



# Thinking forward about Livelihoods for Refugees in Ethiopia: Learning from NRC's Programming

2013 - 2016



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<b>Migration</b>	<b>Displacement</b>
Migration and development	Internal Displacement
Irregular migration	Forced migration
Smuggling	Trafficking
Migration-employment nexus	Return and reintegration, including post-return outcomes, voluntary and involuntary returns
Labour migration and mobility	Durable solutions
Policy development	

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### **About Samuel Hall.**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **NRC's evolving programme in Ethiopia 2013 - 2016**

This research finds the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Ethiopia to be forward thinking as a strategic player in the livelihoods sector and in providing assistance to refugees. Its initial basic service response – which was in high demand (due to drought) when NRC began work in country and remains well executed – placed the organisation in a strong position in Ethiopia. From this foundation NRC has been able to expand into livelihood programming, both in and outside of camps, based on needs and as opportunities presented themselves. At present, however, NRC is limited by the lack of a core strategy to define its approach to livelihoods in Ethiopia.

NRC's livelihoods programming has been well received and suited to meet beneficiaries' immediate needs. However, this research reveals a mismatch between the livelihood support provided and beneficiaries' expectations. Moreover, the discrepancy between the resources provided - small size of the cash grants or loans for vocational activities - and the resources required to start-up and maintain business was deemed to have 'diluted' the impact of the project to a great extent, even when utilized correctly. In addition, outside of internally linked income-generating opportunities for YEP graduates, there is a high level of unemployment for participant's post-graduation – negating the theoretical linkages between education and livelihoods and threatening NRC's programme impact.

## **Towards an integrated (livelihoods) programming strategy**

Although livelihoods programmes have been delivered well, activities have been ad hoc and need to be formalised to meet community expectations and donor demands and fit with stakeholder programming. The country programme needs to determine where livelihoods programming should be positioned internally. At a global level, NRC has delinked livelihoods and food security; however, at the country level there is a misperception that the two remain joined, creating internal and external confusion. It is crucial that these linkages be clarified at the country level, as NRC will need to ensure its linkages to key partners who do not define livelihoods in terms of food security. NRC Ethiopia has already implemented ad hoc livelihoods education (YEP), shelter, WASH programming and is already seeing a demand from partners for further livelihood-specific programming. Therefore, without a clear position/strategy, NRC will run the risk of internal disconnects and missed opportunities. As a result, **NRC needs an integrated programming framework that encompasses livelihoods** – rather than aiming for a sustainable livelihoods strategy – to fit to the context and to facilitate both internal and external coordination.

This report provides actionable – short, medium and long-term - recommendations in this regard, with a specific focus on youth. Across the board, NRC has emphasised the importance of supporting youth and children, a significant demographic group both in importance and in sheer volume. Furthermore, NRC's reconceptualising of refugee education, in line with such partners as UNHCR, demonstrates the organisation's achievement in ensuring programmatic focus is placed on human rights to achieve durable solutions and avoid prolonged humanitarian endeavours. The following provides a summary of key recommendations outlined in the document.

## 1. LONG TERM. Building a resilience agenda aligned with a durable solutions agenda

### Local economic integration strategies – albeit informal in nature – remain unexplored

The research shows that informal local economic integration *is* happening at the field level without inclusion in NRC’s programming design. Refugees and host community members work together to maximise their income generating potential. For example, host community beneficiaries (who know the refugees from vocational training programmes) work with their refugee peers to help them purchase or sell goods on the market as well as to procure local host communities contracts. NRC has seen its graduates working together across the refugee/host dichotomy. Host community contractors will often take a bid and then informally employ refugees. Such examples abound in the context of Shire and Dollo Ado.

A priority will be for business skills trainings to be linked to and aligned with informal integration strategies to create durable solutions. The primary focus cannot be on repatriation. To inform such a strategy, activities may include support to:

- Financing: increasing access to banks and local financial institutions
- Refugee cooperatives: closing the loophole and linking refugees to local financial institutions
- Self-help groups: composing groups of host/refugee graduates. Host community members can procure local contracts, and refugees can access business opportunities through the host community.

**Durable solutions.** While it is commendable that NRC asks beneficiaries what skills would be of most use in their country of return or in onwards movements, this needs to be done more systematically. It should integrate both objective and subjective measures, especially when considering the value beneficiaries place on certificates.

- **Regionally**, there is a clear space for NRC to maximise its presence. It remains one of the few actors present in the countries bordering Ethiopia – Eritrea, Somalia, and Kenya – and hence this is a key strength to build on for regional programming.
- **Nationally**, NRC can have a more targeted approach and conduct 1) a comprehensive market survey in its areas of implementation and 2) research on local entry points for cross-border programming, drawing on its regional presence to better understand the needs and ensure they are not duplicating efforts of actors in areas of return.
- **Locally**, undertaking area-level government engagement for refugee access to local financial institutions through the cooperative loophole.

## 2. MEDIUM TERM: Standardising M&E frameworks across donors and projects to support a Learning Agenda

In the medium term, and as part of a broader learning agenda, missing monitoring and evaluation components will need to be addressed in three ways: first, through NRC’s own M&E framework and indicators (some of which are proposed in this study); second, through information management systems standardized between partners; and third, through greater coordination. Learning has to be, in this context, endorsed and upheld by all partners in a collaborative manner. NRC cannot on its own design effective livelihood strategies if it is not aligned with lessons learned. This research

provides recommendations as to key indicators to integrate in different steps of resilience programming to ensure this may be achieved.

### 3. SHORT TERM. Strengthening local ownership and engagement

How can NRC link its achievements with targeted messaging to external partners, including the government? In the urban context, it is acknowledged that the current programme will likely not be successful without increased coordination and policy shifts. As such, NRC is reframing its urban programming to include a larger government engagement element. Donors seek an emphasis on reduced secondary irregular migration – harnessing the support of donors in advocacy for increased livelihoods opportunities for refugees is thus clear. NRC needs to understand how education is contributing to solutions. NRC must conduct follow-up studies to understand market needs and income generating linkages as well as beneficiary intentions post-graduation.

Improving its youth based programming will entail, in part, understanding that youth programming requires a more holistic approach than education, vocational training and a start-up kit or capital. As voiced by a community leader in Dollo Ado, youth gaps go beyond the economy to understanding the social and psychosocial needs of youth. ‘They need a youth centre, a place to spend time – not only vocational centres, but playing grounds’ (Community leader Dollo Ado). They also need capital for livelihoods – their own stated priority. However, for the impact to be sustainable, a broader well-being approach is required.

That is why individual **interventions alongside community involvement matter**. It is important for **youth to be part of a collective and not on his or her own as decision makers**.

Ten Recommendations for a Learning Agenda Around Refugee Livelihoods	
<b>Long term</b> <b>A RESILIENCE AGENDA</b>	1. Thinking of resilience: Beyond sustainable livelihoods 2. Humanitarian-development <i>contiguuum</i> approach 3. Aligning resilience with durable solutions
<b>Medium term</b> <b>A LEARNING AGENDA</b>	4. Monitoring and evaluation: standardising frameworks 5. Sharing lessons learned 6. Coordinating information systems
<b>Short term</b> <b>A COORDINATION AGENDA</b>	7. Government cooperation on community-based interventions 8. Expand LWG and link with food security 9. Increase host community involvement 10. Increase youth-based programming and a graduation program to highlight steps towards livelihoods for young refugees

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## ACRONYMS

ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
BRCiS	Building Resilient Communities in Somalia
COC	Certificate of Competency
CIG	Common Interest Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
DFID	Department for International Development
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
HRF	Humanitarian Response Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
KII	Key Informant Interview
LWG	Livelihoods Working Group
MLRF	Micro-Loan Revolving Fund
NMFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCP	Out-of-Camp Policy
OICE	Opportunities Industrialization Centre Ethiopia
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
RA	Regional Authority
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
RCC	Refugee Community Committee
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SHG	Self-Help Group
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat
TWG	Technical Working Group
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VfM	Value for Money
WFP	World Food Programme
YEP	Youth Education

# I. FRAMING THE PROJECT

## Background

Ethiopia ratified the United Nation's 1951 Refugee Convention with the caveat that the rights of refugees – such as the right to work – were to be considered 'only as recommendations and not as legally binding obligations'.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, Proclamation 409/2004 further stated that refugees would be subject to the national laws in force in Ethiopia (Article 21.1 and 22.2). In regard to employment, 'refugees are entitled to the same rights and subjected to the same restrictions as conferred or imposed by the relevant laws on foreigners in Ethiopia' (Article 21.3). As a result, the situation for refugees in Ethiopia is mainly one of encampment, with no access to work (beyond incentivized labour) and very limited and predictable livelihood opportunities. Outside of the camp settings, Eritreans can legally reside either as urban refugees or as part of the Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP), detailed in the 2014 Samuel Hall report.<sup>2</sup>

Partners in Ethiopia have agreed that an analysis of the legal framework may lead to entry points for government engagement and tailored programming. This rapid assessment of NRC's livelihood activities discusses what livelihood interventions for refugees in Ethiopia may be possible given the context of:

1. **Increased donor and government attention on irregular migration in Ethiopia.** This is an opportunity to negotiate greater access to livelihood programmes and longer-term initiatives beyond distribution and vocational training. The Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), in an interview in Shire in September 2016, mentioned to the research team that there are refugees starting businesses under the OCP scheme, but that there is no implementing partner focused on supporting them through tailored urban programming.
2. **Greater social cohesion between refugees and hosts.** 'We do not see any of the hostilities that you see between different community groups', according to a representative of ARRA in Shire. Tolerance and acceptance should be built on for a strong foundation for further livelihood and resilience programming that takes a community perspective.
3. **Existing food security initiatives and financing mechanisms around loans.** These can function as a means to target livelihoods through cooperatives and associations. Under the OCP, Eritrean refugees may access informal business opportunities. The non-formal service cooperative umbrella is composed of different self-help groups. All loans are overseen by a loan committee composed of ARRA, the Refugee Community Committee (RCC), NRC, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other stakeholders. These groups access micro-finance institutions through ARRA's written endorsement. While refugees are not able to access these systems on their own, a pathway is open and can be scaled and modified. For instance, these accounts are for savings, not withdrawal. They earn interest and pay a bank charge but no tax is required.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2016) *Exploring further possibilities for refugees to work in Ethiopia*. Protection Working Group. 05 July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hall (2014) *Living Out of Camp: Alternatives to camp-based assistance for Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia*, commissioned by the Norwegian Refugee Council, Ethiopia.

Similar projects are running with NRC in Shire, ZOA and International Humanitarian Solutions in Hitsats and Shamelba, as a result of direct engagement with the local government and the efforts of the Livelihoods Technical Working Group (TWG).

### **The Norwegian Refugee Council in Ethiopia**

A review of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) programming documents in Ethiopia suggests a continually evolving focus and scope of operation, with an emphasis on integrated programming and collaboration. NRC established operations in 2011 to provide assistance and support to both Somali refugees (in Dollo Ado) and Eritrean refugees (in Shire). Since that time, NRC has expanded to work in all major refugee camps within Ethiopia, thereby supporting Sudanese, South Sudanese, Eritrean and Somali refugees along with vulnerable host communities. In late 2014, NRC further expanded to include programming targeted towards urban refugees in Addis Ababa and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Somali region. In addition to Addis Ababa, NRC in Ethiopia is presently operating in five field locations: Dollo Ado, Jijiga, Assosa, Shire and Gambella.

Originally, the scope of NRC's programming in Ethiopia was predominately humanitarian, as evidenced by NRC's inception project of a large-scale shelter intervention in Dollo Ado. From the initial launch of NRC activities, there has been significant investment in shelter and WASH, with the notable addition of education activities in 2013. The evolution of NRC programming, in line with the regional context and with partners such as UNHCR, has since 2014 moved towards a higher emphasis on recovery, development, and resilience to avoid prolonged humanitarian endeavours. Projects were expanded into livelihood and food security programming, while still maintaining and improving the WASH, shelter and education components.

Refugees in Ethiopia remain in a protracted crisis with limited prospects for durable solutions. This is further exacerbated by the countries continued food insecurity,<sup>3</sup> population strain and increasing refugee movements. This is further exacerbated by key structural weaknesses of the labour market, which prevent refugees and migrants from accessing employment due to a wide skills gap and restrictions on formal economic participation. In Ethiopia, this places further pressures on the implementation of durable and sustainable interventions.

In this setting, NRC and other partners are making important progress to address the needs of refugees and host communities. However, there is room for improvement, and **NRC is in a unique position to lead future programming endeavours**. As no one programme can meet all of the physical, psychological and livelihood needs of vulnerable communities, a holistic, integrated approach must be explored to maximise impact and mitigate missed opportunities.

In this light, NRC has commissioned the present study to examine its core livelihoods activities in two primary areas in Dollo Ado; Kobe, Hiloweyn and Shire; Mai Tseberi and Hitsats. The programmes reviewed include:

- **Food security and irrigation:** The overall objective of the irrigation initiative is to improve resilience and promote a durable solutions landscape for host communities and refugees in Dollo Ado. To do so, NRC has provided skills in commercial agricultural production and has

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<sup>3</sup> Birara Endalew, Mequanent Muche, and Samuel Tadesse, "Assessment of Food Security Situation in Ethiopia: A Review," *Asian Journal of Agricultural Research* 9, no. 2 (February 1, 2015): 55–68, doi:10.3923/ajar.2015.55.68; WFP, "Climate Risk and Food Security in Ethiopia: Analysis of Climate Impacts on Food Security and Livelihoods," n.d.



contributed to household food security improvements by promoting agricultural production and income generation.

- **Youth Education Pack (YEP) and Vocational Training:** In Shire and Dollo Ado, YEP projects combine basic literacy/numeracy skills, life skills and practical vocational training to facilitate livelihoods. The vocational skill emphasis varies across programme locations, taking into consideration market assessments of the demand for various skills and the particular interests of the target beneficiaries. Examples of skills offered include construction, plumbing, hairdressing, electronics, furniture building, hotel management, food preparation and tailoring.
- **Micro-loan revolving funds (MLRF):** In Shire, the project is designed to empower refugees and vulnerable members of the host community members, including YEP graduates, through the provision of entrepreneurship training, tools kits and loans to expand beneficiaries’ business opportunities.

## Objectives of this assessment

This study was commissioned by NRC Ethiopia to document lessons learned as well as to provide a strategic framework to inform NRC’s positioning on integrated programming. It examines the role of NRC in the provision of refugee livelihoods and education. It is not meant to document nor take into account basic services. **The objectives of this study are to:**

1. Identify key strengths, weaknesses and **opportunities to bring together** programming opportunities in relation to education, livelihoods, resilience and migration.
2. Build a **strategic framework** for NRC to position itself in terms of scalable programs on refugee livelihoods, taking into consideration donor interests/strategies and potential programme synergies.

This study does not purport to produce a technical programmatic evaluation or appraisal of the project. Rather, the research has been guided by the following research questions and should be read alongside NRC project documents.

**Table 1- Research questions**

Main Research Questions	
1	How is NRC Ethiopia contributing to sustainable and increased livelihoods for refugees?
2	What concrete programmatic and coordination opportunities exist?
3	How can NRC link its achievements to targeted messaging for key stakeholders; government and donors?

Research was conducted in Shire and Dollo Ado including camps (Mai Tseberi, Hitsats, Kobe, and Hilowayn) in July - August 2016. The research is further based on an urban setting snapshot in Addis. The research locations were chosen to represent a sample from NRC’s areas of implementation throughout Ethiopia. Local enumerators collected data using tools designed by Samuel Hall to determine the positioning and relevance of NRC’s programming.

## Methodology

A participatory research framework was designed, employing qualitative research methods in Addis, Shire and Dollo Ado. Focus group discussions (9 FGDs with 63 respondents), key informant interviews (30) and in-depth case studies (5) were gathered in a manner to reflect the voices of people engaged at different levels and in different phases of NRC’s implementation.

In-depth studies in Shire and Dollo Ado were conducted using a standardized approach aimed at comparing, contrasting and refining the analysis.

These included the five elements below:

- Direct observation checklist
- Focus group discussions (FGDs)
- Key informant interviews (KIIs) with partners, government and community leaders
- Individual case studies
- Field journals built around the key research questions/sub questions



**Table 2 - Fieldwork breakdown**

	Addis	Shire	Dollo Ado	TOTAL
<b>Key Information Interviews</b>	18	8	3	29
<b>FGDs</b>	-	5	4	63
<b>Case Studies</b>	1	2	2	5
<b>Total</b>				97

The focus in this methodology is on speaking with refugees and host communities alike – collectively making up 67 out of our 97 respondents. It followed a participatory approach built from the community up to the organisations mandated to assist them. The team spoke to representatives of partner organisations and to NRC to better frame our analysis and recommendations.

In order to fully detail and review the significance, sustainability and impact of NRC’s programming in Ethiopia, the research focused on the following target groups:

- **Male and female programme beneficiaries:** YEP graduates, microloan and direct cash beneficiaries, current education/vocational training students and food security beneficiaries
- **Male and female non-beneficiaries:** Including host and refugee community members ranging from 15-35 years of age within the catchment area of NRC programmes
- **Refugee Community Committees:** Male and female refugee representatives elected as leaders
- **Local authorities and community leaders:** Leaders from within the host community
- **Business community members and leaders:** Including male and female business leaders drawn from within the refugee and host community.

Two teams were used to conduct fieldwork at each location, with each team comprised of one moderator and one note taker. Where possible, a mixed gender team was recruited to conduct the assessment. All teams were supported by Samuel Hall’s field coordinator as well as NRC to gain access to the target groups.

## Fieldwork Approach

With guidance from NRC staff and its own team, Samuel Hall identified respondents in each of the following four locations of relevance to NRC programming: Dollo Ado (Kobe and Hilowayn) and Shire (Mai Tseberi, Hitsats). The team gained a better understanding of (1) how stakeholders define and view livelihoods, (2) the links and relationships between core competency components including durable solutions and resilience and (3) the local relationships between shocks, coping mechanisms, and stability in the areas where refugees live and work. **Figure 1** provides geographic reference for each location within the wider context of Ethiopia.

Figure 1: Location of NRC’s programming in Ethiopia



## II. CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

In interviews conducted for this study, UNHCR commended the ‘courage’ of NRC to be involved in urban livelihoods, especially given the structural constraints in Ethiopia. UNHCR considered it is an important activity to attempt in spite of the lack of possibilities, and UNHCR emphasised that one could not truly speak of ‘sustainable livelihoods’ for refugees in the current policy environment. This preface highlights the three angles of this study: NRC’s role, support of refugee livelihoods, and the context of Ethiopia.

### 1. The context in Ethiopia

**Ethiopia is testing alternatives to camps in restricted settings.** This provides an important case study of a government exploring out of camp solutions, at least for one group (Eritrean refugees – specifically youth) through the Out-of-Camp policy (OCP). Gains from this initiative seem timid and uncertain, but stakeholders agree for the need to revive efforts around the OCP.<sup>4</sup> In addition, stakeholders – with the government – have been active in setting up a coordination forum that provides hope for future livelihood interventions. The Livelihoods Working Group (LWG) brings together all livelihood-implementing partners, UNHCR and ARRA and provides a platform for this study’s recommendations. The LWG in Shire is chaired by NRC with responsibilities covering the establishment of a common livelihoods strategy, optimization of livelihood interventions and coordination and information sharing.<sup>5</sup>

### 2. NRC in Ethiopia... and in the region

NRC has moved to position itself as a strategic player in livelihoods in Ethiopia with a strong foothold in Shire. Its initial basic service response – which was both highly in demand due to drought when NRC began work in country and well-executed – set them up in a strong position in Ethiopia, despite being a new actor. From this solid foundation NRC has been able to expand into livelihood programming both in and outside of camps based on the needs and opportunities presented. At present, however, NRC is limited by the lack of a core strategy to define its approach to livelihoods in Ethiopia. A key added value and asset of NRC Ethiopia remains its regional role in education and resilience, two aspects to be tapped into to reinforce its livelihood approach in Ethiopia. For resilience, this study focuses on Ungar’s definition: ‘Both the capacity of individuals to **navigate** their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical **resources** that sustain their **wellbeing**, and their capacity, individually and collectively, to **negotiate** for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally **meaningful** ways’.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Threats to NRC’s Programming

NRC is proud of its ‘uniqueness’ in targeting livelihoods for urban refugees in Addis, ‘giving them a means to sustain livelihoods’. However, the many limitations make the actual impact of this programme on livelihoods questionable. The motivation for the continual work on a ‘livelihoods

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<sup>4</sup> ReDSS/Samuel Hall (2016), Review of Durable Solutions Initiatives in the East and Horn of Africa

<sup>5</sup> Livelihood Working Group (LWG) – Draft Terms of Reference (TOR), Shire.

<sup>6</sup> Ungar 2008. *Resilience in Action*. Toronto University Press. p.225

programme', despite acknowledgment of its inability to have an impact on livelihoods, shows a tension to be addressed. This programme faces many threats – therefore, how can it engage for changes in the policy level (where many threats come from); and how can it, in the interim, operate in the present context in a livelihoods capacity, especially in light of the likelihood of the OCP programme expanding?

Three threats are to be underlined in this context:

- No link to durable solutions and migration
- Misalignment with beneficiary expectations and immediate needs
- (Dis-)Integrated Programming

These are the key nodes of the problem to solve.

**Macro Threat 1. Absent link with durable solutions:** In particular, the lack of a clear objective in regards to durable solutions outcomes - local integration, reduced secondary movements, and/or repatriation - may be a key threat to NRC's ability to measure its impact. Across the board NRC has emphasised the importance of supporting youth and children, a significant demographic group both in importance and in sheer volume. Furthermore, NRC's reconceptualising of refugee education, in line with such partners as UNHCR, demonstrates the organisation's achievement in ensuring programmatic focus is placed on human rights to achieve durable solutions and avoid prolonged humanitarian endeavours.

**Macro Threat 2. Misalignment of beneficiary expectations and needs:** This research reveals a misalignment between the support provided and beneficiaries' expectations. The discrepancy between the low amount of the cash grants or loans for vocational activities and beneficiaries' actual needs to start businesses were deemed to have 'diluted' the impact of the project to a great extent, even when utilized correctly. This was further exacerbated in the urban context where beneficiaries' immediate needs dictated financial investment towards basic services and not business inputs.

**Macro Threat 3. (Dis-)Integrated Programming – in need of an Integrated Programming: how to create cohesion internally?** Outside of internally linked income-generating opportunities for YEP graduates, there is a high level of unemployment for participant's post-graduation – negating the theoretical linkages between education and livelihoods and directly threatening the impact of NRC's programming.

## Evaluation Framework

To find areas for opportunity for NRC and partners in Ethiopia, this assessment used seven criteria to test the scalability of NRC programming in Ethiopia. These criteria are presented in the table below and reviewed with two case studies – Dollo Ado and Shire – in chapter 3 of this report.

<b>Scalability criteria</b>	<i>Main research Questions addressed per-criteria</i>
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<b>Relevance</b>	<i>What progress has been made towards the implementation of durable solutions and addressing the sustainability of livelihoods interventions? Where the interventions timely and did they address the needs of the beneficiaries?</i>	<b>1</b> <b>1.2</b>
<b>Feasibility</b>	<i>How complex is the integrated programming sought? Was the mode of delivery adapted to meet the needs of the population? What were the impacts of the programmes on the NRC's overall objectives? What economic impact did the programming have on the wider community?</i>	<b>2</b> <b>2.1</b>
<b>Urgency of need</b>	<i>What is the level of needs? Are there key practices appropriate for replication?</i>	<b>2.2, 3, 3.2</b>
<b>Ethical Acceptability</b>	<i>Do the interventions accurately target a population? Did the programming successfully enhance community engagement and improve social cohesion?</i>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Avoidance of duplication</b>	<i>Are there similar interventions on-going in NRC's area of implementation? What coordination mechanisms are in place at the national and regional level to address issues of duplication?</i>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>Political Acceptability</b>	<i>What policies are in place to support or hinder NRC's programming? Is there a willingness on the part of key stakeholders to support sustainable livelihoods interventions?</i>	<b>1.1,</b> <b>4, 4.1</b>
<b>Application of recommendations</b>	<i>Are there adequate resources to undertake integrated programming? What is the likelihood the programming will be applicable? Are there available internal resources for scaling?</i>	<b>4,</b> <b>4.2</b>

Each question is scaled on a five-point value from low (1) to high (5), giving a grade per criteria and then an overall grade and final score for the programme.

This method allows one to see the:

- Micro level (which questions to focus on),
- Meso level (which criteria to focus on), and
- Macro level (whether the programme has the potential to be scaled and whether further investment could improve the implementation and sustainability of the programme).

### III. GENERAL FINDINGS

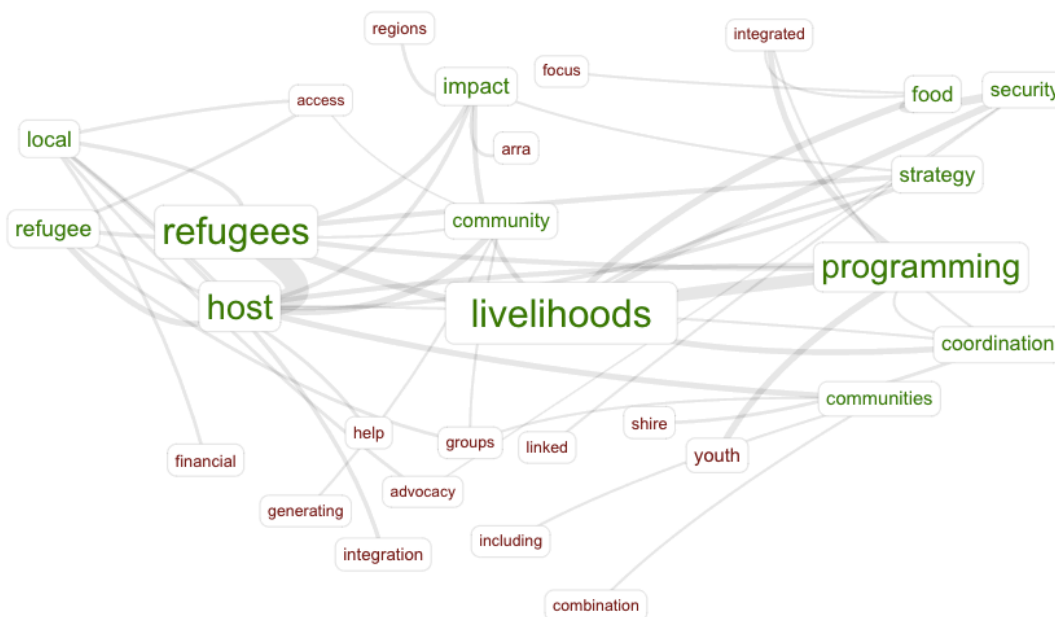
When asked to define ‘livelihoods’, beneficiaries insisted on two key features of livelihoods, described below using their own words:

1. **Skills Training and Education** – ‘important’, ‘critical’ and ‘essential’ means to improve their future
2. **Capital for business start-up** – the most sought after means of livelihoods support

NRC has, in practice, added two aspects to this definition:

1. **Food security** – the Micro-Loan Revolving Funds (MRLF) training in poultry production and irrigation incorporates *improved nutritional status*
2. **Building capacities and ownership** – the focus on the Youth Education Package (YEP) and certification as a means to *improve collaboration/coordination* with other stakeholders while building the *individual capacity of its youth graduates*

The word cloud obtained from our field teams’ journals reveals a focus on refugee-host livelihoods in a more balanced manner than the way project documents have been built so far, with equal weight on refugees and hosts and a more local, integrated approach between populations. The second layer of analysis then shows the need to look into ‘strategy and impact’ for a programming that is ‘local, community’ focused, ‘built around food security’ and has greater coordination. The third layer, not shown here, then delves into the focus on youth and durable solutions. These are the three layers this research will address as key findings.



What can sustainable livelihoods mean in this context?

1. **A community-based food security programme (*absorption*)**
2. **An immediate IGA programme with a youth focus (*adaptation*)**
3. **A durable solutions programme (*transformation*)** – even if, as this research will show, it means starting from transitional solutions or informal economic integration in order to build opportunities for actual durable solutions, whether return, resettlement or local integration.

Bringing these three components together then creates a strategic *Resilience framework* built around a learning agenda, of which this assessment is one part:

- What NRC knows has worked
- What NRC knows has not worked
- What remains to be further tested – and learned from in a continuous, coordinated process.

**‘Sustainable livelihoods’** is not a term that NRC can continue working with easily in this context. Detached from reality, the true sustainability of livelihoods for refugees in the Ethiopian context is questioned by many of our key informants. As a result, it would be preferable to see livelihoods as part of a bigger strategy, rather than a strategy in and of itself. Livelihoods can be one component of a bigger framework. What could this strategic framework then look like?

A key potential of programming in Ethiopia is to build the resilience of refugees and hosts alike: this takes on both an individual lens (the definition of resilience we use from Ungar<sup>7</sup> speaks about building individual capacity to negotiate resources and their future) while taking on a community lens (building the potential of communities to absorb shocks and to provide their own response).

In effect this is being done disparately and needs to be systematised by NRC in a full-fledged resilience approach to its programming in Ethiopia:

- Building the **ABSORPTION** capacity through food security initiatives
- Building the **ADAPTATION** capacity through a focus on IGAs for youth
- Building the **TRANSFORMATION** capacity by contributing to durable solutions – and, perhaps more realistically in this restricted setting, on transitional solutions, such as informal local integration, which is already happening.

As such, the recommendation is to move beyond a sustainable livelihoods focus to plan holistically around a *resilience framework*. This would not be complete without a learning agenda, of which this assessment is one part. This learning agenda must allow NRC to know what has worked, what has not worked, and what remains to be further tested, piloted, learned from in a continuous, coordinated approach.

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their wellbeing, and their capacity, individually and collectively, to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways’. Ungar, M. (2008) *Resilience across Cultures*, British Journal of Social Work, 38.



## 1. Link with food security to scale up livelihoods programming

The first part is then ‘Building the ABSORPTION capacity through food security initiatives’. This is already being done in some limited capacity, as revealed in this evaluation’s fieldwork. For example, communities are satisfied with their involvement in beneficiary selection and localized procurement, but they are not included in the project design phase, which is leading to problems down the line in achieving longer-term goals.

### **Community satisfaction is noted in implementation yet not maximised in the design stage**

Despite barriers noted by beneficiaries in regards to the implementation of irrigation programming, respondents generally reported a high level of satisfaction in the project implementation. This extended to the wider community who reported to have been engaged in beneficiary selection and localised procurement of goods.

These engagements did not extend to the project design phase where respondents reported that the views of stakeholders (business leaders and beneficiaries) were not sufficiently included. This research suggests that moving forward including stakeholders’ (in particular business community leaders) inputs into the project design phase would get maximum Value for Money (VfM) rather than deciding without their involvement what types of projects to provide to communities. This would further work to support longer-term objectives and efforts to ensure that the programmes are appropriate to the context. Lastly, it may provide a solution for one of the key questions on the link between food security and livelihoods, i.e. how to go beyond ‘micro’ projects – that help 100 households at a time – to reach a sizeable number of the 600,000 estimated people living in camps. Working with the regional government in Tigray, for instance, is an important part of programme design, and working with populations to design projects will be part of a sustainable response.

### **Missing evidence base to conduct programmes at the nexus of food security and livelihoods**

Key to addressing the food security – livelihoods nexus is to assess the market situation in and around the camps to better assess (a) where crop sharing could be the solution, (b) where informal markets could be supported and (c) where greater numbers of refugees could contribute manpower to the farmlands of host community members. As of 2013/14, the influx of the South Sudanese refugees and greater number of refugees has meant that the ‘one food basket per month for all’ will not be sustainable. A new model is needed for targeted food delivery assistance, and a broader food security – livelihoods plan is needed.

### **INDICATORS to add to the monitoring of NRC’s activities**

How can the ABSORPTION capacity be prioritised? Stronger indicators and objectives need to be built into NRC’s activities. These include the following indicators to be closely measured and monitored to assess when communities are being supported towards resilience and where food security interventions do not contribute to a longer-term approach. Indicators to be measured are:

- ◆ Satisfaction in project implementation
- ◆ Community engagement in beneficiary selection
- ◆ Localised procurement of goods
- ◆ Inclusion of stakeholder views in project design phase
- ◆ Barriers to the implementation of irrigation programming

### Case study: irrigation builds a landscape for durable solutions

One case study shows the potential of the food security – livelihoods linkage in building the absorption capacity of communities, thus contributing to stronger communities and more impactful programming.

Whilst the underlining concepts of the programme - mutual accountability and community ownership - were found to be the correct approach, the absence of formal monitoring systems and documentation between the landowner and farmer greatly diminished the impact of the programming.

This resulted in **negative power dynamics** between the landowner and the farmer, and it even resulted in direct hostilities between community counterparts, rendering the project's overall objective largely irrelevant.

Despite this, the community expressed a willingness to be better engaged with NRC and programme counterparts. This provides NRC with an interesting opportunity to innovate, potentially through introducing monitoring systems with the use of mobile technology.

## 2. Link with refugee youth to offer livelihood alternatives and IGAs


### There has been positive progress towards addressing immediate needs

The majority of beneficiaries describe the vocational trainings received as essential for enabling access to Income Generating Activities (IGAs). However, they did not consider the resources provided – cash and supplies - sufficient for livelihoods start-up. As a result, positive outcomes are noted in addressing immediate needs (access to skills and training), with hurdles to be addressed for longer-term impact.

### The life skills component of YEP influences refugees' views of irregular migration

The qualitative interviews show that youth-based programming has an impact – fundamentally and in youths' minds – on migration outwards. If youth can find work in Ethiopia, they consider it worthwhile to stay. This has been reported in multiple qualitative discussions with youth in this research. However, without linkages to income generating activities post-graduation, beneficiaries may face no other choice than to migrate onwards – even if they no longer want to pursue secondary migration. Although achieving the latter goal is a long-term process, the programme approach and design should bear it in mind from the start to ensure a graduation programme that can take the youth beyond a training and IGA focus, to fulfilling, steps on a longer-term timeline. This should then be replicated in both the urban and camp context.

Programme recipients remained more optimistic about their future and reported that receiving post-graduation support – including business and follow-up trainings, cash and tools – would be crucial to creating linkages to IGAs. This is corroborated by stakeholders' perceptions that NRC's programming is **effective in the short-term and acts as a stopgap**, though it remains unable to meet long-term goals to reach sustainability.



As the second resilience framework level is building the adaptation capacity of beneficiaries. Here the focus of NRC on youth's IGA is particularly important, and it is a focus that no other stakeholder provides. This is a unique added value of the NRC programme: linking the community-based approach with offering refugee youth IGA alternatives.

**NRC has adapted its programming well to meet the needs of youth beneficiaries and key stakeholders**

Project staff demonstrated a great level of ingenuity in project development, proactively recommending linkages between core competencies and livelihoods to address beneficiaries evolving needs. The Youth Education Packages (YEP) and Micro-Loan Revolving Funds (MLRF) programmes are excellent examples of NRC's attempts to build synergy between diverse interventions within their project portfolio and external partners. For instance, MLRF's training in poultry production and irrigation incorporates the strategic objective of improved nutritional status, providing nutrient-dense protein and micronutrients through eggs and produce respectively. Other YEP graduates' vocational skills are utilised to support further NRC interventions, especially shelter construction. Likewise, the older children in NRC's child protection programme are also beneficiaries in the YEP programme. In terms of collaboration with other stakeholders, NRC has implemented the YEP programmes alongside Ethiopia's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) support in teacher training and accreditation and UNHCR's monitoring. NRC has also worked with the Tigray Regional State Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Agency for the Certificate of Competency (CoC) to provide official certificates for graduates of NRC YEP programmes in that region. This provides legitimacy to the programme that increases the prospects and employability of graduates. It also provides possibilities for a sustainable exit strategy, enabling community and government forces to eventually take the project over. Overall, NRC documents emphasise partnership and coordination with donors and other implementing partners to avoid duplication of programming and utilise the expertise of various organisations properly.

**NRC has taken care to adjust its youth programmes in particular areas based on project outcomes and particular needs.** In Shire, for instance, there were significant numbers of dropouts of the long-term (approximately one year) YEP programmes. As such, NRC implemented shorter-term training options in beauty/hair dressing and leather crafting to reach more beneficiaries. Conversely, Eritrean youth refugees in Shire largely have basic literacy skills, so YEP programmes there were customised to focus on computer literacy as an alternative. NRC also incorporates day-care services to encourage the retention of female participants with children, and targets both host community and refugee youth in order to support integration and understanding between the groups.

In education programming, NRC has made endeavours to integrate the programming in collaboration with other actors. **A main success of this has been the TVET certification, which provides a legitimacy to NRC's education programming.** It further pursues inter-agency collaboration in education, through support in teacher training and accreditation with Ethiopia's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA).

**NRC has created impactful linkages through external programme synergies:**

This further extends to NRC's nascent primary school programming (in which they are a unique actor), through which they are supporting primary education for partner and government schools.

Moreover, YEP programming has successfully designed and awarded highly sought after certificates. Notably, beneficiaries will contact NRC for a replacement should they lose their original. Another example of integration is the collaboration in building a school in the Shire region, where NRC built the facility and DRC is supplying a library, latrine and books. This further extended to innovation on the part of NRC and camp management to design a catalyst for refugees to access formal market systems through the construction of markets within the camps.

**NRC has created impactful linkages through internal programme synergies:**

In locations assessed, **NRC created linkages through its internal integration of programming.** For instance, NRC has employed YEP graduates in shelter construction projects or in poultry cage welding – an integration which has been praised by ARRA. However, outside of NRC-led income-generating opportunities for YEP graduates, there is a high level of post-graduation unemployment among participants – negating the theoretical linkages between education and livelihoods. As an ARRA representative noted, the lack of IGA after graduation means YEP is not truly a successful livelihood endeavour. He stated, ‘A skill is not the final output. IGAs are the final output, and we need to see it that way. Skills need to be linked to jobs’. Thus, without concrete and adequate linkages between vocational trainings and income generating activities, NRC is significantly inhibited in the actual success of YEP for livelihoods.

In various projects, **NRC pairs interventions with Micro-Loan Revolving Funds (MLRF) to further facilitate livelihood opportunities and small business development.** These have been distributed to beneficiaries organised in Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), including YEP graduates in Shire. Some microcredit beneficiaries also receive additional entrepreneurship instruction or focused training on particular business skills, such as battery system poultry rearing and drip irrigation husbandry. Other uses of this loan money include business plans for fruit distribution, cosmetic shops, restaurants, butcheries, dairy farms and more. The MLRF programme also shows the strong openness of NRC to beneficiary feedback. Despite this, microloans in the aforementioned regions encountered strong resistance, as loan amounts were considered too small, while simultaneously being provided too widely and under too short a repayment period. Thus, in light of this feedback and in discussion with other shareholders (notably ARRA and UNHCR), NRC adjusted the microloans to be larger loans for smaller groups with a longer repayment schedule.

**INDICATORS to add to the monitoring of NRC’s activities**

- ◆ Aspirations and perceptions of their future
- ◆ Ability to start-up a livelihoods post-training
- ◆ Cash and supply level as compared to start-up requirements
- ◆ Vocational skills gained/developed
- ◆ Life skills
- ◆ Intentions to further migrate

How can the ADAPTATION capacity be measured and prioritised? Key indicators from the study are provided here. Building these in a measurement framework (M&E framework) would allow NRC to link its youth livelihoods programming to the broader resilience theory of change.

#### **Case study: building confidence**

Respondents unanimously agreed that NRC's programming addressed key issues facing youth and positively impacted the youths' role within the community. Beneficiaries of NRC's programming were often deemed 'leaders', 'models', and 'inspirations' to their community. In Dollo Ado, and to a lesser extent in Shire, youth graduates were also reported to have conducted mentorship trainings to transfer learned skills to the wider community. **These mentorship initiatives were widely praised and deemed as the next step in self-reliant programming.** NRC staff noted, that better linkages to mentorship and peer training would be an effective and cost efficient way to scale current vocation trainings. Moreover, the majority of recipients cited increased confidence and an improved ability to interact with their peers as a result of NRC's programming. This was corroborated by community and business leaders, who cited a reduction in negative coping behaviours on the part of programme recipients. NRC staff noted that better linkages to mentorship and peer training would be an effective and cost efficient way to scale current vocation trainings.

### **3. Link with economic interactions and integration: refugees and hosts**

#### **Interventions have resulted in improved market access and economic interactions**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that NRC's programmes raised the purchasing power of beneficiaries at the household level. However, this was only in the short term and on a small scale, as access to refugee livelihoods outside of the camp setting is restricted. This was substantiated by recipients, who noted an inability to access sustainable livelihoods post-graduation.

Irrigation programming revealed great strides towards creating a landscape for durable solutions. Whilst the underlining concepts of the programme – mutual accountability and community ownership – were found to be the correct way to approach such programming, the absence of formal monitoring systems and documentation between the land owner and farmer greatly diminished the impact of the programming. This resulted in negative power dynamics and even direct hostilities between community counterparts, rendering the project's overall objective largely irrelevant. Despite this, the community expressed a willingness to be better engaged with NRC and programme counterparts, which provides NRC an interesting opportunity to innovate, potentially through introducing monitoring systems with the use of mobile technology.

Importantly, albeit unintentionally, the research revealed important progress made towards the longer-term goals of local integration. For instance, in Shire, graduates reported the formation of informal business relations between refugee and host communities to optimize access to business opportunities. These included host community members procuring formal local contracts and the

facilitation of access to formal markets, while refugees have access to tax free business opportunities inside the camps.

### **Economic relationships between hosts and refugees**

In Dollo Ado, business leaders cited the selling of food items and trade to be the most common form of economic interaction. Community members and local authorities reported that graduates played a key role in local economies, offering skills that contributed to market diversity and strengthened local purchasing power.

Business leaders noted that ‘There are advantages to hiring student learners and vocational training beneficiaries, as they are more qualified to conduct the work’. When asked what skills were most sought after in hiring, the majority of respondents from the business community reported that graduates with business training and not skills training were of most value.

IOM in Shire notes, ‘Since NRC entrance there have been great impacts. We have seen an increase in basic services – they are the shelter leader – and an increase in businesses - in particular with youth setting up business in the camps’.

This is a common finding in refugee hosting settings like Kenya as well – informal local economic integration may provide the key to the longer term approach needed for a strategic program: working from the field upwards to NRC’s strategy.

### **INDICATORS to add to the monitoring of NRC’s activities**

- ◆ **The purchasing power of beneficiaries** at the household level, though only in the short term and on a small scale as access to refugee livelihoods outside of the camp setting are restricted. This was substantiated by recipients citing an inability to access livelihoods post-graduation.
- ◆ **Ability to access livelihoods post-graduation**
- ◆ **Harmonious relationships for social and economic cohesion**
- ◆ **Cross-fertilisation between programmes**
- ◆ **Cross-fertilisation with other stakeholders**

#### **Case study: Contributing to local solutions**

**In Shire**, the host and refugee communities cited a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship: borrowing of tools and lending of income demonstrated confidence and trust in community counterparts.

According to IOM, **‘there has been a visible change in the way that refugees from NRC-supported camps interact with other refugees – they just carry themselves with more confidence’**. The research revealed that important progress was made towards longer-term goals of local integration. For instance, in Shire, graduates reported the formation of **informal business relations between refugee and host communities** to optimize access to business opportunities.

## **A leader without a strategy – responsibility and potential way forward**

As the previous section has shown, NRC has become a de facto leader in livelihoods for refugee communities and host communities alike in both urban and camp settings, such as Shire, where NRC implements roughly 12 different livelihood programmes targeting various community groups. In addition, its focus on building the potential of youth has been noted, both through objective and subjective indicators and programme outcomes.

Livelihoods programming is relatively new in Shire. However, it has gained traction with many actors wanting to join in and play a role. In Shire, NRC is perceived as a leader in livelihoods programming from development to implementation and coordination. Part of this assessment is due to NRC's role in establishing the Livelihoods Working Group, which began only six months ago and is co-chaired with ARRA monthly. This group's activity is strong, with participation from NRC, WFP, UNHCR, ARRA, IOM and all other key partners. This provides a platform from which to plan and coordinate an actual livelihoods strategy – which is currently missing.

Although ARRA currently regards NRC as the expert organization on livelihoods, this should be clarified. NRC is proving to be a dynamic and active partner in youth programming and business creation, livelihoods programming and resilience building, yet it is not the only one. The three-part categorisation presented above shows that partnerships need to be built on: 1) Food security and livelihoods, 2) youth programming and livelihoods, and 3) community resilience and participation.

Coordination is needed along these three axes to allow, for instance, for youth programming to lead to sustainable business enterprises, for food security to lead to higher nutrition levels and self-reliance, and for community participation to include community-based monitoring schemes. Coordination will ensure that duplication is avoided. Numerous partners in the camps (ZOA, NRC, OICE) are currently implementing the same skills trainings. This has not yet saturated the market, as the needs are so high. However, this is a duplication that must be addressed now. As a basis for coordination, a comprehensive market survey is needed to better align needs with support.

For coordination to work, livelihoods specialists, food security specialists and youth programming specialists will need to be brought on board to work together under the umbrella of a resilience programme in Ethiopia's camp and urban refugee settings. The next chapter delves into the possibility of such a holistic approach based on the lessons learned from this evaluation.

## IV. STRATEGIC FINDINGS: Building a Learning Agenda

### NRC programme ranking along Samuel Hall's 7 assessment criteria

A seven-point criteria has been used to assess NRC's programmes in Dollo Ado and in Shire. The same framework was applied to both contexts to identify the potential to strengthen and scale up the program. The seven criteria and their components have been categorised into areas of strength and weakness for NRC:

NRC's key strengths have been on building from scratch a

- 1) Relevant programme
- 2) Feasible and well appreciated programme
- 3) Politically acceptable programme welcomed by ARRA
- 4) Potential for integrated programming

The key weaknesses to be addressed are:

- 5) Areas of opportunity currently not explored (such as cross-border opportunities)
- 6) Ethical acceptability
- 7) Avoidance of duplication – a primary concern of all stakeholders interviewed

#### GAINS TO PROTECT: Foundations

1. RELEVANCE
2. FEASIBILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION
3. POLITICAL ACCEPTABILITY
4. APPLICATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### INVESTMENTS TO BE MADE

5. URGENCY OF NEED/AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY
6. ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
7. AVOIDANCE OF DUPLICATION

Generally, NRC's logical sequencing from basic services to livelihoods is consistent with identified programmatic approaches to create sustainable impacts, and it did help beneficiaries in the short-term to gain skills and subsidise their income. Staff ingenuity in project design, which proactively recommended linkages between core competencies and livelihoods, has addressed beneficiaries' evolving needs. **The projects have therefore been able to address a number of resilience programming factors and have created space to link humanitarian and development programming.**



## RANKING BY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Criteria	Status	Findings
<b>RELEVANCE</b>	Acquired	Immediate needs for IGAs and livelihoods are high. Respondents described education and skills training as ‘important’, ‘critical’ and ‘essential’, with access to such programmes a means to improve their future. Strong economic relationships were reported between host and refugee communities and could be leveraged more substantively while mentorship trainings and knowledge sharing initiatives provide a ‘homegrown’ platform for scale.
<b>AVOIDANCE OF DUPLICATION</b>	In progress	The livelihood programme mode of delivery correctly varied across the regions assessed. Nonetheless, the absence of market assessments as well as interagency coordination meant that refugee sector actors were not always aware of each other’s activities, resulting in duplications in programming. In this regard, NRC could position itself strongly by taking a lead in the coordination and execution of market assessments.
<b>URGENCY OF NEED/AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY</b>	Priority	NRC programmes were inhibited by its monitoring capacities due to short funding cycles and to multiple donors. A common M&E framework across funding streams is required to keep standards in implementation and in flexible programming. It is imperative that this process be linked to the formalisation of a learning agenda across its core competencies. Without a stronger M&E approach, it is impossible to better avoid duplications and link livelihoods programming and progress towards the reduction of secondary migration.
<b>POLITICAL ACCEPTABILITY</b>	Priority	‘Sustainable livelihoods’ is not a term that NRC can continue working with in this context. Detached from reality, the true sustainability of livelihoods for refugees in the Ethiopian context is questionable. As a result, it would be preferable to see livelihoods as part of a bigger strategy, rather than a strategy in and of itself. Livelihoods can be one component of a bigger framework in Ethiopia to build the resilience of refugees and host communities, which would contribute to the development of a durable solutions landscape.
<b>FEASIBILITY</b>	Priority	To ensure gains and minimize threats, livelihoods programming will need to focus on addressing gender imbalances as well as in community-based social cohesion.
<b>APPLICABILITY OF RESULTS or RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	In progress	NRC has become a de facto leader in livelihoods for refugee and host communities alike in both the urban and camp settings. It has been able to navigate structural constraints and is well positioned to establish guidelines on best practices and share learning’s through targeted messaging to its key stakeholders.
<b>ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY</b>	In progress	NRC is regarded as a preferred partner and a natural ‘leader’ in furthering changes in the implementation of coordinated, collective livelihoods models. NRC must ensure it can measure and reinforce its own capacities so that it can meet stakeholder demands and expectations.

## CASE STUDIES

The following section is designed to summarise the criteria presented above and provide highlights, key findings and a summary dashboard on the overall scalability on the interventions captured in each region.

### Results

- **Shire** ranks highly according to the assessment criteria with a specific high ranking on the scalability of this programme area
  - **High:** Achievements: relevance, feasibility, urgency of need, ethical acceptability
  - **Medium** (to be reinforced): Applicability of recommendations, potential for scalability, political acceptability for expanded programming
  
- **Dollo Ado** ranks lower than Shire in its overall potential for scalability
  - **High:** Relevance, urgency of need, applicability of recommendations
  - **Medium** (to be reinforced): Feasibility, avoidance of duplication, ethical acceptability, overall potential for scalability
  - **Low:** Political acceptability for expanded programming

# CASE STUDY: DOLLO ADO

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- Youth graduates were reported to have conducted mentorship trainings to transfer learned skills to the wider community. These **mentorship initiatives were widely praised and deemed as the next step in self-reliant programming.**
- **Strong economic relationships were reported between host and refugee communities.** Business and community members reported that graduates played a key role in the local economy, offering skills, which contributed to market diversity and strengthened local purchasing power. Business leaders remarked ‘there are advantages to hiring student learners and vocation training beneficiaries, as they have as they are more qualified to conduct the work’.
- **The contiguous nature of the implementation landscape highlighted unique opportunities to formulate cross-border synergies** between NRC’s YEP programming in Somalia (Dollow) and Ethiopia (Dollo Ado). These include linkages between markets and income generating activities in Dollow and Dollo Ado through the harmonization of vocation skill programming.
- NRC’s irrigation project presents the team with a clear opportunity to learn and innovate. In terms of scaling, the project should do so carefully and exercise strong monitoring protocols, including increased community dialogue and the use of formal land agreements. In this context, information sharing should be better utilized to ensure the successful implementation of the transformation trainings and sensitized on the mutually beneficial outcomes of the project to increase its likelihood of success.



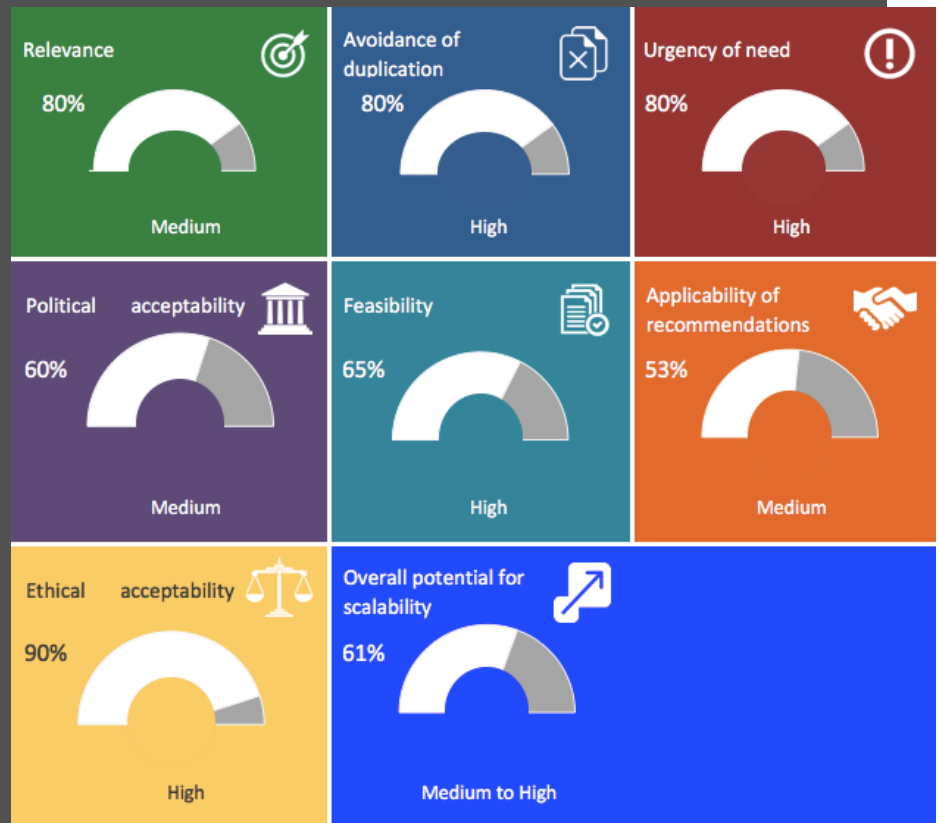
## CONSTRAINTS:

- The community remained more dependent on aid to meet their basic needs, resulting in higher rates of beneficiary dependency, and conflicts were not uncommon amongst programme beneficiaries.
- The lack of standardised reporting and accountability created an imbalance between business and personal agendas, which has the possibility to result in financial abuse. Key stakeholders reported that this may be largely attributed to the lack of formal documentation provided by programme staff to monitor the relationship between the farmer (refugee beneficiary) and the landowner (host beneficiary).
- Communities reportedly felt marginalised and inadequately supported throughout the project. As cited in FGDs, host recipients and community leaders reported feelings of discontent and unease with the project’s implementation.

# CASE STUDY: SHIRE

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- NRC is positioned as a leader in livelihoods programming in Shire, **chairing the Livelihoods Working Group, which has proved** strong in coordination and is cited as a key intervention for **replication in other regions**.
- Donors and partners praise internal integration of livelihoods programming, including the employment of YEP graduates in shelter programming and poultry cage welding. IOM noted that ‘since NRC’s entrance there have been great impacts. We have seen an



increase in basic services – they are the shelter leader – and an increase in business – in particular, from youths setting up business in the camps’.

- Host and refugee communities cited harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships, including the lending of income, which demonstrates confidence and trust in community counterparts. According to IOM, ‘**there has been a visible change in the way that refugees from NRC supported camps interact with other refugees** – they just carry themselves with more confidence’.
- NRC graduates reported the formation of **informal business relations between refugee and host communities** to optimise access to business opportunities.
- There are also partnerships in place with academic and technical partners, such as with Madrid University and the Spanish Development Agency in Shire, to provide electricity to the camps.

## CONSTRAINTS:

- On-going duplications in vocational skills training between NRC and other partners in livelihoods is likely to lead to the oversaturation of certain skills in the market: ‘Everyone is doing the same in livelihoods’.
- With the demands to scale in Shire, there is a clear need for the team to ensure that programming does not outpace its capacity to implement.
- A mismatch between project outcomes and beneficiary expectations of employment and access to IGAs were much higher in Shire.

Furthermore, while the TVET collaboration has proven beneficial, the research revealed that not all eligible youth graduates opted to take the Centre of Competence (CoC) examinations.

## 1. Focus on Ethical Acceptability

Ethical acceptability has been partially achieved with the appropriate targeting of refugee populations and integration of community members (both refugees and host) in the programme's reach. For effective progress towards informal local integration (with on-going economic exchanges between refugees and hosts), other conflicts should be addressed to improve social cohesion as a pathway for economic well-being for all. Reported conflicts between refugees and hosts – although outweighed by collaboration between the two groups – over natural resources and access to interventions mean this aspect of NRC's work will need to be strengthened.

Efforts to improve ethical acceptability should pay particular attention to:

- Gender balance
- Social cohesion
- Conflict over natural resources

**There were reports of increased conflicts between refugees and the host community over natural resources and access to interventions.**

It is important to note that the community's fragility in each assessed location was found to be exacerbated by the reported energy crisis related to deforestation. A lack of resources resulted in hostilities between host and refugee communities trying to preserve and protect their resources. For example, a key informant in Shire noted that 'now the host community will cut a young tree versus risking it falling into the hands of a refugee'. ARRA cited that, without intervention, the situation was unlikely to change because of the large consumption of fuel needed to produce the local food 'injera'. Although not directly in the scope of NRC's programming, this presents a significant opportunity to explore energy saving initiatives.

In Dollo Ado, conflicts amongst programme beneficiaries were not uncommon. One FGD participant noted, 'we have been choked on dust and received nothing'. This may be attributed to limited community engagements due the location of the camps and urban settlements. Despite this, the community noted positive engagements with counterparts outside the irrigation scheme and cited that increased engagement with NRC and stakeholders would be beneficial and welcome.

**Gender balance can provide a more effective linkage between livelihoods and food security.**

In terms of gender, programmes target women as priority. However, given the high numbers of male youths and low numbers of female youths (roughly 35% of the population), projects usually end up with a 50/50 gender split. It is important to note that labour intensive programmes are split in favour of males (70/30) – these are usually host community activities because they often require land. As a result, targeting still remains an issue that hinders women's activities and, more broadly, families' food security. Planning for women to be included in agricultural work will be a required next step in food secure livelihoods.

Furthermore, in terms of gender balance, this assessment captured a structural weakness: **TVET certifications are limited to predominately male-oriented projects**, such as metalworking and electrical installation. This may be attributed to the higher population of males in each assessed location and cultural demands on females in the home. Thus, despite programming targeting women, to reach a proportionally higher number of women the team must further refine its programmatic approach to address specific barriers facing both women's access to educational and vocational training and to their certification, if a longer-term impact is expected.

#### **A more educated caseload**

YEP and livelihoods programmes include similar elements: life skills, vocational skills and literacy. However, in 2015 the YEP programme shifted to an accelerated model (six-nine months), which offered competency literacy as opposed to full literacy programmes. This was because as the majority of refugees coming into the camps were already literate. In turn, this allowed NRC to augment a three- month vocational/entrepreneurship training package for a different caseload. Therefore, NRC reached a higher number of beneficiaries while implementing more effective programming through the literacy competency programme. Alongside the YEP programme, NRC practices integrated livelihoods programming with other core competencies (shelter, food security and livelihoods) to create linkages to income generating activities and cash grants. This is primarily done for youth and post-YEP graduates. This integration is well received and perceived in the field.

YEP and all vocational trainings are certified with TVET. Graduates have the option to receive two certificates: 1) from NRC and 2) an official government certificate if they sit for and pass the government exam. On average, about 60-70% of graduates will opt to sit for the exam while about 80% will pass. This is very high when compared with the average from government TVET schools. NB: all education programmes (primary, vocation, etc.) are required to use the government system in Ethiopia.

**Certificates** are highly valued by beneficiaries. There are anecdotal examples of beneficiaries who returned or moved from the settlements and lost their certificates, and who then contacted NRC directly to ask for a copy of their certificates to be sent to them. This further demonstrates that refugees see the skills they are learning as valuable to them outside of Ethiopia. Focus group discussions with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in Shire support this finding.

The dual importance of youth programming and certification should not ignore women's roles and women's skills. A greater enrolment of women in youth programming and a greater emphasis on certification in trainings targeted at women should be sought to improve gender balance.

## 2. Focus on Avoidance of Duplication

**Across the board stakeholders cited concerns over the duplication of vocational training initiatives by different organisations.**

The most effective means to reduce duplication suggested by stakeholders included:

- ◆ Coordination
- ◆ Camp management
- ◆ Bringing together implementing partners and community partners in urban settings

In order to better understand the implementation landscape, this assessment asked the respondents if they were aware of similar programming. Overwhelmingly, participants reported being aware of similar livelihoods programming implemented by different partners; however, they were unable to provide details on the interventions. A small minority of beneficiaries reported receiving support from multiple sources. Stakeholders confirmed the concern over duplication when they noted issues of replication between partners. This has been seen in the example given by IOM Shire of livelihoods duplication between IRC and NRC prior to IRC's exit from livelihoods programming, and the on-going duplication between OICE and NRC in livelihoods programming. Interestingly, in Shire, the duplication in skills training was not found to be a barrier in accessing IGAs. However, in Dollo Ado, NRC staff reported conflicts due to limited market access.

**Coordination and strong camp management were reported widely as the most effective mechanisms to reduce duplication.**

**In the camps** strong management on the part of ARRA and UNHCR minimised duplication. Routine coordination and information sharing systems were reported across the regions assessed. KIIs noted that the camp management accountability matrix successfully reduced repetitions in programming and funding, referring to it as 'key' to the success of the current camp management structures. Despite this, an increase in livelihoods actors and funding for similar initiatives led to some issues with duplication among partners implementing skills training initiatives. NRC Shire staff corroborate the repetition, noting 'everyone is doing the same in livelihoods and wants to copy YEP', although ARRA in Shire says duplication in the area has been reduced as a result of the Livelihoods Working Group. This is in contrast to the statements of the UNHCR Assistant Representative for Protection, who noted the UNHCR's responsibility to mitigate duplication, and stated that there was 'so far no duplication of programming with livelihoods'.

**Outside of the camp setting**, gaps as well as duplications between implementing partners and community counterparts were widely reported. Thus, there exists a clear opportunity in the urban setting for NRC to expand upon opportunities where the two groups could be brought together – much as the working groups in the camps – to both foster positive relations and open up more livelihood activities for refugees.

### **Integrated programming– an internal potential to address duplication**

Programmes of interest for integration include those mentioned in this study: YEP, micro-credit, backyard gardening, short-term vocation training (three months) and child protection.

ARRA has praised NRC's internal integration of livelihoods programming, including the employment of YEP graduates in shelter programming and poultry cage welding. NRC affirmed these activities were scalable and replicable in other regions. Again, NRC's programming example prompted ARRA (through the working group) to begin mapping all activities where there will be employment opportunities for refugees in the future. They plan, through the LWG, to ensure the link between livelihoods and employment exists for refugees in the future.

Yet, to avoid duplication, key steps in coordination are required as there is presently:

- No comprehensive market study for implementers and camp managers to reference
- No comprehensive market analysis in Shire
  - There is to date no formal linkage between skills/vocational trainings and IGAs: there is, as a result, a clear gap in post-graduation support.
- No strategy to guide NRC's internal integration of livelihoods at the area level
- No coordinated strategy among stakeholders to link:
  - Education and livelihoods
  - Child protection and livelihoods
  - Incentives for host families
- Furthermore, NRC has no internal monitoring to measure or action points related to its integrated programming – this is all done individually on an ad hoc basis.

*Market Assessment:* ARRA has expressly asked NRC to conduct a comprehensive market assessment. They would then, gladly, refer other actors to this assessment to inform future livelihoods programming. This would be another step towards establishing NRC as the livelihoods expert in the area.

*Innovation:* NRC is working with ARRA to pilot refugee cooperatives which will enable refugees to access local financial institutions. This process can happen locally but would be far more complicated at a federal level. This type of innovation provides stronger project sustainability (providing NRC with an exit strategy) and could be replicated and piloted in other regions. Local engagement, rather than a federal initiative, is needed.



### Snapshot: NRC's urban refugee programming

The following section provides an overview of NRC's urban refugee programming in Addis. The data presented below were captured through key information interviews and one beneficiary case study. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of NRC's urban programmes; rather it provides a snapshot of lessons learned, challenges and opportunities in the urban setting.

The **urban context presents unique opportunities** in light of the potential expansion of the out of camp policy. As refugee populations in urban settings grow, the need for more thorough engagement and solid programming increases. With much of urban programming – especially in livelihoods – in its infancy, there are opportunities for NRC to establish itself as a leader. However, in relation to livelihoods programming specifically, significant policy constraints exist. While government engagement and other efforts to improve these livelihood opportunities must continue, the current environment suggests a need for NRC to carefully consider its positioning in urban refugee programming.

In terms of opportunities, one of the main discoveries during fieldwork in Addis Ababa was **the lack of knowledge and coordination present in the urban context**. Refugee actors interviewed in Addis Ababa were unaware of each other's activities, and multiple stakeholders noted the lack of information and assessment of needs in other urban areas in Ethiopia. As such, NRC could position itself strongly by taking the lead on both coordination and assessments throughout urban environments in Ethiopia, which is pertinent in light of the increasing urban refugee population.

NRC is one of the few entities to engage in livelihoods programming in the urban setting. NRC's main urban livelihood activity is cash grants of 2000 birr to support livelihood activities, provided to both refugee and host community members. While NRC is understandably proud of its 'uniqueness' in targeting livelihoods in the urban context, there has been a lack of success in this endeavour. While the host community beneficiaries of the NRC urban livelihoods cash grant programme have an over 50% success rate in utilizing the cash grants to support livelihoods, the vast majority of refugee beneficiaries ultimately used the grants for basic needs as opposed to livelihoods.

NRC and other actors internally acknowledge that these sorts of livelihoods programmes will likely not be successful until the policy context changes. **Therefore, there is a need for a greater government engagement element, which NRC is currently reframing their urban programming to include.** However, in light of the inability for specific livelihood programming to be successful, the reality of what the cash grants are being used for instead, and NRC's strengths as a basic services provider, **there yet remain opportunities for NRC to establish a strong foothold in the urban context.**

### 3. Areas of opportunity/Monitoring & Evaluation

**Challenges in short-term funding were found to limit both the programme outcomes and the team's ability to monitor them.**

NRC's livelihoods programmes have been well received and are suited to the immediate needs of the beneficiaries. Despite this, NRC was inhibited by its monitoring capacities due to short funding cycles, which were found to preclude post-outcome monitoring of projects and hamper its ability to scale effectively. The research was therefore unable to determine the interventions' impact on secondary migration and onward movements, rendering one of stakeholders' primary objectives in local integration through livelihoods interventions largely ineffective.

As an ARRA representative noted, the funding cycles do not allow a move beyond short-term outputs to long-term impacts. This also inhibits programmatic functioning in certain situations, such as YEP and vocational training. In these programs, the teachers are often highly skilled, but the short funding cycles make it challenging to retain the teachers after funding ends, and so they often leave to find other employment. The impact of NRC's programmes on livelihood capacity and income of beneficiaries is also not strongly monitored, creating additional challenges in accountability and direct access to beneficiaries.

This further impacted the team's ability to ensure the funds distributed for business start-up were spent correctly. For instance, **beneficiaries' use of cash to access basic services and diversify the family food basket were widely reported.** In Dollo Ado, ARRA noted, the lack of accountability created an imbalance between business and personal agendas, which may result in financial abuse. A simple solution to address this concern in the short term would be for NRC to develop a basic asset tracking system, potentially through the use of mobile phones, to provide more effect feedback systems.


Finally, due to the lack of available indicators in NRC's monitoring, the research was unable to determine the intervention's impact on secondary migration and onward movements. This can be addressed in future monitoring guidelines. A clear area for concern is the flexibility of NRC's vocation training selection, which may ultimately compromise the impact of its programming as peers are often able to influence each other's decisions leading to a similar skills trainings selection

Taking the example of the irrigation programme, which is the key to the food security component of any livelihoods strategy for NRC, there is to date:

- No formal monitoring mechanism or post-outcome monitoring
- A missed opportunity for monitoring through the use of mobile technology
- A missed opportunity to establish strong monitoring protocols

**The notable lack of comprehensive and routine market assessments to inform the project design may be considered one of the greatest threats to NRC's programming and addressing it should be a priority.**

While the relevance of NRC's livelihoods programming is clear, the lack of comprehensive and routine market assessments in NRC's areas of operations may be considered the largest barrier to creating sustainable and responsible programming. As ARRA notes, market needs change and assessments need to be done routinely to avoid market saturation. For example, certain



programmes/skills taught have been duplicated. To date these have not resulted in severe issues as the needs remain very high, but it will likely lead to oversaturation of certain skills in the market eventually. NRC Shire staff corroborates this duplication, noting ‘everyone is doing the same in livelihoods and wants to copy YEP’, although ARRA in Shire says duplication in the area has been reduced as a result of the Livelihoods Working Group. Despite this success, the working group model was not reported in other rural location, although it was highlighted by key informants as applicable and relevant in out of camp and camp settings throughout Ethiopia. Of particular interest was ARRA’s and UNHCR’s willingness to support NRC in the inception of working groups in each of Ethiopia’s camp settings.

**There is a clear incongruity between beneficiaries’ expectations and the results of the NRC programming.**

In Dollo Ado, one beneficiary noted, ‘It has been more than two years since I finished my training and received a motor. The biggest problem is I never started receiving any income. The motor has a problem. I tried to communicate to people from NRC, but it didn’t work out. I want to ask NRC to look at our problem again and help us maintain our livelihoods’.

From multiple angles – KIIs, FGDs and case studies – there were consistent reports of a mismatch between the size of the cash grants or loans for vocational activities and beneficiaries’ actual needs to start businesses. Furthermore, the low level of cash distributed was deemed to have ‘diluted’ the impact of the project to a great extent even when utilized correctly. For example, outside of internally linked income-generating opportunities for YEP graduates, there is a high level of post-graduation unemployment for participants – negating the theoretical linkages between education and livelihoods. As an ARRA representative noted, the lack of income generation after graduation means the YEP is not truly a successful livelihood endeavour. Thus, without concrete and adequate linkages between vocational trainings and income generating activities, NRC is significantly inhibited in the actual success of its livelihoods program. In terms of access to income generating activities, the wider community reported that NRC programming, in particular the YEP programme, increased youths’ ability to positively contribute to the welfare of their households and the wider community.

**A monitoring and information management system is necessary.**

This system should be based on the:

- Seven-point criteria
- Indicators for inclusion in NRC programming presented in the previous section

This report recommends the creation of a monitoring and information management system within NRC and between partners of livelihoods programmes in Ethiopia. Increasingly, agencies on the ground are receiving similar requests. Donors are motivated by reducing secondary migration, yet data is scarce. As such, if studies can tie NRC (and other partners’) activities – like YEP – to reduced secondary migration, that would increase their ability to better coordinate further programmes, target needs, and acquire funding.

A greater emphasis on an information management system is therefore needed for the potential of livelihoods programmes to be integrated in a resilience framework and in a potential durable solutions framework.

## **A potential for durable solutions? Greater emphasis is needed.**

Actors noted that increased livelihoods are key to stemming irregular migration and secondary movements. This is particularly the case in Shire, where the NRC education coordinator noted that most refugees come with the intention to make onward movements but make different decisions once they have been educated. There is also a general sense that keeping youth busy and learning when they arrive in the camps helps to promote positive community relationships and curb negative coping mechanisms.

### *Secondary migration*

In order to assess this beyond anecdotal findings, the **role of monitoring** is central. NRC will require a tool for better tracking of beneficiaries and linkages to income generating activities. This can likely be linked to UNHCR's interest in Dollo Ado to tap into the pool of NRC YEP graduates as targets for income generating activities. This should have a **clear mitigation strategy**, as it may create conflicts with those who have not received support, while also opening possible links to a mentorship programming whereby the selected youth would act as a multiplier effect.

In Shire, it was noted that the life skills component of YEP did indeed have an impact on refugees' views of and decisions to migrate irregularly, as they all come with this initial intention. However, as programmes are not linked to income generation activities, beneficiaries are left with no choice but to carry out risky movements, even though it may not be their preferred action. This greatly impacts the project's outcomes and may even render them ineffective.

### *Informal local integration through mentorship programme and dedicated market spaces*

NRC has used host community experts to conduct hands-on training for refugees while constructing shelters. The groups have now become formalized skilled 'groups' of trained refugees that are used by NRC in shelter construction. Stakeholders in Shire reported the shelter/YEP integration as innovative and impactful.

One approach to integrated market spaces are refugee days at the local market, where refugees can sell goods with an ARRA pass in selected stalls. Better integration between host graduates and refugee graduates can be promoted to generate business inside and outside the camp. NRC has the potential to make a major impact by conducting an intention survey and comprehensive market survey.

## 4. Lessons learned to be shared

**Camp integration:** One clear area that could benefit from greater integration is the relationship between camps. Camps do not seem to share lessons learned or exchange beneficiary experiences to maximize on human resources and capital. These possibilities should be further investigated. For example, in the newly formed Hitsats camp there is a high dropout rate in YEP programming – and perhaps sharing lessons learned or increasing interaction between refugees of different camps could mitigate this. Integration is on-going, and there are opportunities for expansion between child protection and YEP programming, with unaccompanied minors constituting a key target group for YEP. With UNHCR's wish for NRC to pursue greater involvement in child protection in Shire, expanding this integration of unaccompanied minors as beneficiaries of YEP is key.

Moreover, **as seen in the example of cooperatives**, other options to improve livelihood activities could include market access for refugees, which would allow special permission for refugees to sell their goods (under certain constraints) in host community markets. Another option currently being explored by NRC, IPs and ARRA in Shire is establishing markets within the camps in which YEP graduates would be given space to operate businesses. The theory is that host communities would utilise these markets due to the perceived skills of the refugees and the potential to access tax-free goods and services. However, in the restrictive policy environment, there are major feasibility issues in these respects that need to be better assessed.

### Pursuits to be explored

#### Innovation/basic asset tracking system


Overall the lack of routine information management and monitoring further impacted the team's ability to ensure the funds distributed for business start-up were spent correctly. For instance, **beneficiaries use of cash to access basic services and diversify the family food basket were widely reported.** In Dollo Ado, ARRA noted the lack of accountability created an imbalance between business and personal agendas, which can result in financial abuse.

A solution to address such concerns, in the short term, would be for NRC to develop a basic asset tracking system, potentially **through the use of mobile phones**, to provide more effect feedback systems.

#### Routine work/market assessments

Whilst the relevance of NRC's livelihoods programming is not questioned, **the lack of comprehensive and routine market assessments in NRC's area of operations may be considered the largest barrier to creating sustainable and responsible programming.**

As ARRA notes, market needs change and assessments need to be done routinely to avoid market saturation. For example, certain programmes/skills taught have been duplicated. In livelihoods programming, NRC integrates beneficiaries into programme planning by assessing their interests in vocational activities. This could be formalized into assessments that consider the needs and current capacities of refugees on which to build. However, the integration of the demand side into the assessments –market needs and ability to absorb certain livelihoods – is lacking in NRC's YEP and vocational programmes.



This is a key opportunity, as coordination with the business community can be used not only to align training to demands but also to facilitate job placement after graduation and improve programmes. This is corroborated by focus group discussions with business leaders in the Shire area, several of whom emphasized that they think that NRC would benefit from more input from local businesses.

### **Coordination/expanding the Livelihoods Working Group (LWG) to other areas**

The establishment of the Livelihoods Working Group (LWG) could be expanded to other areas. There are also partnerships in place with academic and technical partners, such as with Madrid University and the Spanish Development Agency in Shire to provide electricity to the camps. There could be an opportunity here to bring in local universities, increasing collaboration and community engagement. In addition, the nascent phenomena of MBIRR in Ethiopia has the potential to have a strong influence on NRCs' projects in a synergistic capacity, as mobile systems could be used for direct cash supports, accountability, monitoring and information management.

**NRC is regarded as a preferential partner and a lead organization in livelihoods.** The establishment of the Livelihoods Working Group and shifts towards centralised funding systems and consortia models in Ethiopia present NRC a clear opportunity to further evolve into a leader in the implementation of a consortium model.

### **Urban programming**

It can be assumed that a strategic entrance point and further area of expansion for NRC into urban programming through its core competency of basic services – adjusted for the urban context – would provide a similar base from which NRC can build engagement efforts, increase the trust of the governmental actors in urban settings, and, if policy context permits, eventually pursue opportunities for livelihood programming in the future. This shift, coupled with more thorough assessments and an emphasis on coordination, provides NRC with the opportunity to establish itself as a key player in the urban context.

### **There is a concerted lack of knowledge and coordination in the urban context.**

Refugee actors interviewed in Addis Ababa were unaware of each other's activities, and multiple stakeholders noted the lack of information and assessment of needs in other urban areas in Ethiopia.

As such, NRC could position itself strongly by taking the lead on both coordination and assessments throughout urban environments in Ethiopia, which is especially pertinent in light of the increasing urban refugee population.

In terms of programming, basic services have provided NRC a solid foundation from which they have been able to expand into livelihood programming by first addressing the immediate needs of beneficiaries.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The expectation that livelihoods will become a greater focus for donors substantiates the need to strategise and take into consideration NRC's objectives in livelihoods, be that reducing on-going migration and/or tying livelihoods to durable solutions.

### **1. Discussions around durable solutions for refugees in Ethiopia are gaining traction, but the question of how to ensure their sustainability remains unanswered.**


Donors and implementers are keen to transition towards longer-term solutions to address the evolving and increasing needs of beneficiaries in Ethiopia. This makes it especially urgent that a greater focus be placed on refugees' self-reliance – and thus, on refugee livelihoods. However, what has been noted is the lack of **sustainability of refugee livelihoods in the context of Ethiopia**. As a UNHCR representative stated, 'I don't know if you can speak of sustainable livelihoods when it comes to refugees, because the economic environment is not yet enabling to sustainable livelihoods'. In light of the Ethiopian government's reservations to the 1951 Refugee's Convention's articles that protect the right to work, the only livelihood activities for refugees at present are ad hoc and informal.

**While the policy environment is restrictive, perhaps more difficult is the lack of clarity on overall policies pertaining to refugees.** Refugees are entitled to engage in 'informal employment', but the delineation between this and formal employment is not clear to many actors. This makes many refugee organisations hesitant to engage in livelihood activities in the urban context, as they do not have clarity on what is legal to support and what is not. Without a clear understanding, they must err on the side of caution in order to ensure positive relationships with ARRA and the government. In terms of accessing Income Generation Activities (IGAs) inside the camps, government restrictions present fewer barriers and so, while limited, there are employment opportunities within the camp.

Outside of the camp and in the urban setting, however, this policy puts refugees in a confused situation in relation to local integration and self-subsistence. Additionally, livelihood activities in the out of camp setting are highly constrained due to Ethiopian policy, as the government's reservations on Article 17(2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention remove the right of employment of refugees. Without access to formal livelihoods, refugees' employment opportunities are constrained, and thus their integration opportunities are limited as well. Furthermore, refugees face issues such as exploitation in the workplace (one refugee the researchers spoke with was refused payment by an employer) or lower incomes compared to Ethiopians. Thus without national government engagement, local integration and sustainable business opportunities, refugees' self-reliance is greatly compromised.

### **2. There is a more flexible approach to refugee livelihoods at the regional level.**

At the regional level ARRA's approach to enabling refugees access to income generating activities outside of the camp was found to be more flexible, offering alternative access to formal financial institutions. For example, NRC and ARRA are working together to design refugee cooperatives, which will provide access to local banking systems at the behest of ARRA – something which to date has proven impossible for most refugees, who are unable to provide legitimate travel documents as well as collateral. However, questions still remain about the capacity of the refugees to lead in this



process and the political will to participate in such programmes at a national level. Another proposed mechanism to facilitate the transition towards durable solutions, suggested in FGDs and KIIs, was to sell the goods produced by students in the YEP centres and employ graduates as student teachers at a cheaper rate to increase the centres' cost effectiveness. Such solutions are also being explored in the region as an additional way to increase graduates' opportunities to refine their skills.

As a result, NRC is forward thinking in moving to position itself as a strategic player in livelihoods. Its initial basic service response – which was highly in demand due to drought when NRC began work in country and well-executed – set them up in a strong position in Ethiopia, despite being a new actor. From this solid foundation, NRC has been able to expand into livelihood programming both in and outside of camps based on the needs and opportunities presented themselves. At present, however, NRC is limited by the lack of a core strategy to define its approach to livelihoods in Ethiopia. In particular, the lack of a clear objective in regards to outcomes - local integration, reduced secondary movements and/or repatriation - may be considered a key threat to NRC's credibility and ability to measure its impact.

### **3. NRC's responsiveness in implementing integrated livelihoods interventions has placed NRC in a strong position to lead future programming.**

NRC is regarded as a preferential partner in livelihoods. NRC is well regarded by stakeholders, who referred to the organization in interviews as transparent, reactive and willing to adapt to challenges. Despite this, NRC's ad hoc programming set-up, lack of technical expertise and limited knowledge of local supply chains places their positioning in livelihoods at peril.

Donors interviewed regarded NRC as a **preferential partner in livelihoods** citing their transparency, reactivity, and ability to independently raise complimentary funding as key to this perception. For instance, DFID described NRC's work as quality, while SIDA noted that NRC is their primary partner in the region. Notably, donors regarded NRC as a reactive organization with a **hand on the pulse on the ground and able to adapt to challenges**.

In Shire they established the Livelihoods Working Group, which has proved strong in coordination, and this example could be expanded or led in other areas. There are also partnerships in place with academic and technical partners, such as with Madrid University and the Spanish Development Agency in Shire to provide electricity to the camps. There could be the chance here to bring in local universities, increasing collaboration and community engagement. In addition, the nascent phenomena of MBIRR in Ethiopia has the potential to have a strong influence on NRC's projects in a synergistic capacity, as mobile systems could be used for direct cash supports, accountability, monitoring and information management.

Moreover, shifts towards centralised funding systems and consortia models in Ethiopia present NRC a clear **opportunity to further evolve into a leader in the implementation of a consortium models**. NRC has a distinct advantage and can build off its internal regional expertise and operations in other Horn of Africa countries – Somalia specifically, where NRC is part of the Building Resilience in Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) consortium, which spearheaded consortium approaches. Overall, a stronger strategy of resilience for refugees and youth engagement on collaborative funding and operational schemes are steps that will help NRC stay relevant in the shifting aid landscape.



#### 4. Possibilities for replication and scaling of NRC's programming?

Key stakeholders reported NRC's integrated approaches and internal synergies to be replicable in other emergency response and recovery settings throughout Ethiopia. For example, across the board YEP dropout rates were reported low, and certificates are highly valued on the part of the beneficiaries. This demonstrates needs for NRC's programming as well as an interest on the part of beneficiaries.

In Shire, ARRA praised NRC's internal integration of livelihoods programming, including the employment of YEP graduates in their shelter programming and poultry cage welding. These activities were further noted by NRC to be scalable and replicable in other regions. In terms of access to income generating activities, in Shire, **ARRA has begun an initiative to map all employable opportunities for refugees through the TWG** to ensure that the link between livelihoods and employment exist for refugees in the future.

**The lack of a core strategy limited the ability of NRC in practice and as perceived by stakeholders.** Key informants, including NRC staff, revealed they did not feel interventions fully addressed the most appropriate ways in which to intervene in livelihoods. This was highlighted by the lack of emphasis on enhancing adaptation strategies and income flows and beneficiaries' differing means of diversifying income.

There is a clear need for the team to ensure that programming does not outreach its capacity implement. For example, staff cited ambitious timelines and unrealistic programming as key challenges to delivery. 'In past, we have gone into projects with the knowledge we could not deliver within the timeframe presented but did it anyway to meet demands from the local community'.


Alarming, **NRC's livelihoods programmes outside of the camps were deemed largely ineffective due to strict policies, exploitation in the work place and beneficiaries' immediate needs remaining largely basic services.** As highlighted below, this presents NRC the opportunity to better utilize their expertise in basic service provision.

#### 5. Several key gaps were identified which limit NRC's capacity to scale: a learning agenda.

Gaps were particularly relevant at the area level, where the implementation of crosscutting activities were cited to be guided by individual interactions, inhibiting the team's ability to monitor the success of interactions and scale catalyst programming.

In terms of NRC's ability to implement complex livelihoods modalities, key informant interviews with staff **cited the lack of technical expertise within the organization to be a major obstacle and to have the potential to inhibit responsible programming.** This is substantiated by the fact that livelihoods within NRC at a global level is categorized as a crosscutting intervention and is no longer a core competency where such expertise would be employed. While the majority of stakeholders at the area level did not perceive this challenge, implementers in Addis did make note of the potential threat that it presented.

In terms of YEP, the programming is considered vocational by external stakeholders, but internally is still in the education sector. This variance in perspective is partially due to the nature of the YEP programme in Ethiopia in comparison to NRC's YEP programmes globally. YEP in Ethiopia is accelerated (having moved to a six-to-nine month model in 2015), with a greater focus on



vocational skills and a reduced literacy component, as the majority of refugees are already literate. However, despite YEP being categorized as an education programme in NRC, in Ethiopia there is a theoretical integration between livelihoods and education in YEP, considering the emphasis on vocational training that is meant to lead to increased livelihood opportunities.

Moreover, **despite the strength of NRC's programmes, there remain limitations and challenges that will hamper its impact and may consequently impact its ability to scale.** These include delays in monitoring, poor quality toolkits and delayed distribution, and limited teacher capacities due to high turnover. Furthermore, while the TVET collaboration has proven beneficial, the research revealed that **not all eligible youth graduates opted to take the Centre of Competence (CoC) examinations.** In terms of gender, the scaling is further compromised because activities predominately focus on male-oriented vocation training programmes. This must be corrected to ensure female youths have equal opportunities in the programmes.

**Basic services are a strong entry point for NRC to upscale programming.**

Basic services have provided NRC a solid foundation from which they have been able to expand into livelihood programming by first addressing the immediate needs of beneficiaries. In this same vein, it can be assumed that a strategic entrance point and further expansion for NRC into urban programming through its core competency of basic services – adjusted for the urban context – would in theory provide a similar base from which NRC can build engagement efforts, increase the trust of the governmental actors in urban settings, and, if policy context permits, eventually pursue opportunities for livelihood programming in the future. This shift, coupled with more thorough assessments and an emphasis on coordination, provides NRC with the opportunity to establish itself as a key player in the urban context.

The challenges noted in the NRC irrigation project present the team a clear opportunity to learn and innovate. In terms of scaling, the project should do so carefully and exercise strong monitoring protocols, including increased community dialogue and the use of formal land agreements. In this context, special attention should be paid to information sharing to ensure the successful implementation of transformation training.

### **Research Question 1: How is NRC Ethiopia contributing to sustainable and increased livelihoods for refugees?**

Coordination of key actors in the Shire TWG, the implementation of internal integrated programming and complimentary livelihoods programming with IOM.

Key projects: *YEP, Micro-credits, backyard gardening, short-term vocation training (3 months) and child protection (linkages to hosts livelihoods support and WFP vouches)*

ARRA highlighted the impact of NRC's integrated livelihoods programming as a key response replicable for impact elsewhere. These included the employment of YEP graduates in shelter construction and poultry cage making.

NRC staff suggested micro-credit loans, poultry programmes and local government engagement for access to bank accounts would have impact in different regions.

ARRA, having seen the impact of the livelihoods TWG, would like to see NRC replicate its technical working group in other camps in other regions.

### **Research Question 2: What concrete programmatic and coordination opportunities exist?**

NRC is in a unique position to replicate its lead role coordinating refugee livelihood activities in different regions. However, as they are not livelihoods experts, they risk potentially losing this position without a clear strategy and proof of impact.

There is a clear opportunity to coordinate interagency integrated programming. ARRA is on board and sees NRC as a key player in this process. The IOM/NRC Shire project is a good pilot example:

- Mobile innovation opportunities
- Building on local interactions: host/refugee interactions and innovation
- Durable solution strategies

### **Research Question 3: How can NRC link its achievements with targeted government engagement messages?**

Donors want the emphasis on reducing secondary migration. Harnessing the support of donors in engagement for increased livelihoods opportunities for refugees is thus clear.

This can include engagement for

- Integrated programming at the federal level with key stakeholders
- Responsible, integrated livelihoods programming at the federal level
- Refugee access to local financial institutions through the cooperative loop-hole

**Further research needed:** how is education contributing to local integration and irregular migration? NRC must conduct follow-up studies to understand market needs and income generating linkages as well as beneficiary intentions post-graduation.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Ten Recommendations for a Learning Agenda Around Refugee Livelihoods

<b>Long term</b> <b>A RESILIENCE AGENDA</b>	1. Thinking of Resilience: Beyond sustainable livelihoods 2. Humanitarian-Development <i>contiguum</i> approach 3. Aligning resilience with durable solutions
<b>Medium term</b> <b>A LEARNING AGENDA</b>	4. Monitoring and Evaluation: standardising frameworks 5. Sharing lessons learned 6. Coordinating information systems
<b>Short term</b> <b>A COORDINATION AGENDA</b>	7. Government cooperation on community-based interventions 8. Expand LWG and link with food security 9. Increase host community involvement 10. Increase youth-based programming and a graduation program to highlight steps towards livelihoods for young refugees

**Longer term**, the key message of this research is to look beyond sustainable livelihoods (a concept ill-adapted to this context) to build a resilience approach whereby absorption, adaptation and transformation capacities are built at the same time. This means not a continuum but a *contiguum* approach to ensuring that humanitarian actors are given the means to look beyond short-term funding cycles, to multi-year and multi-partner programming. Key in Ethiopia will be to align resilience with durable solutions – whether local integration, return or resettlement – and to minimize displacement episodes and the layering of displacement experiences.

**The contiguous nature of the implementation landscape highlighted unique opportunities to formulate cross-border synergies** between NRC’s YEP programming in Somalia (Dollow) and Ethiopia (Dollo Ado). These include linkages between markets and income generating activities in Dollow and Dollo Ado through the harmonization of vocation skill programming. These programmes must take into account market needs in Ethiopia and Somalia given the donor’s (UNHCR) durable solutions strategy, which is repatriation. In Dollo Ado income generating activities as well as YEP vocation skill training must take into account market needs in Somalia. They currently do not and so do not align with UNHCR’s durable solutions strategy.

## Focusing on a *RESILIENCE* approach and a *THEORY OF CHANGE*

Putting the learning agenda at the heart of the strategy requires an approach to assess the impact of programming on absorption (community, local level), adaptation (individual youth focus), and transformation (durable solutions) capacity. This research presents key indicators currently left out of the measurement landscape. These include:

### INDICATORS to add to the monitoring of NRC's activities (tentative list from this research)

#### Community – Absorption:

- ◆ Satisfaction in project implementation
- ◆ Community engagement in beneficiary selection
- ◆ Localised procurement of goods
- ◆ Inclusion of stakeholder views in project design phase
- ◆ Barriers to the implementation of irrigation programming

#### Youth – Adaptation:

- ◆ Aspirations and perceptions of their future
- ◆ Ability to start-up a livelihoods post-training
- ◆ Cash and supply level as compared to start-up requirements
- ◆ Vocational skills gained/developed
- ◆ Life skills
- ◆ Intentions to further migrate

#### Linkages – Transformation:

- ◆ The purchasing power of beneficiaries
- ◆ Ability to access livelihoods post-graduation
- ◆ Harmonious relationships for social and economic cohesion
- ◆ Cross-fertilization between programmes
- ◆ Cross-fertilization with other stakeholders

## Building a common roadmap

In a longer-term perspective, it is essential to shift from a model where consortia, NGOs, UN agencies, or implementing partners would only be 'service providers, to a new paradigm where donors *and* implementing actors learn from their strategic and programmatic choices, in coordination'. This will be key to a common engagement platform on what *is* feasible in Ethiopia from a livelihoods perspective.

It is necessary to move beyond singular views of 'livelihoods vs. resilience' or 'humanitarian vs. development' to recognise multiple possible goals and values, while drawing clear lines (and bridges) between projects and partners. For instance, it is recommended that NRC prioritises:

- Partnerships with **WFP** on food security and livelihoods, refugees and hosts
- Partnerships with the **World Bank** on community-based responses
- Partnerships with **protection and rights-based focused consortia** members on irregular and secondary migration, child protection and rights of unaccompanied minors.

While supporting food security and nutrition systems leads to stronger adaptive or absorptive capacities, promoting transformative and longer-term durable solutions is needed in this context.

## Creating and Fostering Linkages (Externally)

**Creating a proper coordinating body between stakeholders:** Beyond preventing antagonistic confrontations and building consensus, a coordinating body is necessary to promote coordination and polycentric governance/management/decision-making processes and encourage initiatives like the Livelihood Working Group.

**Supporting implementing agencies at the district/community level to support the whole mainstreaming and integrating programming:** This is where the coordination between donors could also add value – supporting integration capacity at the top level, mid-level and at the district level.

**Developing direct accountability loops with local communities:** Community-based approaches are crucial to ensure ownership, sustainability, conflict prevention and resolution and must be fully involved in all phases of the projects cycle. Donors should ensure that all projects they fund apply strict participatory and accountability principles with local communities.


**Creating and fostering linkages (internally) to integrate livelihoods with YEP, micro loans and food security in an overall resilience approach:** The goal is to take such synergies forward to build a Theory of Change for Resilience in Ethiopia, as part of NRC's growing focus and work on resilience in the East and Horn of Africa region.

Integrated programming will also entail further integration between country offices and with the regional office to work increasingly on cross-border initiatives as a key to unlocking solutions to resilience and durable solutions.

In the **medium term**, identifying scalable programs will allow for better coordination across partners. NRC's mentorship efforts, cooperatives, youth-based vocational training and micro loans are successful programs that, if fine-tuned, can be scaled. The research identified a variety of integrated approaches and innovative synergies for replication and scaling in the short term and longer term. These include:

The personal use of **mobile technology** was widely captured throughout the areas assessed yet reportedly unexplored by actors for the implementation of aid. Despite this, the majority of key informants reported that the use of mobile technologies would increase project accountability and provide the community a more effective means to assess assistance and feedback. Whilst the use of mobile technology in Ethiopia presents challenges such as ensuring connectivity it nonetheless offers NRC an interesting opportunity and potentially simple solution to scale. For example, **mobile accountability mechanisms could be used in the short term** to provide NRC effective feedback systems to mitigate challenges in accountability with beneficiaries.

NRC must build on the gains made by the community through the initiation of **mentorship initiatives**. There is an immediate opportunity for the team to assess graduates' ability to lead skills trainings and to ensure that start-up kits have adequate provisions including training materials to prompt such trainings. This should be linked to the ARRA-led employment mapping and should be taken into consideration in programme planning as an effective means to scale. There is a clear space for mentorship programming across the



camps. Students can be encouraged to train other students, set-up certificate programmes and take on board non-beneficiary youth to train/apprentice them.

**Cooperatives** have been more feasible with host communities due to their access to banking. Other options to improve livelihood activities could entail market access for refugees, which would allow special permission for refugees to sell their goods (under certain constraints) in host community markets. Another option, currently being explored by NRC, IPs and ARRA in Shire is establishing markets within the camps in which YEP graduates would be given space to operate businesses. **The theory is that host communities would utilise these camp markets due to the perceived skills of the refugees and the lack of taxation on goods and services.** However, in the restrictive policy environment, there are major feasibility issues in these respects.

The opportunity to scale vocation skills programming and micro-loans is clear. However, it must 1) be coupled with a comprehensive market assessment lest it lead to market saturation and market completion and 2) be aligned with integrated programming initiatives including:

- Child protection and YEP with unaccompanied minors as a key target group for YEP
- Basic services in urban settings
- Cross border programming in the Horn of Africa and alignment with the durable solutions agenda at the regional level.

In the **short term**, NRC can enable local ownership through government endorsement of programming that centres on refugees through the host community. This will provide a basis to support informal local integration while measuring the economic impact of refugees in Ethiopia at the local level. Combining operational and learning agendas will be the basis for strong government engagement at the regional and national levels. **Enabling local ownership will become a key to building the evidence necessary for longer-term solutions.**

Working with the Ethiopian government will draw a clearer line between the government and implementing NGOs or consortia. Caught between national internal political conflicts or considered as fund managers by local governmental counterparts, consortia and NGOs', *de facto*, play a political role that can put their mandate and projects at risk.

In the long-run, progressively strengthening government participation in the decision-making process will lead to capacity-building, ownership, and information sharing, for a two-way dialogue with clear conditionality and milestones.

Rethinking the on-going strategies and programmes towards transformative capacity should be done with the three aspects of livelihoods to be promoted in parallel.

The analytical framework can be expanded by including other regional and cross-border dimensions. The issues of migration (internally displaced and refugees in neighbouring countries) and durable solutions cannot be excluded from long-term resilience approaches in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Eritrea.

# ANNEX SECTION

## ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

### Qualitative methods and tools

In order to conduct the assessment in Ethiopia, a number of qualitative tools were developed to address the research questions outlined in Section 1. A detail description of each tool can be found in the inception report.

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (9):** A total of nine FGDs were conducted with the five groups identified in the targeting strategy. In order to get comparative qualitative data, a target of five FGDs was set for each location. However, due to the challenges noted four FGDs were conducted in Dollo Ado. The interviews were conducted using open-ended questionnaires to explore the perceptions of targeted sub-segments of the local population with regards to NRC's programming, local socio-economic contexts, youth, education, resilience, social cohesion, service availability and expectations.

As part of the FGD, a **word association exercise**, designed to explore how participants associate specific words that are related to key concepts that underpin NRC programming, was administered. These included:


- Youth (Menlsey, Dhalinyaro)
- Livelihoods (Menebabero, Habnodaleedka)
- Resilience (Akemi Mezai, Adkeysiga) and
- Education (Timeherti, waxbarasho)

In each surveyed location NRC regional offices identified and prepared the focus group discussion teams prior to the fieldwork to reduce challenges of access. The open-ended focus group questionnaire lasted approximately an hour and a half. Below is a breakdown of the FGD structure:

**Table 2 – Focus Group Discussion and word association exercise groups**

<b>Dollo Ado</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beneficiaries</li><li>• Non-beneficiaries</li><li>• Business leaders – refugee community only</li><li>• RCC</li></ul>
<b>Shire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Beneficiaries</li><li>• Non-beneficiaries</li><li>• Business leaders – Refugee and host community</li><li>• RCC</li><li>• Community and local leaders</li></ul>





### **KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (29; 18 Addis, 3 Dollo Ado and 8 in Shire)**

Key informant interviews were conducted at the national and local level with ARRA, UN and donor representatives identified by NRC staff. The representatives provided information on the current systems in each region, the challenges encountered as well as previous and current livelihoods interventions implemented by other actors. Moreover, the interviews outlined relationships and interactions with key stakeholders in the interventions. Staff were also interviewed to determine their level of involvement. A specific target of 18 key informant interviews was set for this research; however, thanks to the availability of stakeholders, a total of 29 KIIs were conducted.

### **BENEFICIARY CASE STUDIES: (5; 2 in Shire, 2 in Dollo Ado and 1 in Addis)**

Case studies were conducted in each fieldwork location with beneficiaries purposefully selected by NRC staff to provide a detailed narrative on the impact of livelihoods and education programming on the beneficiaries, their families and the wider community.

In addition, findings from evaluations and internal reports commissioned, as well as Samuel Hall research conducted for NRC and key migration stakeholders in the region, will be presented and analysed with the findings gathered from the qualitative tools.



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