manner through resource and curriculum support, site visits, assessments of children, and coaching.

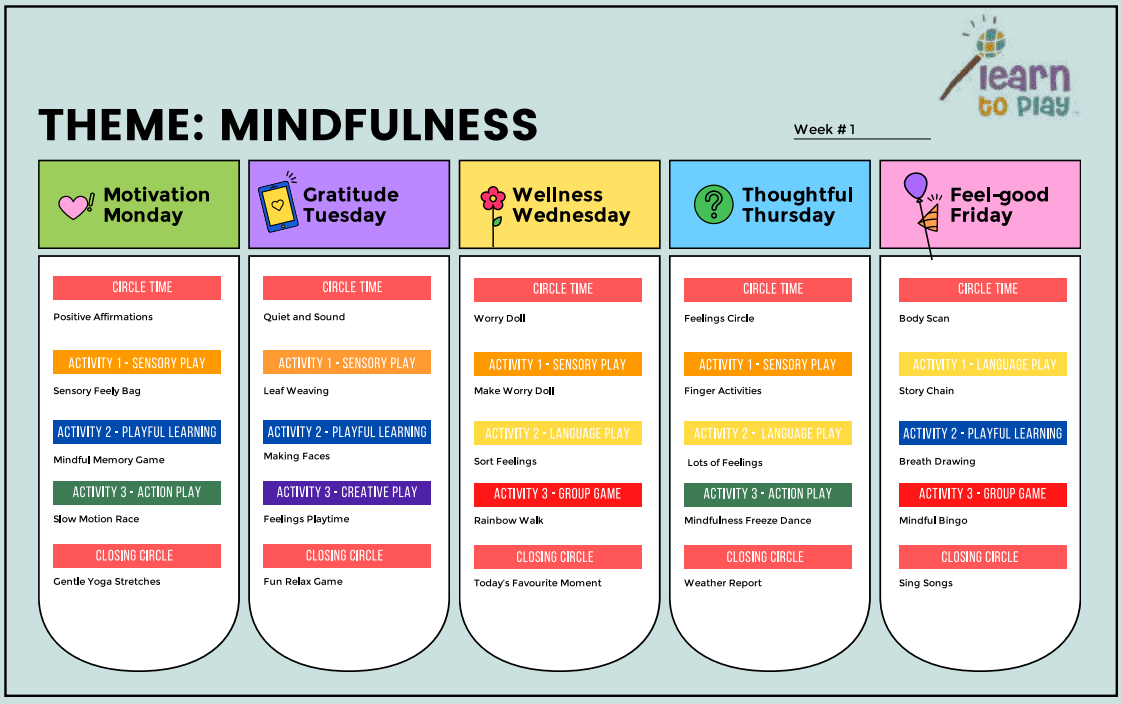
The refugee camp-based playgroups which LTP runs are specifically boosted to improve socio-emotional skills for families and children in the camp and has a strong focus on mindfulness. Additionally, they focus on family strengthening which refers to a holistic approach that enhances the well-being, resilience, and cohesion of families through mindful play and culturally responsive educational practices.

LTP is currently working with 550 children and providing livelihoods to 35 Maatla Mamas.

Key elements

Schedule and delivery

Each playgroup session runs for 3-4 hours each, accommodating up to 36 children per session with a 1:12 Mama-to-child ratio. In each session, there is a morning circle, followed by 3 activities and end with a closing circle. There can be multiple sessions in a day. A sample week plan is enclosed:



ii Resource support

Mamas receive daily activity plans in a printed and bound curriculum. The play resources suggested in the plans are created from household items like recyclables and cardboard to minimise costs. A snapshot of the day's plan is below. Mamas have the option to avail daily remote support in case they have questions on how to conduct the activities.

RESOURCES & NOTES REQUIRED FOR MONDAY

CIRCLE TIME	SENSORY PLAY	PLAYFUL LEARNING	ACTION PLAY	CLOSING CIRCLE
Positive Affirmations Use positive affirmations on the next page and practice breathing in and out gently.	Sensory Feely Bag Before this activity, you will need to collect various items like a leaf, stick, stone, and cotton wool. Put them inside a bag. Let each child touch one item without looking. You can use a blindfold to cover their eyes if they feel comfortable to make this activity more fun. Ask the child to guess what they're touching based on how it feels. After they guess, show them the item to see if they were right. Talk about the different textures and feelings of each item.	Mindful Memory Game Mamaprenuer to precut the cards on the next page in advance. Place the cards upside down in any order and in a row. Before picking, children take a big breath and think of the card they want. Children pick two cards. If they're the same, keep them out; if different, put them back. Help children think of where cards were if they didn't match. After, talk about how they remembered and chose cards.	Slow Motion Race Have children stand at a starting point. Tell them this is a special race – the slowest person wins. Say "start," and children walk as slowly as they can to the finish line. Remind them to breathe deeply as they walk. The last one to the end wins! Sit down and discuss how it felt to move slowly and focus.	Gentle Yoga Stretches Cat Stretch: Tell children to imagine they're cats. On all fours, they arch their backs up as they breathe out, then lower their bellies down as they breathe in. Tall Tree: Now, they're trees. Standing up, children raise their arms high and stand on their tiptoes, stretching tall. They breathe deeply, feeling the stretch. Sleeping Butterfly: Sitting down, kids put the soles of their feet together and let their knees drop out. They gently flap their knees up and down, like butterfly wings. Relax: Lie down flat, arms and legs spread out. Close eyes, breathe deeply, and relax for a minute. Sit up and discuss how each stretch felt. Which was their favourite? How do their bodies feel?

iii Parental engagement meetings

Maatla Mamas meet parents once a term and trains them on mindful play activities which the parents can undertake with children at home.

iv Income generation

The Mamas are paid a small monthly stipend to run the playgroup, thereby contributing to improving family income directly. 100% of the Mamas in the programme have been uplifted out of poverty. Indirectly, by providing a safe space to children, it allows women to take up other jobs offered as part of various employment schemes and earn an income to support their families.

v Monitoring

The programme uses digital monitoring tools using Kobo for quality assurance. LTP has co-developed a Play-based Programme Assessment Tool (PPAT) to evaluate the quality of effective teaching and learning.

Parent Playbox for families with children aged 0 to 6

The Parent Playbox is a comprehensive kit containing 52 play-based activities, one for each week of the year, designed for caregivers to engage with their children at home. The box is aimed towards improving connectedness between parents and children. The Parent Playbox is being implemented by 8 organisations across Botswana and South Africa reaching 850 children in 280 families. The programme is delivered in two ways:

i Direct delivery model

Parents receive a one-day training at the beginning from LTP on positive parenting and child development milestones. In this training, they receive a physical box with some play materials. Weekly, they receive activity instructions via WhatsApp, including language-neutral video demonstrations of each activity directed to improve parent-child interaction.

ii Partnership model

LTP collaborates with partners to scale the playbox in diverse contexts. For instance, in South Africa, a partnership with Kids Collab has extended the program to 8 communities. Under this model, LTP provides initial training to implementation partners on the use of the playbox and provides specifications for local printing of the playbox. Local implementation partners then have the flexibility to further adapt the program to local needs. For example, in some settings, activities are delivered to community health workers via WhatsApp instead of parents, who then demonstrate the activities to parents.

I used to think only children play. My parents did not play with me when I was young, so I didn't grow up knowing how to play with mom or dad. I just knew my role was to be given food and go to sleep. However, now you are showing us the importance of playing with our children. I didn't know I could do it because I wasn't used to it, but now, I am close to my child. I used to be strict with my child. If my child made a mistake, I would scold them, but now I see changes. I see the results.

- A parent from the Dukwi Refugee Camp

Key learnings

Mindful play is integral to programming in refugee contexts and holds potential for replication across various settings

Mindful play helps families build emotional resilience, nurture positive relationships, and enhance social-emotional learning in young children. At LTP, mindfulness practices are key. Some examples of mindfulness activities include deep breathing, positive affirmations, gratitude reflections, sensory awareness etc.

After learning playful breathing techniques for emotional regulation, a Rohingya teacher in Kutapalong Bangladesh said “I have never done this before and now I understand that this mindful play system is actually able to bring a bad and careless mind back to the right track instantly. We can overcome our own depression by practicing them, this system seems completely different, and we think it is a very effective approach.”

Training caregivers of all nationalities

Training caregivers of all nationalities is valuable in helping children feel safe in playgroups, ensure use of culturally appropriate learning methods, and encourage social-emotional growth.

Partnerships are pivotal

Partnerships are pivotal for maximising impact. An example is the collaboration between Kids Collab and LTP to scale the Parent Playbox. The essentials for building this successful collaboration included clear roles, well-defined project plan, and a willingness to learn together.

Learn to Play

CHILDREN ON THE EDGE

About the organisation

Children on the Edge is a child rights organisation that works hand-in-hand with communities to support some of the world's most marginalised children, in some of the toughest situations. They have more than 30 years of experience in 18 countries and currently work with over 17,000 children in Bangladesh, India, Uganda, Myanmar, and Lebanon. In 2012, they founded a Ugandan-led organisation called Children on the Edge Africa to further develop our work in Uganda.

Context

In 2019, Children on the Edge Africa (COTEA) began working in the Kyaka II refugee settlement, in Uganda. Kyaka II refugee settlement is home to over 125,000 refugees, many who have fled across the border from the Democratic Republic of Congo and are now spread across 81.5km, living in mostly rural village communities. COTEA is currently reaching 5,182 children across 191 cluster groups, in 40 villages across Kyaka II refugee settlement, covering over 70% of early learning needs across 5 zones. So far, they have trained 20 teacher trainers and over 200 refugee caregivers.

Key intervention

COTEA's Cluster Learning Programme is a cost-effective, child-centered early education model for children aged 3-6, that derives sustainability by being rooted firmly in the community. In place of costly classrooms and staff salaries, this approach uses open communal spaces close to where the children live, develops parental engagement and provides in-depth training and mentoring support to refugee caregivers. It develops community savings group initiatives to encourage communities to cover the costs of ECED themselves. The objectives of the Cluster Learning Programme are as follows:

More children access primary education at age 6 and remain in school for longer

Young children become 'school ready' by age 6 with a focus on resilience, confidence, well-being, self-expression and independence.

Communities own and invest in ECED opportunities for their children

Parents understand the value of play and benefit from playing with their children at home

Caregivers find teaching enjoyable, and have high motivation and retention levels

Familial relationships are improved

Key elements

i Community ownership and engagement

COTEA's programme is designed to be led, owned, and managed by parents and community members. Key strategies are:

- Engaging stakeholders in a problem analysis and collaborating with community leaders to understand how cluster learning can address community needs.
- Recruiting and training refugees as teacher trainers (ToTs) who are tasked with activities like conducting household surveys, needs assessments, community engagement workshops, and recruiting and training refugee parents and community members to become caregivers.
- Developing a culturally relevant curriculum by working with caregivers who recommend local play, stories, songs, and games to be added to the curriculum, and conducting ongoing efforts to shift community attitudes towards ECED and play.

ii Ease of access

Study areas are situated close to where children live (in compounds, homes, under trees and in the shade of church buildings), enabling more children to attend the learning spaces. Each study area is broken into baby class (3–4-year-olds), middle class (4–5-year-olds), and top class (5–6-year-olds).

For some activities, children are mixed across age group, while for specific activities such as phonics, children are separated into age or ability groups. Children play in small groups of 15, which means that they benefit from a low caregiver to child ratio. Additionally, since caregivers are members of the community itself, they understand the context and experiences of the children, speak the same language, and are also able to build strong relationships with the children which further helps build trust with parents who feel more comfortable in leaving their children in their care. Cluster learning sessions run three mornings a week, from Monday to Wednesday, with play activities at home encouraged for the remaining week.

Through household surveys, COTEA's programme aims to identify the most vulnerable children including those with disabilities and additional needs. Working on an individual basis, the programme works closely with families to support them to access and benefit from the cluster learning group closest to them. Children of concern are quickly identified, supported and if necessary, referred to external agencies.

iii Play-based, child-centered learning

In study areas, the daily routine includes a session on "exploring my environment", followed by "building my brain", then physical play and story time. Plenty of time is allocated for free play and independent exploration of resources.

Cluster learning utilises sustainable and locally available materials for play, such as sticks, leaves, bottle tops, seeds and various containers. These are collected and donated by the communities themselves. COTEA delivers training for caregivers, parents and the wider community on how to best utilise these materials to support children's learning. Each caregiver is also given a workbook which is built on play ideas from caregivers with suggested daily activities and resources, closely linked to the Ugandan Learning Framework. The workbooks also have space for caregivers to reflect on and evaluate their teaching practice.

iv Parent engagement

The programme values families as essential partners in the learning process. In each term, COTEA organises family fun days in each study area aiming to bring parents together to participate in play with their children, celebrate their child's achievements and discuss the next steps in their learning and development. Parents are also always welcomed to join in with cluster learning if they are available.

v VSLA scheme to promote savings and livelihoods of caregivers

The programme establishes VSLAs for families and provides financial training. Savings groups are encouraged to see the value of ECED and invest in it for the benefit of their children by contributing to caregiver stipends, building shelters, providing snacks, or acquiring resources. Members from these savings groups are also selected and trained to form the cluster management committee (CLMC).

vi Caregiver training with a focus on mindfulness and child protection

Recognising that many children are dealing with signs of trauma and stress, COTEA extensively emphasises on training caregivers on mindfulness activities focused on understanding and dealing with emotions, building resilience and confidence. COTEA has developed a picture book called 'Dembe's Story', which is a tool for caregivers to help children understand abuse, what it is and how they can help.

Read more about this initiative

In terms of the training, a new caregiver works with a more experienced caregiver for a term where they become a teaching assistant in their cluster, mentored closely by the ToTs. Ongoing training allows programme staff and ToTs to identify any gaps in knowledge and practice of caregivers. In addition, all caregivers meet at a zone level (approx. 30 caregivers from surrounding communities) every Thursday to evaluate learning, share their experiences, solve problems and prepare for the following week.

vii Community-led programme monitoring

COTEA works closely with caregivers to support with ongoing assessment. The core is to strengthen relationships between caregivers and their children and increase the frequency of informal observations of the children. Caregivers use their workbooks to note any 'wow moments' and next steps for each child, which they review at the end of term when writing report cards for parents and planning for the following term.

In addition, ToTs use an observation questionnaire, downloaded onto a data app called Kobo, which is used during cluster group visits on a weekly basis. It helps monitor all elements of cluster learning with a focus on teaching and learning but are also used for supervision support encouraging feedback and discussion with the caregivers.

Children on the Edge

Key learnings

Frequent migration impacts programme effectiveness

The transient nature of the population in humanitarian context makes it difficult to establish long-term, stable support systems and monitor the effectiveness of programmes over time.

Addressing high demand with limited resources is a challenge

The high number of vulnerable children, parents, and communities—facing issues such as trauma, poverty, abuse—demonstrates a significant need for the programme. However, the small and relatively new team at COTEA finds it challenging to address the needs of the community on its own.

Building sustainable systems is a gradual process and requires deep engagement of the community

The historical reliance on NGOs within the settlement has created a culture of dependence and over-reliance on free handouts than ownership. COTEA's approach focuses on fostering a sense of ownership amongst locals, NGOs, and camp authorities. There are opportunities to research sustainable community models in various contexts.

Cultural perceptions often resist the promotion of play-based approaches

There are cultural beliefs that play is frivolous, fun and unnecessary. To address these challenges, it is essential to engage local community leaders, who can advocate to caregivers. In COTEA's programme, family fun days have helped parents connect play with learning and see the much wider benefits of play such as stress relief, processing emotions etc.

There are opportunities to research and explore tools which can better assess and monitor play-based programmes

Current tools and resources do not often focus on playfully assessing children and follow more traditional methods. COTE, Learn to Play Botswana and the University of Chichester have developed a tool which assesses both children's development and the programme itself, through play. This assessment is conducted once per year, using a sample group.

Click to learn more about the play-based tool →

3.8
Additional resources for designing play-oriented programmes in refugee contexts

This section offers a curated collection of readings and resources on play-oriented programming. While most of the resources are for humanitarian settings, a select set of resources are applicable across contexts. The full database of play resources can be found here . Below are a few highlighted resources:

01	**Playful Learning Across the Years (PLAY) Measurement Toolkit** *By: The Lego Foundation, NYU Global Ties For Children, RTI International and Education Development Center* The toolkit measures how caregivers and teachers support children's engagement in their learning. The toolkit consists of observation and survey tools for children from birth to 12-years-old and can be applied across diverse learning settings and contexts.	Link
02	**A course on Learning Through Play in EiE** By: *Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Humanity & Inclusion, IKEA Foundation, INEE (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies), People in Need (PIN), Plan International, Save the Children, The MHPSS Collaborative, University of Geneva, War Child, World Vision, Right to Play, LEGO Foundation* A course exploring Learning Through Play in Emergencies explaining why we should do it, how to implement it, and the enabling systems needed for the same.	Link
03	**Watch, Play and Learn: Early Learning Videos** By: *Sesame Workshop* A set of animated video segments to promote math, science, and social-emotional skills for young children in crises in a playful way.	Link
04	**P.O.W.E.R.: Games for Child Development and Learning** By: *Right to Play* The Play Opportunities for Wellness and Education Resource (P.O.W.E.R.) is a collection of 100 gender-responsive play-based learning activities created to support parents, teachers, coaches, social workers and others to promote children's learning and development.	Link
05	**A review of evidence related to play for children's education and development in humanitarian and low-resource contexts** By: *Play Matters* The report studies promising and/or effective "Learning through Play" approaches in humanitarian and/or low resource contexts, delivered through educators, caregivers, communities (in pre-primary, primary school, community and/or home settings), and those integrated within wider education systems.	Link
06	**BRAC's Humanitarian Play Lab: Promoting healing, learning, and development for displaced Rohingya children** By: *BRAC in Journal on Education in Emergencies* A field note which describes the key features of the Humanitarian play model for children ages 0-6 in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. The intervention combines play-based learning with psychosocial support from paracounselors to promote positive developmental outcomes for children in crisis settings.	Link
07	**Learning and healing through play in humanitarian crises** By: *The Brookings Institution* This article elaborates on three programming approaches, developed and tested in humanitarian crises around the world, which have shown promise in supporting both children and adults in crisis contexts.	Link

04

Supporting caregivers to improve emotional and mental well-being

4.1 Introduction to the theory

Along with children, emergencies have an impact on the functioning of caregivers like families, communities, teachers and school staff who have experienced adversity themselves. This is primarily due to stressors like family separation, limited livelihood opportunities, precarious access to public services and uncertainty about the future. When a caregiver's own mental health is compromised, they struggle to provide their children with nurturing and supportive care and become an indirect source of risk for their child's well-being.

Research shows that poor caregiver mental health is associated with adverse childhood outcomes, such as low birth weight, prematurity, developmental delays and various health problems later in life.

Women are more prone to negative mental health conditions. An established body of literature highlights that refugee women from various backgrounds in resettlement countries face poorer well-being when compared to native-born.

Given this context, there is a pressing need for scalable MHPSS interventions, along with education provision, in conflict and other humanitarian settings. The term MHPSS refers to any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being or prevent or treat mental health conditions. Psycho-social is defined as the state of being or doing well of an individual in different aspects of life, including having supportive social relationships, access to basic survival needs and economic and environmental resources and physical, intellectual, emotional and developmental needs being addressed.

4.2 Importance of focusing on MHPSS for refugee families

This section summarises the key arguments regarding the importance of prioritising MHPSS programmes for caregivers in refugee settings.

Acts as a foundation for the healthy development of children: One of the key advantages of having a strong relationship with the caregiver is that it helps young children learn how to regulate their emotions in a systematic manner when confronted with stress. In destabilising contexts of conflict and displacement, the nurturing caregiver-child relationship becomes more critical. It is known to a mitigate the worst effects of stress and adversity. It also reduces violence against children and increases positive development. When a caregiver's own mental health is compromised, they struggle to provide their children with nurturing and supportive care. This results in children experiencing severe stress, psycho-social deprivation, and lack of stimulation, which can have long-term effects on their health, learning and behaviour. Investing in MHPSS programming for caregivers is necessary to ensure positive life-long outcomes for children.

Helps in building social cohesion: MHPSS initiatives contribute to a more cohesive and resilient community. By facilitating opportunities for individuals to connect, share experiences, and support each other, these programmes enhance community well-being and stability. This collective support not only strengthens individual resilience to face adversity but also helps build a robust community support and improve their sense of belongingness.

Normalises daily life for caregivers: It involves establishing routines, promoting self-efficacy, fostering social connections, and encouraging engagement in meaningful activities. This helps promote a sense of confidence in caregivers and restoration of control over one's life. When caregivers feel in control and confident, they are better equipped to advocate for their needs and ask for improved support for their families.

4.3 MHPSS as a lever for promoting family outcomes under the dual-generational framework

MHPSS initiatives for caregivers are essential for promoting dual-generational impact in humanitarian settings. The first five years of development are crucial from the impact on a child's cognitive development and later life. However, poor mental health among caregivers leads to neglect of childcare, adversely affecting child development. The challenges are found to be exacerbated among caregivers experiencing violence and displacement, as they suffer frequently from discriminatory policies, difficult access to services, and the loss of personal dignity, social roles, community fabric and family relationships.

By providing MHPSS support to caregivers, we can improve their well-being, which in turn enhances their capacity to provide nurturing care for their young children. Research also shows that ECED interventions that include an element directed at caregivers – by providing information on positive caregiving practices or by otherwise supporting caregiver well-being, have been successful in improving outcomes for young children.

Given these factors, MHPSS programming is critical to yield dual-generational impact as it supports both caregiver and child development.

FUDELA

4.4
Modalities of delivering MHPSS in refugee settings

In this section, we will look at key models for delivering well-being programmes for caregivers in humanitarian settings. These are based on desk research and learnings generated through the CoP discussions. Each model is illustrated with a practical example to provide a clear vision of how it operates in practice.

	Model	Description	An example:
01	**Group-based support**	Involves providing MHPSS programming through structured group sessions conducted in community spaces.	**The University of Los Andes's programme called Semillas de Apego** is a group-based MHPSS intervention for primary caregivers of children aged 0-5 in Colombia impacted by humanitarian crisis. The training spans 15 weeks. It first provides tools so that victimised caregivers can start processing their own trauma. Then, the model focuses on allowing a proper understanding of the child's development trajectories and how they are affected by the experience of adversities, such as violence exposure. Finally, the programme works towards fostering positive child-rearing practices, to support on sensitive and responsive caregiving.
02	**One-to-one support**	Offers personalised MHPSS programming delivered directly to caregivers and children in their homes, often through phone calls or home visits.	**BRAC's Phone-based Pashe Achi** trains community volunteers called Play Leaders to provide improved MHPSS programming to children and their caregivers. The Play Leaders interact with children, mothers and caregivers, with the help of the scripts on audio files. Children are engaged through activities such as reciting traditional rhymes called kabbiyas, while mothers and caregivers are given basic MHPSS, health and hygiene tips, and child stimulation tips. The calls to children and caregivers are weekly in nature (~for 20 minutes). The programme was initiated in response to COVID-19.

Model	Description	An example:
Hybrid models combining group and one-to-one support 03	Integrates both group-based and one-to-one support approaches. They typically involve group sessions for general education and support, combined with individual follow-up through home visits or personalised interactions.	**Right to Play's Play to Grow Programme** works with parents and caregivers of children aged three to six. It comprises a 24-week parent education programme designed to support the development of nine key parenting skills like child development, play, alongside a component of psycho-social support for parents. The 24 sessions are supplemented by six monthly home visits from the Parent Educator designed to build trusting relationships with participating parents/caregivers and gives an opportunity to discuss their experience of the programme, what they are learning, and how they are applying new knowledge and skills. The monthly visits also provide an opportunity for Parent Educators to observe participating parent/ caregivers' progress in applying the parenting skills developed through the weekly sessions. The final component of the intervention model is a series of radio messages designed and contextualised to reinforce the key themes and skills focused on in the regular sessions. In group sessions, the facilitator also holds conversations with caregivers about family safety. Additionally, there are activities to promote self-compassion amongst caregivers. The intervention is now expanding to respond to the needs of children and families affected by conflict and crisis, particularly those that have been displaced, experienced war or community violence, or have experienced the loss or separation from loved ones. In this programme, two additional sessions are prioritised focussing on the impact of adversity on children and their caregivers. The programme is implemented in Uganda and Tanzania.

4.5 Promising features of MHPSS programmes in humanitarian settings

This section articulates programming features of MHPSS programmes in humanitarian contexts as identified through desk research and discussions through online communities of practice:

MHPSS programming in humanitarian contexts is led predominantly by local volunteers and community volunteers and directed towards non-specialised support: The discussions with practitioners in the CoP highlighted that MHPSS programmes have high involvement of local community workers and volunteers in humanitarian contexts. They also highlighted that the key services provided by local actors are

non-specialised like peer assistance, offering a listening ear, comforting individuals, and aiding in connecting them with relevant information and support services. In the long run, CoP practitioners suggested that there is a need to balance between community-led support services and specialised interventions to meet the mental health and psycho-social needs of large numbers of caregivers in humanitarian settings.

Interventions for caregivers are commonly delivered through structured group formats: MHPSS programmes for caregivers are often delivered in group sessions, and sometimes combined with individual home visits. Most programmes have weekly meetings. Engaging in group sessions with recurring frequency provides caregivers an opportunity to get to know each other and build a relationship with their facilitator. A sense of community is important to build emotional security and social support. Group learning, in many programmes, is targeted through strategies like role play activities, structured play time with children and guided modelling on positive behaviours. In a few cases, only one-to-one home visits are used as a delivery method. A recent study highlighted that home visits can be powerful, as it allows for engaging caregivers who are unable to attend services regularly, as well as fostering more culturally sensitive services. However, a challenge is that such interventions can be resource-intensive and become burdensome to deliver in a cost-effective way.

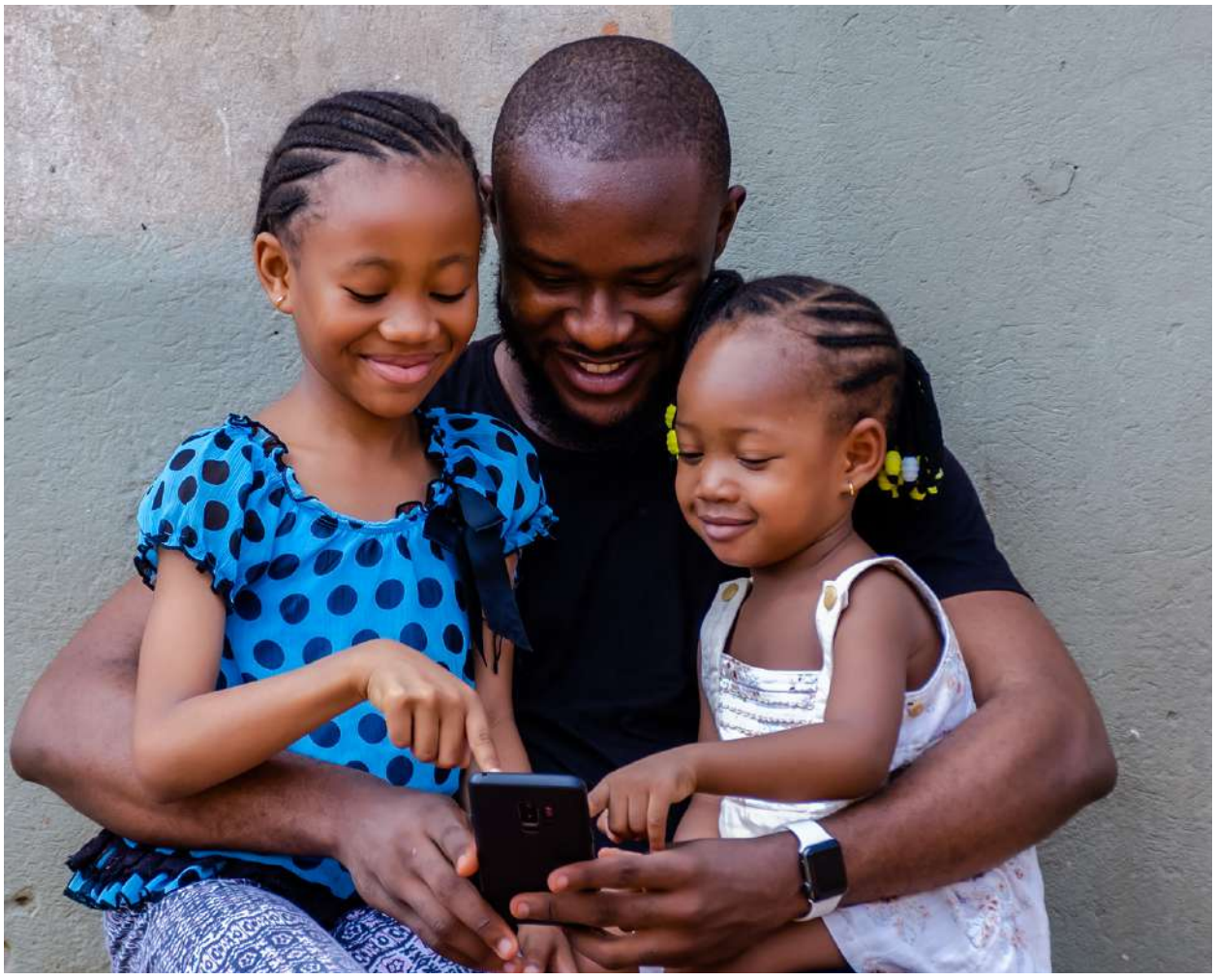
Many programmes leverage existing networks, such as women's groups and religious organisations to promote caregiver well-being. In networks, the group dynamics push caregivers to recognise their strengths, while reducing stress and discussing strategies that help them cope with and avoid harsh self-judgement. Support networks are well-positioned to contribute to improved caregiver effectiveness that can be sustained after the intervention ends. Many programmes have used gender-specific support groups for promoting targeted interventions.

Integration with communal spaces like schools and health centres are also seen to be natural entry points to support caregiver well-being. They instinctively furnish a space for refugee parents and other caregivers to come together and build a community. More broadly, access to reliable education and health services for children play a pivotal role in lifting an immense burden off the shoulders of caregivers. It frees up their time to focus on daily survival tasks without worrying about their children, like collecting food, and water. It also provides them time to cope with stress associated with crisis. Additionally, observing growth in their children can reinforce caregivers' sense of accomplishment and well-being.

MHPSS programmes commonly cover topics which help caregivers process their own trauma, engage in self-care and foster knowledge about the development trajectories of children. To process trauma and engage in self-

care, the programme equips caregivers with tools and strategies to manage stress and maintain their well-being. Within positive caregiving practices, the focus is on improving the quality of caregiver-child interactions at home and school and in the community. They are also taught how children are affected by the exposure to adverse events and fostering child-rearing good practices.

Planning MHPSS programmes requires a deep understanding of the culture within the impacted region. These considerations can span dimensions like recognising cultural perceptions and attitudes towards mental health; understanding the social fabric of the community, identifying the infrastructural landscape of the country such as social protection and healthcare systems; and gauging the broader political context within which the programme operates. Aligning the design and delivery of MHPSS interventions with contextual considerations better positions the intervention to address the needs of the caregiver population in humanitarian settings.



4.6 Challenges that exist

This section synthesises key challenges, and future support areas based on our discussions with practitioners during the CoP and individual consultations.

1. **Narrow focus on child-outcomes as opposed to family-outcomes:** Despite the critical role of caregiver well-being in child development, research highlights that there is an overwhelmingly narrow focus on the individual outcomes of the child by both scholars and practitioners in these contexts rather than on family outcomes. Combined or integrated interventions are not only necessary for fostering healthy early childhood development, but to improve outcomes for parents as well. There is a strong need to focus on "whole family" or family-based interventions that focus on early response and prevention of mental health conditions for all family members.

2. **Limited research on programmatic elements of an effective MHPSS programme:** Studies from the US and other high-income countries shows that psycho-social and other types of support to parents and caregivers together with stimulating and safe environments have long- term positive effects on children in early years. However, when it comes to contexts of conflict, there is extremely limited knowledge about what works, especially when integrated within education programmes. The few tools and resources that are robust, often are intensive on costs, and resources.

There is an immediate need to conduct quality research investigating the life condition of caregivers, and caregivers' approaches to processing own trauma and supporting vulnerable children. In particular, the research should pay attention to context, long-term effects, scaling up, implementation, cost, ethics, and lived experience. In addition to this, in programmes that support ECED and caregiver well-being, there is also a scope to better establish the connection between caregiver well-being and child outcomes.

3. **Poor funding towards MHPSS programmes:** As per a study, only 0.31% of official development assistance and 1% of private sector funding is allocated toward funding for child, youth and family mental health and psycho-social support. To increase funding for MHPSS in humanitarian settings, it is essential to build a compelling case for action by demonstrating the positive impact of such interventions, building case studies of innovative programming and outlining scalable delivery methods.

4.7
Additional resources for MHPSS programming in humanitarian contexts

This section offers a curated collection of readings and resources on MHPSS programming. While most of the resources are for humanitarian settings, a select set of resources are applicable across contexts, as indicated. The full database of resources can be found here. Below are a few highlighted resources:

01	**A guidebook on intervention research for children and youth in settings affected by armed conflict** By: *War Child* The guidebook provides an overview of War Child's care system and a deep-dive on the "BeThere" intervention which is a caregiver support intervention for families in adversity.	Link
02	**Caring for the caregiver module** By: *UNICEF* The module provides information about how to help caregivers increase their emotional awareness, practice self-care, and improve their coping skills. It is a four to six-week training programme.	Link
03	**Why supporting caregivers' mental health in crisis settings is essential for young children's holistic development** By: *Moving Minds Alliance* The thematic brief highlights the importance of supporting caregivers' mental health in crisis settings to promote young children's holistic development. It also shares illustrative examples of evidence-based interventions, that adopt a whole family approach to promote the mental health and psychosocial well-being of caregivers, responsive caregiving, and early learning.	Link
04	**Community-based mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings** By: *UNICEF* This document provides guidelines to design and implement MHPSS strategies for actors at various levels like caregivers, families and community service providers.	Link
05	**Baytna: Early childhood development for refugees in Greece** By: *Moving Minds Alliance* A case study on Baytna which delivers psychosocial support and early years education to refugee children aged 0-6 and their caregivers in Greece.	Link
06	**The Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Network** By: *MHPSS.net* A global platform for connecting people, networks and organisations, for sharing resources and for building knowledge related to mental health and psychosocial support both in emergency settings and in situations of chronic hardship.	Link
07	**The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package** By: *MHPSS-MSP* The platform builds on existing MHPSS standards and tools to create a single, easy-to-follow intersectoral package.	Link

05

Enhancing livelihood opportunities for caregivers

5.1 Importance of livelihood and income generation of refugee families

In contexts of crises, accessing ECED services incurs various expenses for refugee families. These costs may include transportation, meals, and in some cases, direct fees. In many host countries, the government does not provide public pre-primary education, which forces families seeking education for their young children to rely on private providers that charge prohibitive fees, creating a substantial financial barrier. Furthermore, refugee families often struggle to secure stable livelihoods due to several challenges, such as restrictions on work permits, lack of appropriate credentials, or workplace discrimination. This lack of access to income-generating opportunities additionally places a significant financial strain on families, directly impacting their ability to support their young children and meet their educational needs.

Livelihood opportunities are critical to ensure:

Improved access to ECED education: Currently, due to lack of finances, parents are often unable to send their children to school. In Uganda, fewer than 1 in 10 pre-primary aged children (ages 3-5) are enrolled in a formal pre-primary school, and 60 percent attend no school at all. In Kampala, fees can reach UGX 1,750,000 (US$462) or more per child per term. For a full school year—three terms—fees for just one child at this rate represent more than two years' wages for an average person in paid employment in Uganda. The situation compounds further for refugee caregivers who do not have access to stable and well-paying livelihoods. By addressing economic barriers, one can ensure that more young children are able to gain access to early education, which is essential for their future.

Improved quality of ECED education: Financial strain not only affects access to schooling for young children but also impacts the quality of education they receive. With minimal financial support from parents and reduced donor and government funding, ECED centers struggle to invest in high-quality infrastructure and teaching provision. For example, in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp, on average, there are 133 children per classroom severely impacting the quality of interactions between staff and children, and between children themselves. In Uganda, issues of abuse and corporal punishment are also occurring, as parents are detached from classroom practices and perhaps unaware of the consequences of such forms of discipline. By building the financial stability of refugee families, improved quality of ECED education can be provided to young children.

Improved caregiver well-being: Increased financial hardship results in caregiver distress which leads to child distress. This is a "hardship chain reaction" as the financial strain and uncertainty of meeting basic needs negatively affects caregiver well-being, which in turn adversely affects

the emotional health of young children. By improving the livelihood of caregivers, one can ensure improved well-being of caregivers and increased outcomes for children.

5.2 How income generation initiatives promote family outcomes under the dual-generational framework

While increased caregiver livelihood has an impact on child outcomes and caregiver well-being, it plays an added role in improving family resilience. The increase in income strengthens family dynamics by enhancing the self-esteem of caregivers and ensuring they have a greater sense of agency, which fosters more positive parent-child interactions. Additionally, stable income opportunity enhances the social integration of refugee families by increasing interactions with host communities. This fosters cultural understanding and reduces social isolation while also improving access to local services. Income generation initiatives also promote long-term financial stability which provides families with the tools and resources to break the inter-generational cycles of poverty. Given these factors, we consider improving income generation of families as a critical lever to yield dual-generational impact.

5.3 Modalities of supporting income-generation of refugee families

In section 1, we identified a few emerging models to support refugee families in improving their income-generation capacity. In this section, we will understand these models in further detail:

Skills training and/ or business coaching

	Description	An example
01	**Vocational training:** Practitioner organisations offer vocational training aligned with local market needs, and language courses to overcome communication barriers. These initiatives bridge the gap between refugees' current skills and the requirements of their host country's job market, improving their employability and facilitating smoother integration into the local workforce.	**Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)** in Uganda provides non-formal training in trades including bakery, electronics, hair dressing, tailoring, brickmaking, poultry, horticulture, and carpentry. Youths are also taught life skills and functional literacy and numeracy. Upon successful completion, each graduate receives a start-up kit with all the essential tools and inputs for beginning a business in their chosen trade.
02	**Business coaching:** This includes supporting refugee entrepreneurship by providing training in business management, guiding refugees through the process of starting and running their own businesses, improving financial literacy and providing training on budgeting, savings, and financial management. Another model of business coaching focuses on building the capacity of refugee youth and caregivers, particularly mothers, to establish and operate their own ECED centers. This approach yields significant social and economic benefits not only for caregivers but also for children. Within this category, some programmes are also innovating by using the space of ECED centers to run second businesses during off-hours which may or may not be connected to ECED, to generate additional revenue to support the centers financially	**The Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems (DREAMS)** programme offers savings groups, business training, mentorship, as well as connections with private companies that supply, buy, or sell products and services. The project is implemented by **Mercy Corps and Village Enterprise** in Ethiopia and Uganda. This innovative model merges Village Enterprise's poverty graduation programme with Mercy Corps' expertise in market systems development to equip people with the skills, resources, and markets to start sustainable businesses and promote economic self-reliance. **UNICEF Uganda and UNCD** are designing a programme called Skill and Transform Resilient Youth to Invest in the Development of Early Childhood (STRYIDE). It aims to provide demand-driven skills for young people (especially young mothers) to become accredited ECD caregivers and entrepreneurs. Uganda will be the first country to implement STRYIDE, where access to ECD services is very low (~10% of the population). The programme aims to provide young entrepreneurs with financial resources within a sustainable investment model and technical and entrepreneurial skills to run their ECED centres as social enterprises.
03	**Agricultural training:** This includes working with caregivers to improve access to land, agricultural inputs, and training in sustainable farming techniques and livestock management. In rural settings, this often involves larger plots of land. In urban camps, it may include smaller-scale initiatives like community gardens, rooftop farms, or container gardening. The goal is to help refugee farmers become economically empowered, and food secure through sustainable, climate-smart and nutrition- sensitive agricultural livelihoods.	**UGEAFI,** in the Burundian refugee camps of Mulongwe and Lusenda in South Kivu, addresses food shortages by leasing agricultural fields to refugees and supplying them with seeds and essential farming tools, including watering cans and hoes. This initiative is aimed at families to secure enough food for their children and generate surplus produce for sale in local markets. The income from these sales is intended to meet various household needs and improve overall well-being.

Skills training and/ or business coaching + Access to capital

	Description	An example
01	**Linkages to microfinance institutions:** It includes facilitating access to banking services for refugees like` microfinance and credit services, which are crucial for starting small businesses, managing emergency expenses, and improving overall financial security. It also includes interventions that are aimed at building credit histories of refugees, which are vital for accessing loans and other financial opportunities and building long-term self-sufficiency.	**Refugees: Innovation, Self-reliance & Empowerment (RISE) programme by Opportunity Bank Uganda Ltd. in partnership with FINCA** works in refugee settlements in Uganda where it supports refugees and displaced people with (a) promoting financial inclusion through financial literacy training and (b) providing market linkages by helping individual open bank accounts and access loans. The programme is also educating loan takers on how timely payment of loans helps with improving credit rating making it easier to get a second loan.
02	**Establishment, legalisation and management of VSLAs:** This includes helping families set up VSLAs, which are community-based groups where members pool their savings and provide loans to one another. Refugee families are supported with formal registration and legal recognition of these associations to ensure they operate within the host country's legal framework. Ongoing management support is also provided, including training in financial management and group dynamics to ensure the VSLAs function effectively. Additionally, business training and skills development are offered to prepare members to use the loans meaningfully, focusing on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and small business management.	**Children in Crossfire**, in partnership with **Maedot,** works in the **Oromia region** in Ethiopia where they support the most vulnerable members from the community by organising them into VSLAs and supporting with business training and skills development preparing them to meaningfully use the loans.

Job matching support and social integration

	Description	An example
01	**Matching refugees with jobs:** This includes collaborating with local businesses and/ or leveraging technology to facilitate job placements, offer job readiness training, and advocate for policies that support refugee employment. These services help refugees enter the local job market, fostering economic self-sufficiency and promoting social inclusion by integrating them into their new communities.	**Mercy Corps and BFA Global** run a project called "Jobtech for Refugees"in Uganda which focuses on removing barriers to accessing jobtech platforms (gigmatching, jobmatching, ecommerce). The programme supports start-ups with technical assistance, project delivery support, grant capital and connections to partners, with a long-term goal of supporting refugees (through refugee-led organisations) to access new job opportunities.

5.4 Promising features of promoting livelihood of refugee caregivers with young children

Based on an analysis of various livelihood support models in refugee contexts, including interviews with practitioners and discussions within online CoP, we have summarised the key findings below:

1. **It is critical to provide ongoing mentorship and guidance beyond the initial business training or job placement programme.** It typically takes many months, sometimes even a year or more, for a new refugee-owned or refugee-led business to become profitable and self-sustaining. During this crucial transitional period, refugee caregivers who have turned into entrepreneurs need continued support to navigate the challenges of business management, access to working capital, regulations, etc. Similarly, refugees placed in formal employment may initially struggle to adapt to the new work environment and require mentoring to develop confidence, interpersonal skills, and a clear career pathway. Providing hands-on coaching support is therefore key to building a sustainable livelihood for refugee caregivers.

2. **Facilitating market linkages and value chain integration for businesses owned by refugee caregivers is crucial.** Refugees often encounter challenges in accessing wider markets, supply chains, and distribution networks. Livelihood programmes that help bridge this gap by facilitating partnerships with local companies, cooperatives, and larger enterprises have a distinct advantage. This could involve connecting refugee entrepreneurs to procurement opportunities, establishing reliable sales channels, or supporting branding, quality control, and logistics. By embedding refugee livelihoods within broader economic ecosystems, these market linkage strategies enhance the long-term viability and scalability of the refugee businesses.

3. **Beyond creating just economic opportunities, livelihood training and income-generation should also support "trauma healing" for refugee families who have experienced significant adversity.** The stability, routine, and sense of purpose provided by these programmes can help refugee caregivers regain a sense of control over their lives and build resilience. Integrating psychosocial support, stress management techniques, and mental health services within livelihood programmes is necessary to impact the overall wellbeing of refugee caregivers and their children.

4. **In line with the EiE principle of "do no harm", there is an emerging focus on prioritising climate-sensitive and environmentally sustainable livelihood programmes for refugee caregivers.** This includes avoiding income generation activities that could potentially harm the local ecosystem, and instead prioritise "green" livelihoods that respond to the impacts of climate change. This could involve training refugees on climate-smart agriculture techniques, such as cultivating

drought-resistant crops or implementing water-efficient irrigation systems. Programme can also promote the use of renewable energy sources like biogas or solar power for refugee-led enterprises. Integrating climate change awareness and eco-friendly practices into life skills and business skills training are also useful ways to equip refugee entrepreneurs make environmentally responsible choices.

5. **Building income-generating initiatives for refugee caregivers requires key collaborations between diverse partners.** A single organisation cannot address the full spectrum of barriers faced by refugee families in accessing income-generating opportunities. For example, one partner may specialise in providing vocational and entrepreneurship training and equipping refugee caregivers with demand-driven skills. Another partner can focus on facilitating linkages of refugee entrepreneurs with markets. A microfinance institution can play a critical role in helping entrepreneurs open bank accounts, provide financial literacy training and offer tailored loan products and savings services. This can help refugee caregivers overcome the capital constraints that often act as an obstacle in their entrepreneurial goals. Similarly, a financial intermediary organisation may be needed to help de-risk lending to refugee clients and improve their access to financing. This could involve providing loan guarantees or offering business development support to strengthen the creditworthiness of refugee entrepreneurs.

FUDELA

5.5 Challenges faced in delivering livelihood initiatives for refugee caregivers with young children

This section synthesises key challenges, and future support needs based on our discussions with practitioners during the CoPs and individual consultations.

1. **High mobility in search for better economic opportunities:** Refugees face unique challenges securing safe and sustainable livelihoods due to factors like lack of social networks, opaque information on labour markets, language barriers etc. This is further complicated by restrictive movement of refugees within designated areas and legal restrictions, especially for camp-based refugees. In the absence of livelihoods and the increasingly protracted nature of crises, refugees face asset depletion and rising debt levels. This economic pressure is leading to high mobility among refugee populations, in particular those living in restrictive policy environments. Many practitioners have raised the concern that the transient nature of refugee population makes it challenging to provide consistent support and fully realise the impact of interventions.

2. **Low levels of literacy and numeracy:** Refugee caregivers often face significant challenges in engaging effectively in income-generating activities due to inadequate functional literacy and numeracy skills. For instance, Uganda and Ethiopia, hosts some of Africa's largest refugee populations, primarily from South Sudan- a country with a general literacy rate of just 34%. With lack of access and time to pursue further education in refugee set ups, refugee families become more vulnerable. Practitioners highlighted that it is essential to integrate literacy and basic numeracy training with business and vocational education for caregivers, but also expressed that there are negligible tested and replicable models to learn from.

3. **Lack of identification documentation impacting market linkages.** The lack of national formal identification documents is one of the main barriers preventing refugees from establishing businesses and earning a livelihood. Without proper documentation, families are unable to access to basic services like banking or registering their businesses. The process of obtaining documents has been highlighted to be challenging by practitioners. In Kenya, refugees have expressed feeling confused and uncertain about obtaining legal identities, largely stemming from the often conflicting, unclear, or incomplete information they received from different sources. The time to obtain the documents in Kenya has been estimated as anywhere from three months to two to three years. When issued, refugee identification documents do not satisfy the documentation requirements for accessing many financial services. In Kenya, Know-Your-Customer requirements, are required for financial service providers to verify the identity of customers, however, a refugee identification card is not one of the permitted identification documents.

4. **Limited demand for businesses started by refugees:** In refugee settings, vocational training is often more supply-oriented rather than demand-oriented. Most programmes offer training available in traditional trades (e.g., hairdressing, tailoring, carpentry), which is leading to market saturation. Fast-tracked education and training that is driven by demand and has low entry requirements are necessary to identify.

5. **Low access to capital for refugees who are considered to be high risk borrowers:** Refugees are rarely served by formal financial institutions as many financial services providers consider them risky to lend to. This is specifically true for urban refugees who are not as geographically restricted as camp-based refugees. E.g. in Uganda, private lenders commonly charge 50 per cent interest, and VSLAs charge upto 20% interest as refugees are considered 'risky'. However, studies show that between 2014 and 2018, only 1% of refugees in Uganda resettled. There is a need for financial service providers to strategically assess refugee groups effectively.

6. **Gender-based barriers prevent women to enroll in livelihood trainings and income-generating activities:** Women refugee caregivers face unique constraints in accessing livelihood activities primarily due to lack of childcare options. Countries affected by emergencies are home to nearly a 1/4 of the world's pre-primary-age population, but only 1 in 3 children in those countries are enrolled in preschool. In absence of childcare for young children, mothers and youth, find it extremely challenging to attend trainings for building livelihoods. Where childcare is available, the training hours may not overlap with childcare availability. These further impact equitable livelihood opportunities for women refugee caregivers.

7. **Lack of effective measurement tools to measure self-reliance of refugee families:** UNHCR has defined self-reliance as "the ability of individuals, households or communities to meet their essential needs and enjoy their human rights in a sustainable manner and to live with dignity". Currently, programmes are measuring outcomes in terms of changes to income, assets and savings. While

Children in Crossfire

these are vitally important for economic programming, they fall short of examining whether refugees' lives actually improve. There are opportunities to innovate in this area recognising that self-reliance may not be a solution for refugees in every situation, but it is certainly an important tool in refugee response where additional evidence should be generated.

8. **Limited access to land impact refugee's ability to earn an income:** Providing land to refugees adds significantly to refugees' positive impact on income, especially where legal restrictions prevent refugees from working and earning a livelihood. The food produced on the plots is an important source of nutrition for refugee households. Refugees can also earn an income by selling some of the food in local markets, most of which, in turn, they spend locally. With increasing number of influx of refugees, the plot sizes offered to refugees have been increasingly shrinking. In Bidi Bidi camp in Uganda, refugees currently have plot size of 30 m by 30 m. A study by UNDP has found that plots of this size are not sufficient to meet the dietary needs of refugees in the absence of food rations. The same report suggested that the quality of the land given to refugees also varies widely, with some rocky and infertile areas amidst fertile areas. While there is a widespread assumption that refugee households can achieve self-reliance through subsistence farming, the current challenges in land allocation and quality make this increasingly difficult to attain.

Children on the Edge

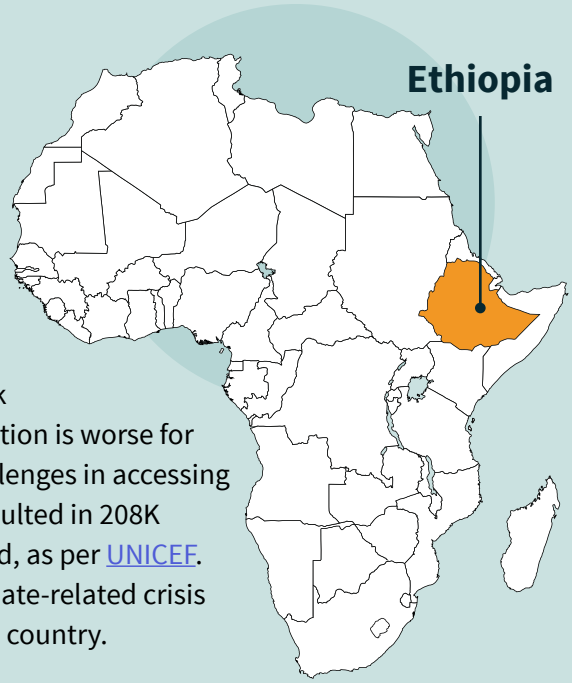
5.6 Case studies

Children in Crossfire

About the organisation

Children in Crossfire is dedicated to supporting projects that aid the world's most vulnerable children suffering from poverty-related injustices. In Tanzania and Ethiopia, they work in partnership with local organisations to improve the lives of young children, with a particular focus on Early Childhood Education (ECE).

Context



In Ethiopia, the demand for childcare (for children 0 to 4) and pre-primary education (for children aged 4-6) is growing rapidly. Government provision is unable to keep up with demand, especially in rural areas, and private players and NGOs are the main providers. Privately run childcare centres are prohibitively expensive and extremely unaffordable. On top of that, they are poorly resourced, lack infrastructure and offer low quality of education. The condition is worse for refugees, or low-income communities who face further challenges in accessing quality ECE. Oromia is facing rising insecurity which has resulted in 208K children being out of school and over 1200 schools damaged, as per UNICEF. The displacement is intensified through an overlay of a climate-related crisis resulting in 590,000 people being internally displaced in the country.

Key interventions

In Ethiopia's Oromia region, Children in Crossfire has taken a dual generation approach, and across four different interventions it seeks to improve outcomes for children and their caregivers.

School Readiness support:
delivering high-quality early childhood education to children aged 3 to 6 in collaboration with local NGOs and government schools.

Livelihoods support:
providing a VSLA scheme, alongside training to caregivers, especially women, to set up small enterprises, raising vital income for their families.

Responsive parenting:
supporting parents on the key issues of parenting, nutrition, and health delivered through culturally rooted coffee ceremonies facilitated by Community Volunteers.

Health:
therapeutic feeding and hospital treatment for children suffering from severe and acute malnutrition.

In this case study, we will delve deeper into their livelihood support programme for income generation.

At the beginning of the early childhood project, Children in Crossfire noticed that many children were not accessing ECE centers. One reason was that there were not enough pre-school places available in the area. However, in neighbourhoods where there were schools, the main cause of non-enrollment in school was found to be household poverty and the lack of livelihood at the household level to support their families. Based on this finding, together with its partner Maedot, Children in Crossfire initiated the creation of VSLAs to support the livelihoods of highly vulnerable households. The programme is currently supporting 75 families. The objective of VSLA programme are as follows:

- Bolster household income and livelihoods of young mothers
- Promote self-initiative and self-support amongst families so they are able to gain access to quality ECD programmes
- Increase financial security of families so that they are able to afford the indirect costs of their children's education (such as uniforms of school supplies)

Key elements

Selection of members

VSLA members are recruited from the parenting sessions, where Community Volunteers deliver parenting skills to the participants. Women in parenting sessions who meet the following criteria are enrolled in the VSLA programme:

- Young mothers with children less than 7 years old
- Proven vulnerability and household poverty
- Struggling to sustain a small business

ii Formalisation and legalisation of VSLA

After the selection of VSLA members, the programme provides legalisation support, which requires each member to obtain a Kebele resident ID. The VSLA then becomes a formal legal entity with its own leadership hierarchy. In Ethiopia, the legal framework surrounding VSLAs for refugees has evolved significantly, particularly following the enactment of the revised refugee law in February 2019. This law allows refugees to access banking services, thereby enabling their participation in VSLAs, which are crucial for enhancing their economic self-reliance.

iii Training and coaching

In each Kebele, a Community engagement facilitator (CEF) is assigned who works on providing support to VSLA members in the following areas:

- **Business startup training:** This training guides members of the groups in defining their business and understanding basic business skills. Training is aligned with government guidelines and strategies. The goal is to equip the selected trainees to: (A) select a microenterprise suitable for their individual circumstances; (B) plan for the successful launch of the selected microenterprise; and (C) manage the microenterprise.

- **Literacy and capacity building:** Children in Crossfire provides training and support to VSLA members on financial management, budgeting, record-keeping, and business development. This empowers members to make informed financial decisions and manage their own resources.

- **Leadership training:** Leaders of the groups are given additional training to strengthen their skills in managing the income generation programmes. Leaders of each group are selected by the group members during their formation.

- **Monitoring and evaluation systems:** Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are established to track the performance, impact, and sustainability of the VSLAs, and to provide ongoing adaptive support. The programme tracks both direct and indirect outcomes on women and their households. In direct outcomes, it tracks “increase in income of VSLA members”. The programme also measures indirect outcomes. which includes improved access to social services, enhanced social status women’s economic empowerment as an indirect outcomes and support for children’s birth registration and formal education.

iv Savings mobilisation mechanism

The CEF encourages regular, mandatory savings contributions from VSLA members, even if the amounts are small. Members meet weekly at a mutually convenient location to make their savings. After three to six months of regular weekly savings which is a pre-agreed amount by the members, matching funds are released by Maedot to create the revolving fund which can then be used for loans.

v Revolving loans

Loans are made on a rotating basis, with 10 VSLA members eligible for the first year, and a second round of loans available to members once the repayments for the first round are completed. The revolving fund is transferred to active members on a rolling basis.

vi Linkages to formal financial institutions

The programme also explores opportunities to link VSLAs with formal financial institutions, such as microfinance providers, to facilitate access to larger loans or other financial services while their business is growing.

Children in Crossfire

Key Learnings

Accurate Targeting is key

VSLAs are best suited for families who have achieved a baseline level of stability, with their basic food, housing, and health needs already met. These families can leverage VSLA resources to further improve their financial situation and build long-term resilience. However, for families struggling below this threshold, the recommendation is providing cash assistance support first and helping families establish foundational stability.

Adding responsive parenting with economic support is essential for caregivers with young children

Providing parenting support alone is insufficient to support child development and build family resilience. It needs to be combined with livelihood support. By ensuring that caregivers have the resources necessary to meet their families' economic needs, programmes can enhance the overall stability of families, ultimately leading to better developmental outcomes for children.

Successful implementation of the programme hinges on an interplay of policy and capacity factors

A thorough strategic assessment of existing strengths is critical before deciding on a key intervention. The decision for Children in Crossfire to adopt the VSLA model was based on a careful evaluation of several critical factors which included favorable local regulatory environment that recognised the legality of VSLAs for displaced populations, the presence of a reliable local partner such as Maedot, and the internal capacity for sustainable management.

There are opportunities to enhance the assessment of livelihood programmes by incorporating a gender lens

This includes evaluating aspects such as women's involvement in household decision-making, their control over personal time and resources, participation in community leadership roles, and increase in confidence and self-assurance. While these factors are often challenging to measure, they are crucial for understanding the full impact of the programme beyond just economic indicators.

Existing training programmes must be complemented with ongoing mentorship and a peer support network

Continuous mentorship offers practical guidance and adaptive support. Concurrently, strong peer support networks foster a sense of community, facilitate shared learning, while providing essential emotional support. For displaced populations, who often lack established networks in their new communities, these peer support systems are particularly crucial. They not only help refugees integrate and build relationships but also strengthen social cohesion and collective resilience.

The lack of mental health and psycho-social support is a gap in terms of services offered to refugee families in VSLAs

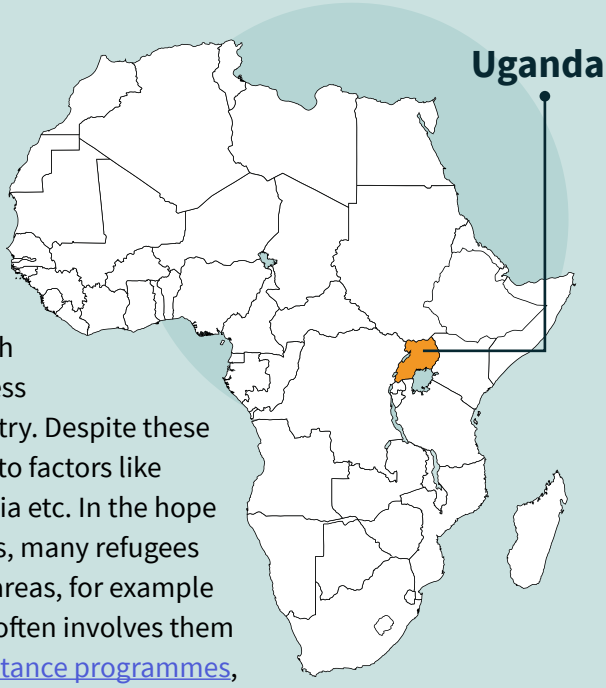
Addressing mental health challenges is critical for ensuring that caregivers can effectively manage stress, build resilience, and engage fully in income-generation activities. Comprehensive support should include access to counseling, stress management resources, and community-based psycho-social interventions.

Children in Crossfire

About the organisation

Founded in 2018, Makasi Rescue Foundation (MRF) is a registered refugee led, non-governmental organisation working towards ensuring the rights of refugees and the most vulnerable persons in the host communities are fulfilled. The implementation is in Kampala in Uganda targeting urban refugees and vulnerable host communities.

Context



Uganda hosts the largest number of refugees in Africa and is the third-largest refugee-hosting country in the world. Uganda has inflows of Congolese refugees. Other countries of origin include Somalia, Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Uganda is known for its 'open-door' policy towards refugees which involves providing refugees with the right to work, access to social services, and free movement around the country. Despite these progressive policies, refugees struggle to find jobs due to factors like limited job opportunities, language barriers, xenophobia etc. In the hope of improved social integration and access to livelihoods, many refugees are now choosing to live outside settlements in urban areas, for example Kampala District, the capital of Uganda. However, this often involves them to give up on their access to regular humanitarian assistance programmes, creating a need for additional support in income-generation activities, like training support, access to capital etc.

Key Interventions

- **Skilling training**
- **Financial literacy and business training**
- **Provision of a ECED center**
- **Mental health and psycho-social support programme**
- **Sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**

In Uganda's Kampala region, MRF offers following interventions for both children and caregivers from refugee and host communities to improve livelihood and income generation:

Key elements

Skilling training

MRF offers a diverse range of vocational skilling courses that are universally accepted. The courses are accredited by the Directorate of industrial training (DIT) under the Ministry of Education and Sports. These include hair dressing and makeup for both men and women, mechanics, art and craft, fashion and design (encompassing tailoring and fashion), bakery, and shoemaking. The programme also offers English language instruction for both Level 1 and Level 2.

The programme runs for 6 months with a 3-month work placement, providing hands-on experience in real-world settings. Upon completion, participants undergo an assessment conducted by DIT. Successful candidates receive official certification. MRF supports the graduates by providing start-up kits to launch their businesses and conducts a 6-month follow-up monitoring with bi-weekly check-ins to support their progress.

MRF offers courses to both refugees and host communities with a ratio of 70% Refugees to 30% host and this has in a way promoted cohesion and co-existence. A fixed percentage of seats are saved for parents who send their children to an ECED center keeping a dual-generational focus. The enrollment process involves the use of a standardised checklist developed by an instituted committee for all livelihood enrolments.

As per MRF's internal report, the programme has close to 100% graduation rate with 20% of guardians who have benefited from both vocational skills training and have children in ECED centers. 94% of small micro enterprises started by MRF graduates are still in existence. 2 Urban Savings and Loan Associations (USLA) have also been started by graduates on their own.

Makasi Rescue Foundation

ii Financial literacy and business training

Recognising that vocational skills alone are insufficient, MRF complements it with financial literacy and business education to prepare refugees and host communities to build and run successful businesses. Refugees and host families are encouraged to develop business ideas and MRF helps in terms of formalising their enterprises in Kampala and provides capital support to beneficiaries to start their own small micro-enterprises. In addition, MRF supports the formation and strengthening of USLA groups including their registration with various authorities.

MRF's financial literacy programme also targets caregivers running ECED centers. To enhance governance and community involvement, MRF has facilitated the establishment of a Centre Management Committee (CMC) and a Parents Teachers Association (PTA). These bodies oversee operations and serve as vital links between the center and the broader community, ensuring that the ECED center remains responsive to local needs and cultural contexts. Furthermore, recognising the importance of financial stability for ECED centers, a USLA group has been formed among guardians and parents at the ECED center. This is meant to promote stability through organised savings and access to loans, while contributing small amounts to ECED center in terms of setting up the school infrastructure, paying for teacher stipend etc.

iii Provision of a ECED center

MRF has established an ECED center to support early learning for children from both refugee and host communities. The Makasi Nursery and Primary schools currently serve over 200 young learners aged 3 onwards to 6 years, offering a nurturing environment for early education, play, and simulation activities. The center also provides nutritious meals to support children's health and development. To ensure enrollment, MRF conducted door to door awareness and mobilisation, use of community radios, referrals from parents, awareness during livelihood workshops etc.

A key feature of the ECED center is its community-based management. By employing members from the local community, MRF creates livelihood opportunities within the community while ensuring culturally sensitive care for children. In addition, the presence of a safe and accessible ECED center also allows refugee and host community parents to seek employment or pursue other opportunities, knowing their children are in secure environments. As per internal reports, all children from pre-primary have transitioned to primary schools.

iv Mental health and psycho-social support programme

MRF offers MHPSS for both refugee and host families. The need was recognised as MRF observed emotional distress among refugee and host families participating in MRF services. In response, MRF developed a programme on parent -child play time projects to help build relationship between parents and children. This is a dedicated time for children and parents to play together. The initiative has seen an impressive turnout, with approximately 90 percent of parents consistently participating. This initiative has also helped increase the turnout of parents in other engagements like meetings and parenting training sessions. Other support is through counselling, campfire story telling with refugees, games through Makasi Football team, referral and linkages.

v Sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

SRHR services like STI screening, diagnosis and management including HIV counseling and testing, are extended to refugees and vulnerable host communities. School health is also promoted through sensitisation and health awareness on menstrual hygiene and early pregnancies amongst adolescents.

Key learnings

New refugees encounter significant communication barriers due to the diverse geographies they come from

Providing English language instruction is essential for helping them build social networks and seek better livelihoods. Since the directorate exams for vocational courses are also conducted in English, it is even more crucial for refugees to develop their English-speaking skills. MRF supports refugees build English skills. MRF's programming team includes instructors who are fluent in the refugees' native languages and who are themselves refugees, ensuring effective support.

In addition to business and vocational training, it is essential to support families with setting up short-term businesses to ensure a regular stream of daily income

MRF trains refugees and host communities in areas like urban gardening and agribusiness, supporting them to grow their own food. This helps them become food secure. They can also sell any surplus produce, allowing them to earn some regular income while building environment sustainability. MRF supports this initiative by providing seeds and conducting awareness sessions with refugee and host families and providing access to backyard gardens. MRF sets up demonstration garden in own premises where beneficiaries are guided on how to plant.

Complementing the ECED center with home-based family learning is essential

As the demand for the ECED center grows and funding shortages persist, MRF is exploring strategies to promote home-based family learning initiatives. The goal is to extend reach and ensure that more children and families benefit from early childhood development resources. They have collaborated with a technical partner to support designing and implementing this programme. However, more research and support efforts are needed to codify low-cost and scalable home-based family learning initiatives for displaced families. Currently, MRF also conducts parenting workshops with the caregivers in ECED centers to provide support and information about responsive parenting.

Makasi Rescue Foundation

Partnerships are essential for bridging gaps in service provision

MRF has established several meaningful collaborations to enhance the impact of their work. For example, recognising that financial literacy alone is insufficient, MRF has partnered with FINCA and Opportunity Bank to increase the frequency of training and improve financial inclusion for both refugees and host communities. Additionally, they have collaborated with an organisation for capacity-building support for their community-based home learning programme. For the ECED programme, MRF has partnered with Madrasa to acquire school furniture and play materials, and with Innovations for Poverty Action to document their initiatives promoting child-parent participation.

The lack of childcare for children aged 0-3 poses a significant barrier to accessing training support

Parents with young children often find it challenging to attend vocational training and business training programmes without adequate childcare. While MRF's ECED support focuses on children aged 3-6 years, establishing a childcare center for younger children is essential to extend support to more families and advance the impact of the work. In the absence of this, there is a high rate of dropout in vocational and training programmes.

Makasi Rescue Foundation

5.7 Additional Resources

This section offers a curated collection of readings and resources on livelihood programming. While most of the resources are for humanitarian settings, a select set of resources are applicable across contexts, as indicated. A database of resources can be found here . Below are a few highlighted resources:

01	**A guide to market-based livelihood interventions for refugees** By: ***UNHCR and ILO*** The toolkit provides guidance on how to build the nexus between humanitarian and development actors and build more market-oriented approaches to refugee livelihood programmes.	Link
02	**Jobtech for refugees community of practice** By: ***Mercy Corps, BFA Global and Na'amal*** The CoP provides a space where members share knowledge, experiences, and best practices related to job opportunities for refugees in the digital economy and specifically on jobtech platforms. This collaborative environment aims to fill existing gaps in understanding what works for refugees in jobtech and to build a supportive ecosystem where these practices can be refined and disseminated.	Link
03	**Self-reliance index** By: ***Refugee Self Reliance*** Self-Reliance Index (SRI) is the first-ever global tool for measuring the progress of refugee households toward self-reliance over time. The SRI can be used to support the design and provision of effective services, target populations for assistance, highlight service gaps and inform funding priorities .	Link
04	**Scaling local refugee lending – Kampala & Nairobi** By: ***Ikea Foundation, International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Center for Global Development (CGD), Open Capital (OCA), Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), and Nairobi City Country Government (NCCG)*** This paper presents learnings and insights from an assessment of the refugee lending landscape in Kampala and Nairobi to identify opportunities to catalyse formal financing and inform the design of market systems interventions being implemented in collaboration with key private sector players.	Link
05	**VSLA in emergencies** By: ***CARE*** CARE has been working with technical specialists, its country offices, humanitarian and development agencies to understand when, where and how VSLAs can support emergency response. They have released various reports codifying their learning and experiences.	Link

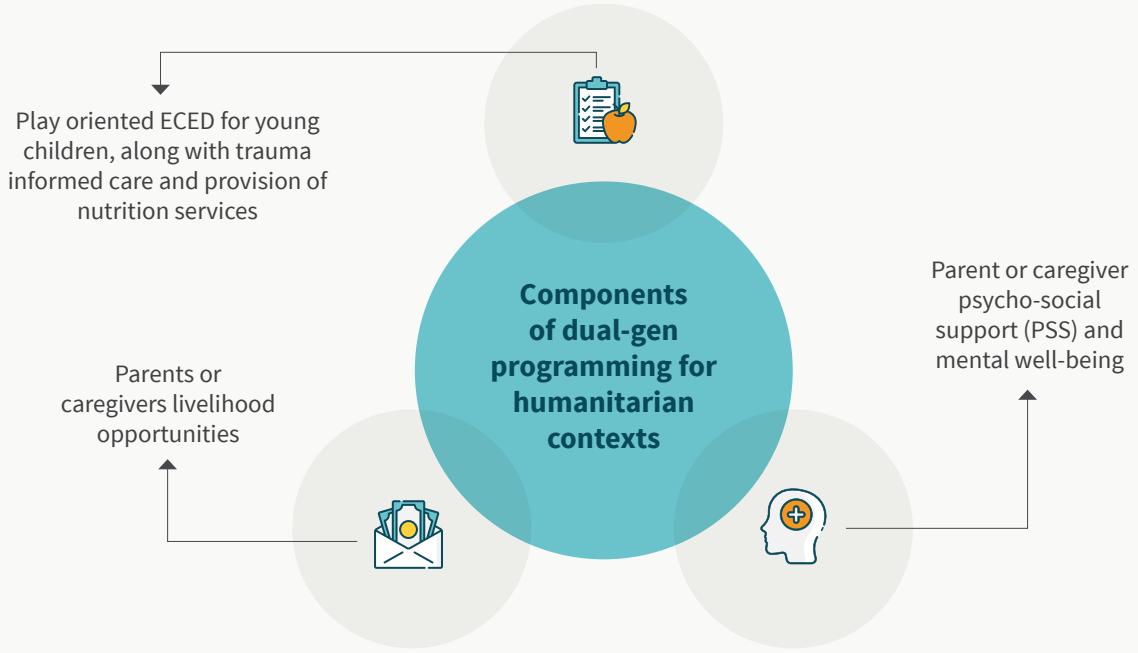
06

Integrating programming components to support both children and caregivers

6.1
Why integration of services for children and caregivers is necessary for refugee settings

In the previous sections, we examined foundational programming components for dual-generational programming, including play-oriented ECED, trauma-informed care, nutritional services for children, PSS for caregivers, and livelihood enhancement for families with young children. We examined the importance of each component individually in dual-generational approaches within humanitarian settings and assessed their indirect contributions to improving family outcomes.

Figure 6: Key components of dual-generational programming in humanitarian contexts



Building on the foundation, this section will focus on the integration of these key programming components. Integrating services is essential because addressing the needs of both children and their caregivers simultaneously can lead to more effective and sustainable interventions that benefit the entire family unit. While we have previously discussed the importance of integrated programming, here is a snapshot of the key reasons, as highlighted through our CoP sessions and desk research:

- **Improving the quality of life in the short-term:** Dual-generational programming facilitates improvement in family well-being by addressing the needs of both caregivers and children. This approach ensures that as caregivers gain access to employment opportunities and financial services, children benefit from improved living conditions, educational resources, and health outcomes. This, in turn, positively impacts caregiver well-being. This interconnected impact ensures that both generations experience an enhanced quality of life.

- **Streamlining the use of limited resources and bridging the gaps between sectors in humanitarian settings:** The integration of services allows for the optimised allocation of limited resources, particularly in humanitarian contexts where these resources are often scarce. By consolidating programme such as ECED, parenting support, and financial literacy into a cohesive model, organisations can reduce redundancy and strive towards operational efficiency. This approach also encourages cross-sector collaboration, aiming to break down traditional silos across sectors like education, health, economic recovery and development etc.

- **Promoting intergenerational impact:** Research indicates that synergistic approaches lead to lasting improvements in family dynamics and individual outcomes. Economic growth positively affects children's well-being, linking the current generation (parents or caregivers) with future generations (their children and descendants). The ripple effect of dual-generational interventions can lead to more resilient communities and contribute to broader economic development in the long term.

- **Increasing feelings of cohesion amongst refugee families and host communities:** By focusing on both adult and child needs, the dual-generational approach naturally creates opportunities for social integration and community building. When programmes focus on the needs of the whole family, they create chances for caregivers to meet and connect with other families. These connections often happen in places like schools or community centers. As caregivers and families build relationships, they form a stronger network of support. The resulting increase in social capital strengthens community resilience and promotes a sense of belonging in the long term.

6.2 Models of integrated programming

This section presents models which synergises between ECED, livelihoods for economic recovery, and PSS support for families. It includes detailed case studies of innovative programmes that are advancing various integrated dual-generational approaches. These case studies' objective is to show how dual-generational principles are implemented in practice. Since many of these programmes are in their early stages, the case studies focus more on examining the programmatic components and lessons learned, rather than evaluating their impact at this stage.

Model 1: Childcare

Childcare programmes provide a supportive environment where children can play, learn, and grow through meaningful interactions and relationships. Childcare programmes ensure that children receive quality care while their parents or primary caregivers are engaged in work or other activities. Access to quality childcare benefits not only the children but also center staff, center owners, and parents or other caregivers at home. Below is a brief overview of how childcare programmes influence dual generation and indicative outcomes:

Indicative Components

Children

- Opportunities for play and stimulation
- Quality early learning opportunities
- Trauma-informed care and responsive caregiving
- Health services, and nutritional support.

Center Staff and Owners

- Income generation opportunities
- Skilling through training on financial education, management and entrepreneurship to run profitable centers
- Social networks for staff members who are locals from the refugee communities

Parents and other caregivers at home

- Time to seek or engage in employment and self-care
- Opportunities for social cohesion as childcare becomes a natural entry point for community engagement
- Responsive caregiving by participating in training sessions on parenting at childcare centers

Indicative Outcomes

Increased access for children to safe and conducive learning environment

Improved social, emotional, creative, physical and cognitive outcomes of children who are better prepared for primary education

Improved nutrition and health

Increased sustainability of centers

Increased ability to engage in work for caregivers

Reduced stress and improved mental health for caregivers

6.3 Case studies

FUDELA
FundacióndelasAméricas

About the organisation

With 20 years of experience, Fundación de las Américas (FUDELA), an NGO in Ecuador focuses on implementing various human development initiatives to transform the lives of vulnerable children, adolescents, and youth.

Context

With nearly half a million Venezuelan nationwide, Ecuador hosts the third largest Venezuelan migrant population worldwide.

For children, although free education is available in public schools of Ecuador, several barriers exist to access schooling like education-related costs related to uniforms and transport, xenophobia, lack of required enrolment documentation, and limited school capacity to accommodate students.

The average per capita income of Venezuelan families in Ecuador falls below the poverty line, with the majority earning less than USD 84 per month. The regularisation process implemented recently to help build productive lives for Venezuelan migrants does not apply to informal workers. However, the reality of most Venezuelans is that they are informally hired.

Key Interventions

The key components of the programme are as follows:

- **Safe play spaces**
- **Responsive care**
- **Entrepreneurship support**

Key elements

Safe play spaces

The programme focuses on transforming physical environments into safe, and engaging areas where children can play and learn. It includes training for teachers in Montessori methodology, supplemented with instruction in early stimulation, health, and other aspects of the nurturing care framework. Additionally, FUDELA provides classrooms with play-based learning materials tailored for young children. The aim is to foster cognitive, emotional, and social development through enriched and supportive play experiences.

Responsive care

The programme focuses on training parents and other caregivers at home and in the centers to enhance their interpersonal relationships with children, aiming to create nurturing and violence-free environments. Through targeted workshops and training sessions, caregivers learn strategies for effective communication, emotional support, and positive responsive techniques.

Entrepreneurship support

The programme supports childcare centers by providing training that enables them to establish and operate supplementary income-generating ventures. FUDELA offers comprehensive training sessions covering financial management, soft skills, budget planning, and the management of productive units, all aimed at enhancing caregivers' economic well-being and resilience.

Parents, too receive entrepreneurship training to help them start to help them start and manage small businesses for better livelihood opportunities. Recognising that parents often lack childcare while attending these trainings, FUDELA arranges professional care for their children for 2-3 hours, ensuring parents can participate in the livelihood training without challenge. Caregivers also receive hands-on assistance with developing business plans. Currently, 60 caregivers are benefiting from this initiative.

FUDELA

A detailed programme video can be seen from here:

Key Learnings

Navigating administrative structures for ECED can be complex

Identifying and supporting centres for the programme in Ecuador has proven challenging due to the complex administrative structures. ECED falls under various ministries, each with their own internal policies that can be difficult to navigate.

Long-term sustainability of ECED needs to be a central part of programme planning

The long-term sustainability of the centres is a significant concern. The programme has concerns that centers may struggle to continue operating after the project's completion due to insufficient resources and funding constraints.

The effectiveness of virtual training needs to be improved

The teaching team identified the virtual modality as a major barrier to training. They perceived it to less efficient than in-person training, indicating a need for alternative or hybrid teaching methods in future implementation.

Participation of parents in trainings is impacted due to lack of safe spaces for their children

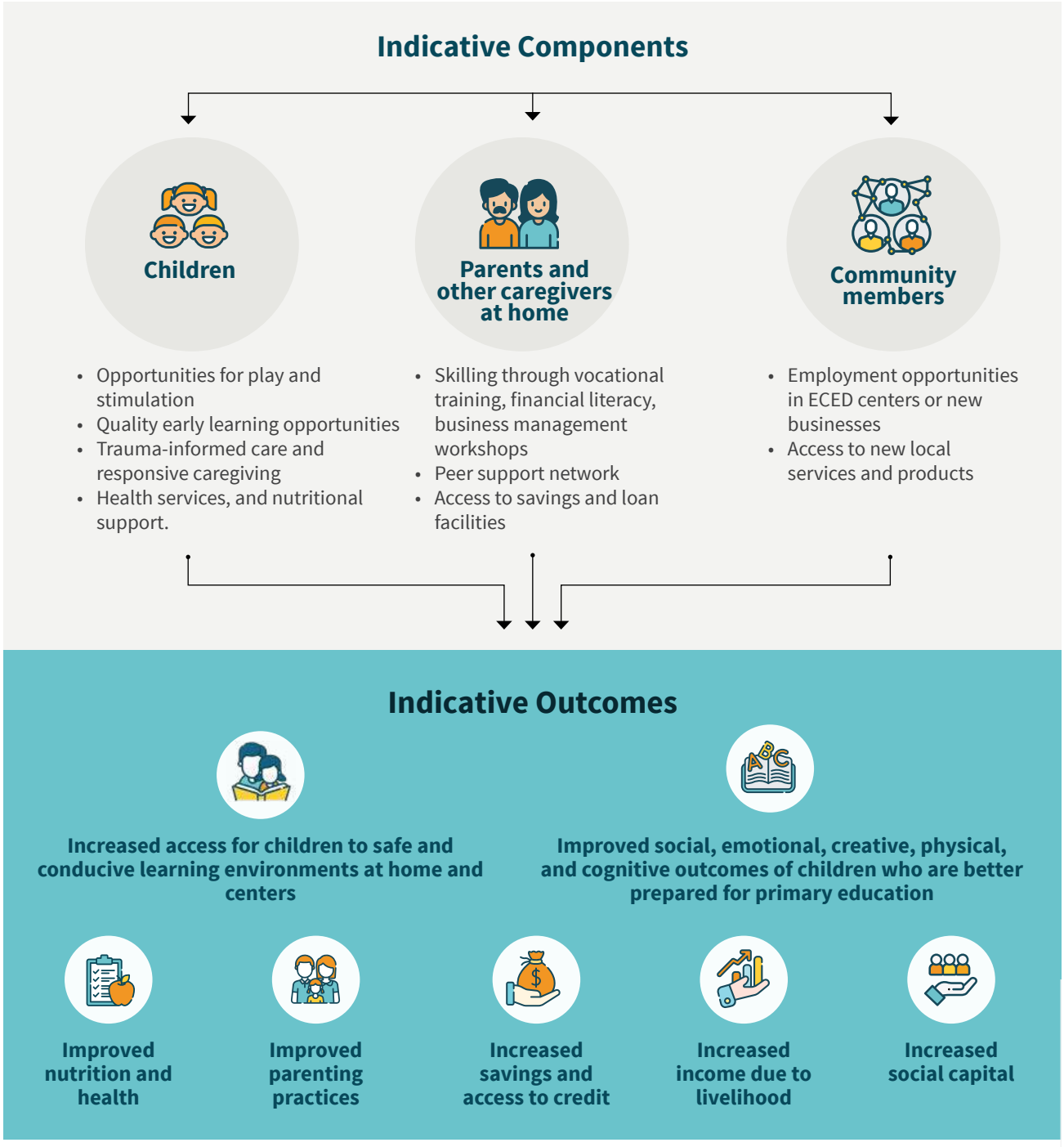
Parents did not appear to be as interested in receiving entrepreneurship training as anticipated. Several factors contributed to this, including short operational hours of Infant Care and Development centers (ICDs) that discourage parents from enrolling in training programmes, and security concerns particularly in some areas.

Administrative burden on teachers needs to be reduced

The teachers gave suggestions to reduce administrative workload as part of the dual-generational programme which can be sometimes high, due to the number of documents to be completed like record sheets, assistance sheets lists, academic follow-up, monthly reports etc.

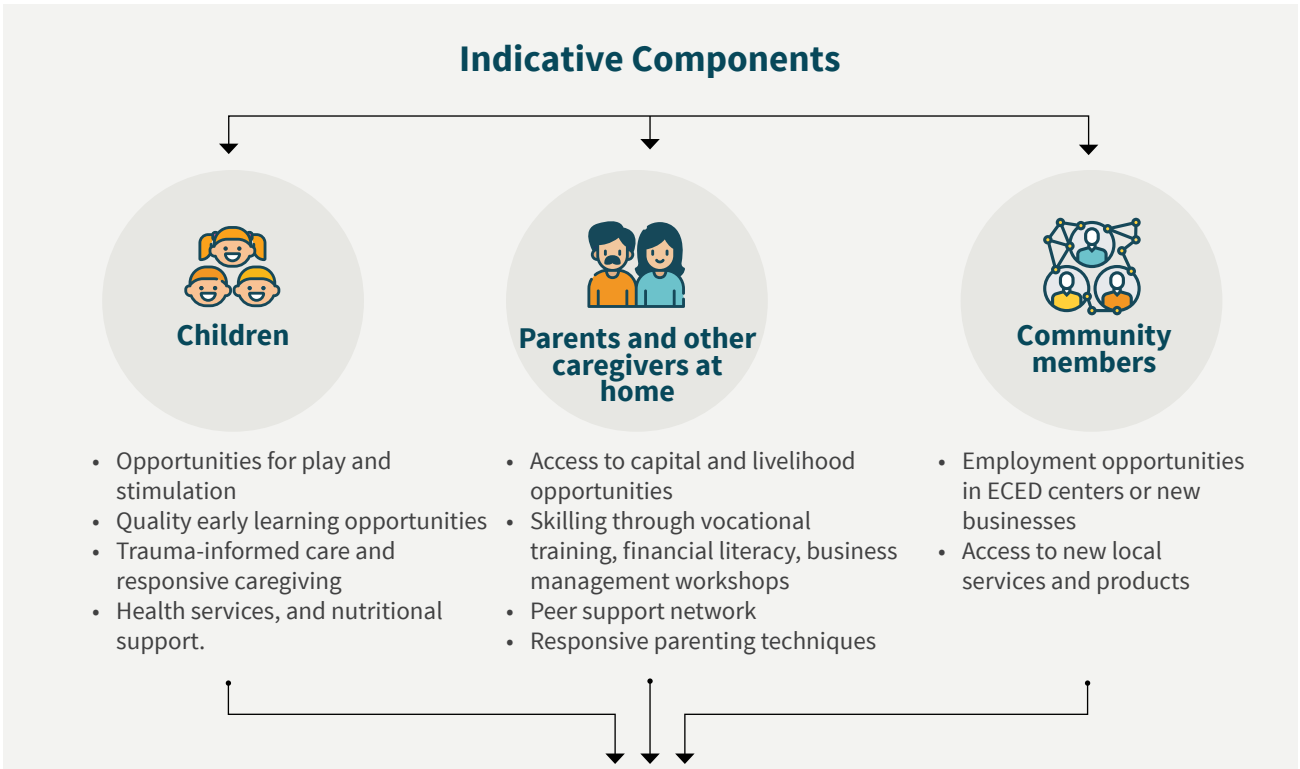
Model 2: ECED + Parenting + VSLA support including business training

This integrated model combines ECED for children with parenting support and VSLA activities for parents and other caregivers at home. This supports child development, parental skills, and household economic stability for parents and caregivers. Beyond supporting the immediate beneficiaries, the models also support the local economy through the creation of small businesses stemming from VSLA support and generating job opportunities in both the business sector and ECED programmes.Here's a brief overview of how this model influences dual generations:



Model 3: ECED + Parenting + Cash grant to start businesses

This model combines ECED for children with parenting support and cash grants to start businesses. Parenting programmes are those which are aimed at enhancing parent-child interactions, parenting knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and parenting practices through training, support, and coaching. Cash grants support with financial assistance and allow families to meet basic needs and invest in their children's future. The combination of cash transfer with parenting support can be a powerful tool to improve child development during the early years. Apart from impacting immediate beneficiaries, the programme stimulates local economic growth through new business creation and job opportunities. Here's a brief overview of how this model influences dual generations:



KULEA WATOTO
Nurturing Children

About the project

Kulea Watoto is a three-year project by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) aimed at improving ECD for children under 5 and transforming livelihood opportunities for refugees and host communities in Uganda. 'Kulea Watoto' - means 'nurturing children' in Swahili.

Key intervention

Kulea Watoto uses a unique dual-generational approach in Yumbe, Kyegegwa and Kampala. Currently, they are impacting 6600 families. The intervention works closely through established local partners – *AfriChild Centre, Madrasa Early Childhood Programme, Kabarole Research and Resource Centre and Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE).* The specific objectives of the dualgenerational programming are to:

The specific objectives of the dual-generational programming are to:

Empower households with responsive caregiving and early learning skills in homes and at the group level

Improve economic well-being and household income generation opportunities

Improve availability of quality ECD services at homes and centers

Create an enabling legal and policy environment for quality ECD service provision

Empower households with responsive caregiving and early learning skills in homes and at the group level: This is achieved through conducting group learning sessions and in-home visits, assisting caregivers in developing their own ECD action plans, and informing them about accessing essential ECD services within their communities.

Improve economic well-being and household income generation opportunities: The project engages agricultural communities in adopting nutrition-sensitive practices that address the nutritional needs of children and boost household income. It provides start-up funding to support business ideas, connects households to financial services, and links individuals to the private sector through job training and placement opportunities.

Improve availability of quality ECD services at homes and centers: The project upgrades learning facilities through infrastructure improvements and develops playgroups and supervised care groups for children, facilitated by parents. It also offers start-up funds to ECD Management Committees supporting with autonomous decision-making on school development projects.

Create an enabling legal and policy environment for quality ECD service provision: This involves identifying and addressing barriers to policy implementation, engaging key decision-makers and influencers, and training and mobilising local ECD and livelihoods champions to foster progress.

The following case study **"Phillip's Journey to Self-Reliance"** shows how the programme elements work together to build family resilience:

Phillip Ochan, 27 had hoped to return home sooner, but the prolonged civil war in South Sudan forced him to extend his stay in Uganda's refugee settlement for eight years. During this time, he found a new home in Village 14 Zone 1 in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement and married Betty Ngonga. Together, they have a two-year-old son named Emmanuel.

Through farming, Phillip was determined to build a prosperous life for his young family, provide for their basic needs and ensure a bright future for his son. However, he faced challenges due to prolonged droughts and pest infestation, which hindered his farming efforts and demotivated him. Through the Kulea Watoto Project he received training in financial literacy, income-generating skills, and mindset change. Together with other refugees in Village 14, Phillip learned the importance of working together with his wife, Betty, to achieve their goals as a family. They drew a vision, pinned it in their living room, to remind them of where they want to be in the next five years. This unity not only improved their farming practices, but also reduced cases of domestic violence in the community.

> **The trainings centered around children and family; the need to work together with my wife to better our lives. I learnt a lot. Now, I work together with my wife in the field. We agree on what to plant, how much to sell and what to use the money for. We don't fight over anything because we are a team. Cases of domestic violence have also greatly reduced in my community, thanks to these trainings because families are working together,**

Furthermore, Phillip received training in permaculture techniques, climate-resilient agriculture, and eco-friendly pest control methods. He was equipped with vegetable seeds and agricultural tools to start his farming activities on their one-acre land. With newfound expertise and commitment, Phillip and Betty now grow okra - a cash crop, maize, cassava, and black-eyed peas, ensuring steady household food security, and overall income for their family from sale of their surplus.

KULEA WATOTO

Life is now better off since these trainings. The plants we grow have provided us with enough nutritious food for consumption at home. We don't buy food anymore," he explains. "We have also planted Okra, a cash crop, and hope to harvest and sell it to supplement our income so that we can provide nutritious meals to our son and save money for his education.

With Kulea Watoto expected to offer a cash grant to refugees enrolled under the project, Phillip is expecting that this will further push their efforts to be fully self-reliant.

I am satisfied with what Kulea Watoto has offered me and my family even before the grant. My wife and I have fully embraced the project interventions and have already planned on using the cash grant to purchase more seedlings and fully utilise our land to maximise our output. From the sale of our produce, we will have enough capital to start a small shop that will supplement our farming efforts.

As the demand for food is projected to increase by 55% in 2030, supporting farmers like Phillip is crucial for food security and livelihoods in refugee settlements. Through sustainable farming practices and community support, refugees like Phillip are not only able to provide for their families but also contribute to the economic development of their communities.

KULEA WATOTO

Key learnings

Collaboration is key

Integration with existing projects and partners is crucial for delivering comprehensive dual-generational services. By integrating efforts with other programmes and services, it is easier to address a wider range of family needs than one programme can do alone. This also contributes to more sustainable impact.

Low literacy and numeracy skills is a challenge

A significant challenge encountered is the low literacy and numeracy levels among many clients. This impacts their ability to fully engage with training materials and business development activities. More focus needs to be provided to families in developing their language, literacy and numeracy skills.

High mobility within the population impacts service delivery

The frequent movement of families within the target population poses a substantial challenge to service delivery and progress tracking. This mobility affects the consistency of access to programmes and measure long-term outcomes.

6.4 Key learnings from the community

Our interviews with practitioners and discussions in the online CoP highlighted key lessons from implementers of promising dual-generational models in humanitarian settings. The following section summarises the key findings:

1. **There is a need to develop a common vocabulary for dual-generational programming.** While many programmes are dual-generational in essence and are aimed at enabling families to reach their full potential, they use varying terminologies to define it like parent plus, whole family, intergenerational etc. CoP members underscored the importance of establishing a common terminology to foster coherence in programmatic discourse in the long term and serve as a catalyst for advocacy efforts aimed at policy improvement and systemic changes.

2. **Partnerships and collaboration are key in advancing dual- generational programming in humanitarian settings.** Meaningful collaborations are necessary as it is often challenging for one implementation organisation to deliver both caregiver and quality child-facing programming. For example, a local NGO specialising in financial inclusion could combine their expertise with a community-based organisation focused on early childhood development to offer holistic support to families. However, organisations often struggle to build and sustain these collaborative efforts due to the lack of frameworks, tools, and resources needed. There is an urgent need for greater codification and documentation of resources illustrating strategies for seeding meaningful dual-generational collaborations in humanitarian settings.

FUDELA

3. **Tracking family outcomes for both children and caregivers are crucial for the successful implementation of dual-generational programming models in humanitarian settings.** Significant challenges persist in this area which include funding constraints, staffing limitations, and the absence of appropriate indicators and tools to measure family outcomes comprehensively. Taking concerted action to enhance funding mechanisms and allocating resources to develop easy-to-use monitoring and evaluation tools will be pivotal in bridging this gap.

4. **Context is key in designing and implementing dual- generational programming in humanitarian contexts.** This principle becomes particularly evident when considering the diverse environments in which such programmes operate. For instance, urban and rural camps differ significantly in various ways like access to markets, environmental resources, proximity to schools amongst others. However, these distinct contexts of rural and urban camp-based settings are often overlooked in programming. While needs assessments and collaboration with community members are commonly employed practices to contextualise a programme, there was consensus about a larger need for more substantive work in this area.

6.5 Challenges that exist

In this section, we will examine the key challenges identified by CoP members that act as barriers to the sustainable implementation of integrated models in humanitarian contexts, affecting both children and caregivers.

1. **Limited gender parity in dual-generational models.** Gender disparities persist in various aspects of caregiving and livelihood opportunities. For instance, men predominantly own childcare centers, while women often comprise the workforce within these centers, highlighting a gender imbalance in leadership roles. Additionally, traditional gender roles dictate that the responsibility of childcare primarily falls on women within the household, limiting their opportunities for economic empowerment and livelihood outside the home. There is a need to prioritise efforts aimed at promoting gender parity within the dual-generational framework in humanitarian settings.

2. **Poor coordination across sectors:** Designing interventions with a dual-generational approach requires multi-sectoral coordination which can often be siloed in humanitarian settings. For instance, a programme aiming to support both young children's education and their caregivers' livelihoods may require coordination between education, economic empowerment, and social protection sectors. However, these sectors often operate independently, leading to fragmented efforts and missed opportunities for synergies.

3. **Gaps in operations and service delivery:** Dual-generational programmes often encounter service delivery issues due to conflicting schedules between early childhood education, workforce training, and employment opportunities. This misalignment can create extended childcare demands that are not adequately met, especially in humanitarian settings. The lack of quality childcare hinders caregivers' ability to fully participate in training or employment opportunities. Moreover, the constant migration of families, driven by the search for safer living conditions and better livelihood prospects, is another challenge. Frequent relocation disrupts families' continuity in dual-generational programmes, making it difficult for them to fully engage with and benefit from the services provided.

4. **Lack of flexible funding:** Several organisations pursuing dual-generation strategies highlighted lack of flexible funding as a challenge in implementing dual generational programming. Practitioners noted that having earmarked finances makes it challenging to forge collaborations and make decisions which can support families in the long term. Flexible funding allows organisations to allocate resources dynamically based on evolving needs and emerging opportunities. Many practitioners also emphasised the need for developing transparent costing models for dual-generational programmes. Such models could provide valuable insights into exact expenses and revenue streams, highlight potential fluctuations, and demonstrate where and how flexible funding could be most beneficial.

5. **Absence of examples, guidance and evidence for children under the age of 3:** Children under age 3 require specialised approaches due to their unique developmental needs and vulnerabilities. While there are some emerging examples for dual-generation approaches from children above ages 3, the absence of examples, guidance, and evidence on dual-generational programming for children under the age of three presents a challenge.

6. **PSS support for caregivers is a limited focus in dual-generational programming:** In discussions with CoP members, it was noted that PSS for caregivers is often neglected in dual-generational programming. While there is emerging innovation in combining child development with caregivers' economic stability within humanitarian settings, the integration of caregivers' mental health and emotional well-being is less deliberate.

Children in Crossfire

6.6 Additional Resources

This section offers a curated collection of readings and resources on integrated dual-generational programming. While most of the resources are for humanitarian settings, a select set of resources are applicable across contexts. The full database of resources can be found here . Below are a few highlighted resources:

01	**Healing Hands** By: ***International Rescue Committee (IRC), Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Center for Development and Self-Management (DYA), the Foundation of the Americas for Development (FUDELA), and the Fundación Alas de Colibri*** Healing Hands implements a dual two-generation model for migrant and host community families in Ecuador. The report describes the programme in depth, shares learnings from the programme and impact of the intervention on family outcomes.	Link
02	**A Global Call for Two- Generation Approaches to Child Development and Caregivers' Livelihoods** By: ***Teresa Eckrich Sommer, Emily Franchett, Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Joan Lombardi*** This paper identifies five models in different geographic regions of the world that promote the development of young children(0–6 years), the education and livelihood of their caregivers, and the well-being of both, which they group by type of programme: quality child care, early childhood development + nonformal education for parents, and cash transfers + parenting.	Link
03	**Childcare in Humanitarian Crises** By: ***UNICEF*** This report aims to provide models of childcare in humanitarian settings, particularly for acute onset emergencies, along with key considerations for implementation.	Link
04	**Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: Whole Family Approach** By: ***Ascend The Aspen Institute and Bernard van Leer Foundation*** This publication introduces a “dual generation” approach as a way to reduce poverty and improve child development.	Link
05	**Improving Outcomes for Young Children and Parents in Key Stages of Development** By: ***Innovations for Poverty Action*** This report uses a dual-generational theory to explore how such programmes could be enhanced by considering other outcomes for caregivers beyond parenting and the unique situation of adolescent caregivers.	Link
06	**Promoting Early Childhood Development through Combining Cash Transfer and Parenting Programmes** By: ***The World Bank*** The brief examines the existing evidence and the potential for bringing together cash transfer programmes and parenting interventions on early child stimulation to improve child development outcomes, notably cognitive and language skills. The brief also provides lessons learned from implementation.	Link

Conclusion

Dual-generational programming in humanitarian settings represents an integrated approach aimed at addressing the complex needs of families and children affected by crises. By simultaneously targeting both caregivers and children, these programmes seek to foster resilience, promote positive outcomes, and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Dual-generational programmes have 3 key components i.e. play-oriented early childhood education with trauma-informed care, mental health and psycho-social support for caregivers, and livelihood opportunities for families. Each of these contributes to building family resilience as its own lever. Play-oriented learning helps children process trauma and develop essential skills, while creating opportunities to promote parent-child interactions, enhancing communication within families, and supporting caregivers in managing stress and trauma. When caregivers have stable livelihoods, they are better able to access essential services for children while improving own confidence and well-being and social integration within communities. Additionally, as caregivers receive mental health and psycho-social support, their improved well-being enhances their capacity to provide emotional and developmental support to their children.

While each of these creates a positive feedback loop that enhances child and caregiver outcomes in humanitarian contexts, we theorise that there is a greater potential for impact when there is meaningful integration of play, trauma informed care, MHPSS and livelihood support at a programming level. When these services are offered to children and their caregivers jointly and simultaneously, families are better able to build long-term resilience and are able to promote positive outcomes for both children and caregivers.

Learnings and Recommendations

While there is a relatively small community of practitioners delivering integrated dual-generational services for early years in humanitarian settings, the insights shared in the online CoP discussion provide valuable guidance. Key findings are summarised below:

- **Streamlining definitions:** While many programmes may be dual-generational in essence, they use varying terminology to define it like multi-generational, whole family, parent plus etc. A common language will help bring coherence in policy and practice. It is also important to qualify what is considered dual-generational through more targeted global and local discourse. For example, defining whether dual-generational initiatives should encompass broader community-wide efforts, or should solely focus on outcomes for children and their immediate caregivers. It could also be determining whether dual-generational programming should only include parents or also extended family members like grandparents or older siblings who play significant caregiving roles for young children.

- **Bridging gaps in tools and resources to support with programming:** There is a notable absence of programming framework, tools and resources to

support practitioners in their design and implementation of dual-generational programmes for early years in humanitarian settings. In particular, a major gap exists in the availability of monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) indicators and tools needed to define and track family outcomes effectively. Practitioners also need examples and templates for theory of change frameworks to support with integrating various components of dual-generational programming. Additionally, there is a need to develop costing guidelines for dual-generational programmes to improve budgeting and resource allocation. Lastly, guidance on building and maintaining effective partnerships is required. It is challenging for a single programme to offer comprehensive interventions for both children and caregivers given its multi-sectoral approach, and there are limited reference points currently for how to meaningfully seed partnerships for such approaches. When developing these resources, it is important to consider the diverse contexts of urban versus rural settings, teenage refugees with children, and newly arrived refugees etc to ensure the solutions are appropriate for local needs.

- **Strengthening systemic enablers:** Feedback from our CoP members indicates that government actors resonate with the dual-generational approaches, however, they emphasise the need for enhanced coordination amongst NGOs. NGOs need to better coordinate efforts and approach governments with more unified asks for dual-generational programming. Even broadly, the coordination needs to be strengthened as dual-generational programming intersects various sectors and ministries, like education, health, livelihoods etc. Beyond government coordination, there are opportunities to work with donors to advocate for improved allocation of funding towards dual-generational programming such that it caters to unified support for families in the long term. Lastly, the research community also needs to strengthen deeper evidence-generation exercises to help practitioners make better programming decisions like identifying which specific models for employment or entrepreneurship can help refugee caregivers increase income. For long-term sustainability, building an enabling system is critical.

> Looking ahead, GSF will continue to gather insights from practitioners and advance practitioner perspectives on dual-generational programming for early years in humanitarian settings. This is a part of our efforts towards building an evidence hub for ECED in emergencies. The hub codifies promising local solutions, models, and approaches to improve education and well-being outcomes of children and families in emergency contexts, through a mix of pilot-based approaches, learning spaces like communities of practice, and systematisation of existing evidence and knowledge.

Acknowledgements

We remain grateful to our community partners who are working hard to create solutions to address intergenerational poverty. We are energised by their participation in our communities of practice and their generous contributions with insights and perspectives in every community gathering. We extend our sincere thanks to the following organizations

aeioTU

BRAC Uganda

Cardinal Aid Development Support Initiative

Children in Crossfire

Children on the Edge

Early Years Count

FUDELA

Impact Network

Innovations for Poverty Action

KALOBEYEI INITIATIVE FOR BETTER LIFE

Kidogo

Kulea Watoto

Makasi Rescue Foundation

Nyota Care Innovations

Open Capital

Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative

Street Child

UGEAFI

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