



IMPLEMENTING A TWO-GENERATION MODEL LEARNING BRIEF | NOVEMBER 2024

INTRODUCTION

With funding from the **Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is leading a consortium of local partners, including (the Madrasa Early Childhood Program (MECP), Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE), Kabarole Resource and Research Centre (KRC), and AfriChild Centre) to implement a **3-year project (Oct 2022 – Sept 2025)** in Uganda titled 'Kulea Watoto,' meaning 'Nurturing Children.'

This initiative employs a distinctive two-generation approach to enhance Early Childhood Development (ECD) for children aged five years and under, alongside improving livelihood opportunities for caregivers from refugee and host communities in the districts of Yumbe, Kyeggyegwa, and Kampala. Kulea Watoto offers sessions for parents and caregivers on responsive caregiving and providing early learning opportunities, improved links to children's services in local communities, livelihoods training, start-up funding for promising business ideas, and more.

The main objectives of the project are:

- Empower households with responsive caregiving and early learning skills
- Improve economic wellbeing and household income generation opportunities
- Improve the availability of quality ECD services
- Advocate for an enabling environment for quality ECD service provision

PROJECT TARGET AND IMPACT

Kulea Watoto aims to reach 6,501 households through its unique two-generation approach. By the end of Year 2 of implementation, 4,921 households (76%) with children aged five or below were reached with the two-generation approach.

Some of our mid-term project successes include:

- **47%** of children are developmentally on track compared to **23%** during the baseline assessment at the beginning of the program¹. This is expected to further improve over the course of the project.
- **86%** of caregivers reported that their children attended ECD programs, participated in a home learning center, or had transitioned to primary school this year, compared to **38%** at baseline.
- **58%** of the client households increased their monthly average income since the baseline period.

¹The goal for the developmental status of children was established by integrating the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) and Caregiver Reported Early Development Index (CREDI) scores since the two approaches target children of different age groups.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION

1. Two-generation programs require contextualization to local communities - including in refugee contexts: Our findings from two years of Kulea Watoto show that implementing a two-generation approach can work in refugee and host community contexts in Uganda. However, programs must be adapted based on the location of the intervention. During implementation, Kulea Watoto partners learned that supporting the children and their primary caregivers yields better outcomes than delivering a program that targets only children or their parents/caregivers. Kulea Watoto's interventions have increased parents' support for their children's learning outcomes – with many of them using proceeds from the livelihood component of the program for ECD. In Uganda, where some refugees live in rural settlements and others live in urban areas such as Kampala, the challenges and opportunities beneficiaries face vary, meaning that service delivery needs to be tailored to their needs. For example: 1) Clients in urban areas such as Kampala require more resources to start or boost businesses due to the higher cost of living compared to rural areas, such as Yumbe or Kyegegwa; 2) Agriculture is a more common source of livelihood in rural settlements compared to urban areas, noting that livelihood initiatives need to meet demands of the local markets; 3) Proximity to ECD centers provides more advantages to urban clients compared to those in the rural areas because there are several ECD centers in the urban; and 4) Refugees in Kampala are highly mobile and therefore more likely to move from one location to another which

requires increased and continuous tracking to monitor the impact of interventions.

2. Two-generation approaches can increase enrollment in ECD centers: After two years of Kulea Watoto's unique combination of ECD and livelihood interventions, we have observed increased demand for ECD services at project sites, leading to increased enrollment at the ECD centers. Parenting sessions help parents have to appreciate the importance of pre-primary education, and now they are motivated to take their children to preschool. Moreover, with improved incomes at the household level, these parents can afford to provide for the needs of the children, including pre-primary education. However, the increase in enrollment creates a need for more school structures and caregivers to accommodate the number of learners. While some parents and communities have come in to support the construction of classrooms for home learning and ECD centers, more resources are still required. We have demonstrated to the government and parents that delivering ECD services using non-formal structures such as home learning centers (HLCs)² is possible. However, these HLCs require support from the government, especially being inspected to ensure that they follow the National ECD Learning Framework and meet the minimum standards. Also, we observe that with the increased enrollment at the centers, the supported parents can enroll their children in any other ECD center of their choice, not necessarily the one supported by the program.

3. Livelihood interventions improve household nutrition: Kulea Watoto's business cash grants have supported clients in starting and expanding their businesses in farm and off-farm activities. Those

² A Home Learning Center is an innovation in response to the high cost of setting up ECD centers. The community members are supported to mobilize resources (such as the play space infrastructure, and locally made play materials) and establish a HLC in one of the selected homes where all the children in the neighborhood can access early learning.

involved in agriculture have grown vegetables and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, which have enough nutrients for children and can generate income for their households. Clients involved in off-farm businesses such as retail shops and restaurants also generate income, enabling them to afford purchase nutritious meals for the home.

4. Providing several options for delivering cash assistance can address the unique needs of children and families.

The Kulea Watoto project has provided several cash assistance options, including seed grants to ECD centers and cash transfers to individual refugees, the host community, and community/parent groups.

- Cash transfers to the ECD centers, which are managed by the Centre Management Committees (CMCs), encourage CMCs to be more accountable and to make strategic decisions for the ECD centers. This includes establishing enterprises for sustainability. They have established businesses – including within the poultry farming and goat rearing sectors. As businesses from the seed funds take shape, it is becoming clear that for the enterprises to break even and start generating sustainable income for the functionality of the ECD centers, sufficient time is required to monitor and provide business mentorship to CMCs. There are also additional costs, such as feeding, and other operation costs, that the ECD centers incur.

- Cash transfers to individuals allow them to select and finance a business of their choice to grow their household income. This has included a variety of businesses that mutually benefit each other, for example, a farmer growing orange sweet potatoes and supplying another client in the bakery

business that uses the potatoes as raw materials. In some cases where the cash transfers have come in hard times, such as a reduction in food assistance, part of the resources have been able to buy food to meet a family's basic needs.

- Cash transfers to parenting groups enable the members to combine their resources to invest together and reduce the risk where an individual can divert resources meant for business for other needs. For example, with 25 members in Zone 3 in Bidibidi, the St. Phillip Group invested their cash in farming (3 acres of cassava, 2 acres of maize, 1 acre of ground nuts) together. The members received the training sessions together, and each member is accountable to the other group members to ensure that they improve the wellbeing of their children and household income.

5. Linkages to financial institutions have promoted financial inclusion.

Kulea Watoto collaborated with Opportunity Bank to deliver clients training in financial literacy and business management. Also, some of these project clients have opened bank accounts in Opportunity Bank to access financial services offered by the bank in Kampala; 520 clients (77M and 443 F) have opened bank accounts and can access their savings or acquire loans from the bank. Parents are able to set objectives to allocate resources for children's education, nutritious food, or other basic needs alongside livelihood aspirations.



6. The household "visioning" technique has facilitated the integration of ECD and livelihoods. Members of each household were supported in developing a vision map that clearly outlines their goals and helps the child develop better. The training on mindset change was crucial for each household to identify opportunities to generate income and intentionally contribute to child wellbeing. For example, this exercise explicitly highlighted how parents' savings in the VSLAs contribute to their children's nutrition, health, and basic needs. The visioning technique is building household autonomy at the most local level and therefore ensuring the sustainability of the program.

7. Two-generation approaches in refugee contexts need more time than other contexts to realize outcomes from the combined ECD and livelihood interventions. For example, adequate time is required for the dosage of the interventions. We conduct mindset change training. However, mindset change is a process that requires time for changes to manifest in households' practices. The clients develop households' visions for between 3 and 5 years to attain significant visible sustainable outcomes. The refugees face challenges such as language differences and delayed processes in formalizing their business, therefore, they would need more time to implement their visions and plans.

8. The consortium partnership has promoted knowledge and capacity sharing and strengthening among international and local partners. Kulea Watoto project brings together several models/methodologies from each consortium partner to create a holistic two-generation approach. This includes LABE's home learning approach, MECP's continuous professional development for educators and home visits, IRC's play-based learning approaches, and KRC's visioning exercise to promote household planning and Care Groups. As the research and learning partner, AfriChild provides expertise in documenting learning from implementing the models. Consortium partners have strengthened each other's capacity and created room for knowledge exchange within the consortium. For example, MECP learned from the IRC's approach of using supervised playgroups, and now they are implementing them in Kampala. LABE also picked up cooking demonstrations from KRC. The technique of using Home Learning Centers introduced by LABE has been appreciated by IRC because it involves community mobilization of resources and IRC will consider using it in other ECD programs. Strengthening capacity between the partners is a continuous process.

9. Integrating services increases the reach, efficiency, and outcomes for clients. At the community level, working with the Village Health Teams (VHTs) has significantly increased Kulea Watoto's impact, helping us reach targeted beneficiaries and the broader community. VHTs are trained as trainers on ECD and livelihood concepts. Under this approach, the VHTs can follow up and guide the implementation of household improvement plans by delivering both ECD and livelihoods sessions in an integrated manner in each household. Their training covers topics under the nurturing care framework (such as positive parenting, early learning, nutrition, time management, savings for child education, etc.). This highlights the value of value of working with established government structures and frameworks, demonstrating that such partnerships can substantially enhance the reach and impact of the project, ultimately contributing

children's healthy growth and development in the wider community.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE TWO-GENERATION MODEL

- **ECD centers have limited resources to support school feeding**, affecting children's learning. Seed grants for the ECD centers have been prioritized for infrastructure, paying caregivers, and some selected enterprises that will generate sustainable income in the long run. This still leaves a gap in school feeding as children cannot effectively learn because of hunger and this sometimes leads to absenteeism.
- **Cash grants to individual clients were diverted to support basic needs.** Cash grants were given at the time when the World Food Programme (WFP) reduced funding for food assistance. Some clients had to use part of the cash received or money from their businesses for other needs, especially buying food.
- **Payment for caregivers/ ECD teachers remains a challenge.** The government has not yet allocated resources to pay pre-primary teachers, and this explains why child/student to caregiver/teacher ratios are so high. The ECD centers have an average learner to teacher ratio of 50:1 compared to the recommended minimum ratio of 25:1. To address this challenge, the Kulea Watoto team is working with partners to advocate for financing pre-primary education and strengthening CMCs to raise funds to pay teachers.
- **Lack of sufficient land for agriculture limits clients' ability to earn a sustainable livelihood to support their families.** Most farmers in the refugee settlements do not have access to enough land for farming. Working with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), refugees have been encouraged to hire land for farming from the nationals, while others acquired more land from OPM.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE IMPLEMENTORS, DONORS AND POLICYMAKERS

- **Collaborate with refugee-led organizations (RLOs) to design and implement the two-generation model.** RLOs understand the needs of refugees and have a nuanced understanding of the cultural contexts and norms of the refugee communities. They are also uniquely positioned to build trust with client populations, leading to quicker and more sustainable gains in behavioral change and promoting ownership of the interventions.
- **Collaborate with the government to adopt the two-generation approach in national programming.** This involves system strengthening and capacity building on two-generation programming at the different levels of government. As a result, government livelihood programs such as the Parish Development Model could explicitly integrate ECD interventions for households with children. Also, the strategic policy engagements with the government should continue to foster an enabling environment for providing ECD services, for example, reviewing legal and policy frameworks to provide for government financing for pre-primary education.



- **Consider having longer project timelines for implementing two-generation models.** For example, the Kulea Watoto project, which is 3 years, would yield more outcomes if extended to at least 6 years. This would provide more time to realize the impact of the combined ECD and livelihood interventions. A greater transformation in the household's wellbeing and children's outcomes can be realized in projects with a longer life span.
- **Scale the two-generation model through further local partnerships.** Learnings from the implementation of Kulea Watoto, support the case for expansion of the two-generation approach in other refugee-hosting areas of Uganda. There are over 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda of which 79% are women and children. In partnership with local implementing organizations and the private sector, this model could contribute greatly to meeting the needs of other refugees and host community members throughout the country.
- **Conduct a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) for Kulea Watoto.** Kulea Watoto is currently conducting a quasi-experimental study to assess the outcomes of the Kulea Watoto approach. However, a more rigorous study (such as an RCT) could test the model in different contexts and allow us to refine the model further to be as effective as possible. The evidence will also contribute to advocacy for support of two-generation programs by national governments, and uptake by other implementing organizations.





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