

PROJECT MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

In partnership with



Table of Contents

List of Tables	Page 4
List of Figures	Page 4
Abbreviations	Page 5
Executive Summary	Page 6
1.0 Introduction and Background	
1.1 Purpose of the Midline Assessment	Page 9
2.0 Evaluation Methodology	
2.1 Evaluation Design	Page 11
2.2 Study Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Methods	Page 11
2.3 Data Collection Methods and Tools	Page 11
2.4 Data Quality Assurance Plan	Page 12
2.5 Data Analysis and Presentation	Page 13
2.6 Limitations of the Evaluation	Page 13
3.0 Presentation of Findings	
3.1 Progress on Project Outcomes	Page 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.1.1 School Readiness and Development Outcomes• 3.1.2 Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI)• 3.1.3 Caregiver Reported Early Development Instruments (CREDI)	
3.2 Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning Skills	Page 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3.2.1 Caregiver Capacity Building and Awareness Sessions	

Table of Contents

3.3.3 Access to Essential ECD Services	Page 21
• 3.3.1 Challenges Hindering Access to Quality ECD Services	
3.2 Transition of Children to Primary School	
3.4 Economic Wellbeing and Household Income Generation	Page 24
• 3.4.1 Agricultural Yields and Livestock Productivity	
• 3.4.2 Challenges in Market Accessibility	
• 3.4.3 Opportunities for Livelihood Enhancement	
3.5 Household Income Improvement	Page 30
• 3.5.1 Business Activity Challenges	
3.6 Quality of ECD Services in Homes and Centers	Page 33
• 3.6.1 Safe and Conducive Learning Environments	
3.7 Enabling Policy Environment for Quality ECD and Livelihoods	Page 35
• 3.7.1 Dissemination and Implementation of NIECD Policy	
• 3.7.2 Approval of Early Childhood Care and Education Policy	
• 3.7.3 Implementation of Parish Development Model	
• 3.7.4 Policy Implementation Challenges	
4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations	
4.1 Conclusion	Page 37
• 4.1.1 Relationship Among Outcome Areas and Two-Generation Approach	
4.2 Recommendations	Page 38

Abbreviations

CDO : Community Development Officer

CMC : Center management committees

CREDI : Caregiver Reported Early Development
Instruments

ECCE : Early childhood care and education

ECD : Early Childhood Development

ERD : Economic Recovery and Development

FGD : Focus Group Discussions

IGA. : Income Generating Activity

IPTT :Indicator Performance Tracking Table

IRC :International Rescue Committee

KFCP : Key Family Care practices

MoE : Ministry of Education.

NIECD : National Integrated Early Childhood
Development

PDM : Parish Development Model,

UWEP : Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Program

Executive Summary

Project Background

In collaboration with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and a consortium of local partners who are the Madrasa Early Childhood Program, Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE), Kabarole Resource and Research Centre, and AfriChild Centre are implementing the Kulea Watoto project, meaning "nurturing children" in Swahili. This initiative employs a distinctive two-generation approach aimed at enhancing Early Childhood Development (ECD) for children aged five and under, alongside improving livelihood opportunities through economic recovery and development (ERD) for caregivers from both refugee and host communities.

The project recognizes that children's healthy development is closely linked to their households' economic conditions and as such strives to improve household livelihoods to enable them to support children's development needs including health, nutrition, safety and learning opportunities. The project focuses on four core areas that include empowering caregivers with early learning skills, enhancing economic well-being, improving ECD service availability and advocating for a supportive environment for quality ECD services. Following the baseline evaluation, a mid-term evaluation was conducted to assess progress towards achieving project outcomes with insights intended to improve implementation strategies as the project enters its final year. This report narrates key progress updates from the midline evaluation conducted in September 2024 in comparison with the baseline conducted in August 2023.

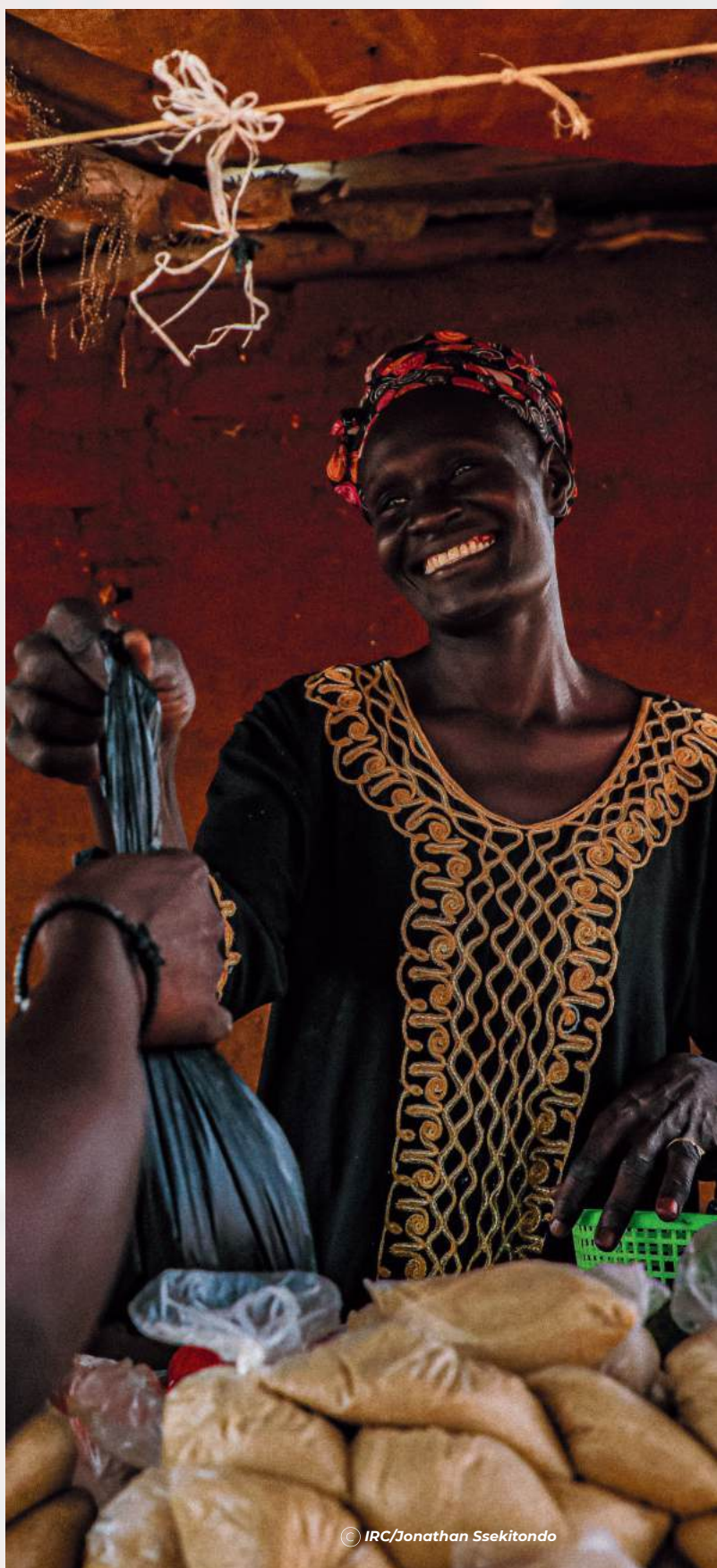
The Midline assessment sought to measure the impact of project activities in improving children's development outcomes and economic wellbeing among target households while providing progress of all project performance indicators.

Methodology

The mid-term evaluation utilized a mixed approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to provide a thorough analysis of the project's progress. A total of 1,012 randomly selected respondents were reached from the host and refugee communities across the 3 districts. The survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from caregivers while qualitative data was collected through open ended questions from other stakeholders including project staff, policy makers, local leaders and district technical persons among others.

Demographics of Respondents

Demographic analysis showed that majority of respondents were female (75%) with majority from the refugee community (68%). Marital status showed that most were married (70.4%) while small scale farming was the primary occupation most respondents (53%), particularly in the rural district of Yumbe and Kyegegwa while off-farm business activities were dominant among households in Kampala (71%). Meanwhile majority of the project supported children were above 36 months of age (72%).



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Summary of Key Findings

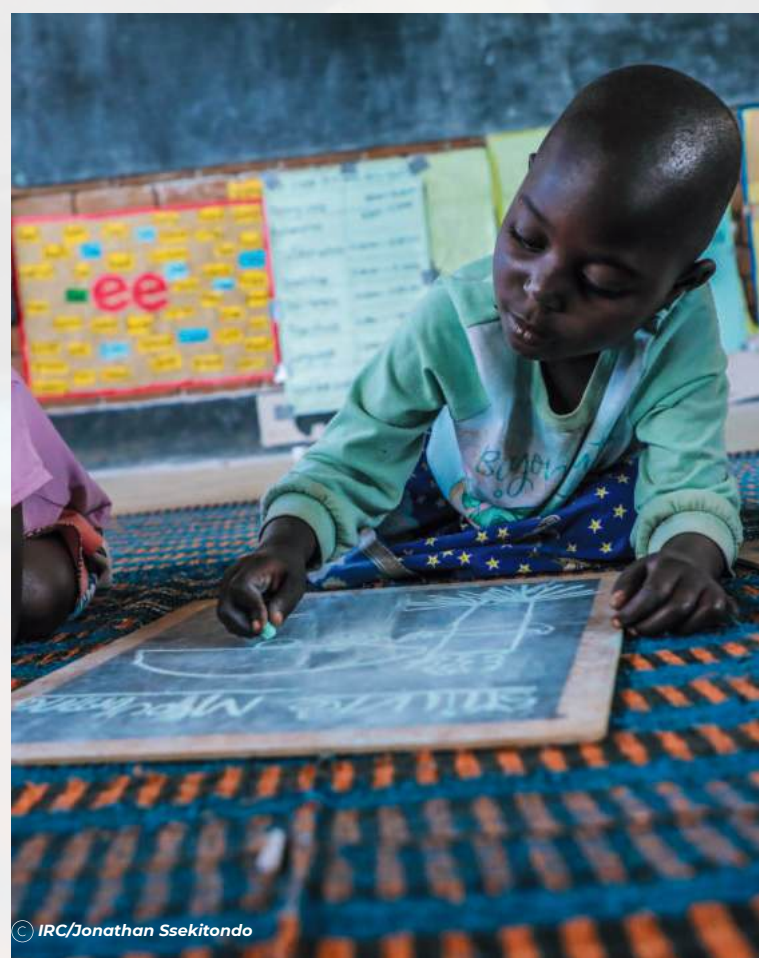
Overall Objective: Improved well-being and school readiness for children aged 0-5 years in refugee and host communities in Yumbe, Kyegegwa and Kampala.

The overall objective of the project focuses on improving children's well-being and school readiness through addressing challenges including but not limited to access to early learning, healthcare, nutrition and social services to ensure that children enter school equipped with the necessary physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills to thrive. To establish progress on this component, the survey employed two (2) standard ECD tests i.e. ECDI and CREDI that were used to establish the proportion of children who were developmentally on track along the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical outcomes. Overall, results indicated that 47% of assessed children were developmentally on track, demonstrating a statistically significant improvement from the baseline of 23%.

Objective 1: Empower Households with Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning Skills in homes and at group level

Responsive caregiving and play-based early learning knowledge levels among caregivers.

Findings revealed that caregivers knowledge levels, skills and attitude towards responsive caregiving increased from 68% at baseline to 78% at midterm. Statistically, analysis showed a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 significance level implying that the improvement is statistically significant thus demonstrating impact of parenting sessions.



Objective 2: Improve Economic Wellbeing and Household Income Generation Opportunities



Agricultural yield and livestock productivity.

Findings indicated a rise in crop and livestock production among households from 34% at baseline (August 2023) to 56% at midline (Sept 2024) with Yumbe experiencing the highest increase from 25% compared to Kyegegwa's 16%. This progress is largely attributed to intensive training on climate-smart agriculture, livestock management and modern farming techniques in collaboration with the district local governments. Other factors include fertile land and favorable rainfall conditions.

Change in Household Income: The survey indicated that 58% of the client households experienced an increase in their monthly household average incomes from baseline which highlights the positive impact of ERD interventions towards the economic well-being for households. More so, the midterm average household income was established at UGX 396,705(approx. \$107) showing a significant increase of 57 percentage points from the baseline average of UGX 252,133(approx. \$68).

Objective 3: Improved availability of quality ECCD services in homes and centers

Access to safe and conducive care or learning environments among children. Overall findings indicated a statistically significant improvement in the percentage of young children accessing safe and conducive learning environment from 50% at baseline to 86% at midterm. Results further showed that caregivers in Kampala were more engaged in ensuring that their children stay in a safe and conducive environment for their healthy development (80%) compared to Yumbe (64%) and Kyegegwa (67%).

Objective 4: An Enabling legal and policy environment for quality ECCD service provision created.

Policy adoption by government to promote ECD learning. Findings revealed that advocacy engagements with key stakeholders including policymakers and implementing resulted in the adoption of the NIECD policy by government to regulate provision of quality ECD services in the country. However, despite these efforts and government's commitment towards the implementation of the policy, challenges such as limited resources, shortage of qualified caregivers, poor coordination and cultural norms among others continue to affect its smooth implementation.

Conclusion

The midline evaluation reveals significant success in both child development outcomes and economic well-being of targeted households. Overall, findings across all objectives show that when caregivers are empowered through improved knowledge and skills, access to services related to ECD and economic support, children are more likely to experience improved developmental outcomes as demonstrated by 47% of children assessed being developmentally on track compared to 23% at baseline. This demonstrates progress in promoting school readiness and holistic development (physical, cognitive, emotional and social).

Recommendations

- The project ERD team should organize additional training sessions for households focused on financial literacy, emphasizing the importance of effectively managing improved incomes to support children's education needs.
- The project should extend some financial contribution to selected sub-counties and target districts to supplement government resource allocations to realize the implementation of the NIECD policy.
- The ECD team should conduct an assessment to identify gaps in meeting quality standards or requirements for licensing of ECD centers. This will help them address these gaps and expedite the process of securing their operational licenses from the district.
- The project MEAL team should conduct a follow-up survey to assess whether the financial assistance provided to the 6% of households who did not identify with any economic activity was utilized effectively.

1.0 Introduction and Background

Kulea Watoto - meaning “*nurturing children*” in Swahili is a project that aims to improve access to quality early childhood care and development for children aged 5 and under in refugee and host communities in Uganda across Yumbe, Kyegegwa and Kampala. The project uses a unique two-generation approach that focuses on improving the developmental outcomes of children and the economic well-being of their caregivers. The approach recognizes that children’s healthy development and growth is greatly influenced by the economic status of their households and as such improving livelihoods would translate into improved household capacity to nurture and care for children’s developmental needs.

The project is implemented in the districts of Kampala, Kyegegwa and Yumbe by a consortium of partners that include Madrasa Early Childhood Program, Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE), Kabarole Resource and Research Centre, AfriChild Centre and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

In order to ensure the realization of the above, Kulea Watoto has supported households through different interventions in sustainable, community driven solutions that include providing responsive caregiving support (mainly focusing on ECD support and capacity building of caregivers) and income generation opportunities including cash start-up and skills development.

In this endeavor, the project focuses on 4 outcome areas that include;

1. Households empowered with responsive caregiving and early learning skills
2. Economic well-being and household income Generation Opportunities improved
3. Accessibility to quality ECCD services Improved
4. Enabling the environment for quality ECCD service provision strengthened



1.1 Purpose of the Midline Assessment

The midline survey focused on measuring impact of project interventions while providing progress on project indicators. Specifically, the evaluation was intended to;

- Determine the change in project indicators since the baseline evaluation.
- Generate recommendations that would inform the third phase of project implementation.

Table 1: Project Outcome Areas

Outcome	Indicator
Impact: Improved well-being and school readiness for children aged 0-5 years in refugee and host communities in Yumbe, Kyegegwa and Kampala.	Impact: Improved well-being and school readiness for children aged 0-5 years in refugee and host communities in Yumbe, Kyegegwa and Kampala.
Objective1: Empower Households with Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning Skills in homes and at group level	1.1: % of caregivers and family members of children 0-3 have increased knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions that promote inclusive, responsive caregiving and play-based early learning behaviors
Objective 2: Improve Economic Wellbeing and Household Income Generation Opportunities	2.1: % of Households reporting increased agricultural yields of focused crops or productivity of livestock in selected value chains
	2.2: % of Surveyed client households whose monthly household incomes increased from baseline to endline
Objective 3: Improved availability of quality ECCD services in homes and centers	3.1: % of young children participating in the program who access safe, and conducive care or learning environments

2.0 Evaluation Methodology

2.1. Evaluation Design

The evaluation combined both qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection. Quantitative data collection approaches mainly included administering of a survey questionnaire to caregivers helped to generate quantitative data to inform indicator progress while qualitative methods that included Key informant interviews with key stakeholders/actors and Focus group discussions with caregivers helped to gather diverse perspectives to explain variances and trends in the quantitative analysis. The mixed approach also helped to facilitate triangulation of findings thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the results in drawing meaningful conclusions.

2.2.1. Study population, sample size and sampling methods

The mid-term evaluation adhered to the established sampling procedures, sample size and target respondents from the baseline assessment and this was aimed at ensuring that findings are reliable enough to make valid comparisons and conclusions about changes observed. A total of 1,028 respondents assessed at baseline

were targeted for the midterm evaluation, with 372 from Yumbe, 361 from Kyegegwa and 295 from Kampala. However, 1,012 respondents were ultimately reached with 265 new respondents included to replace those who could not be traced or missed their interview appointments for various reasons. The replacements were randomly selected from clients who had also benefited from project interventions, especially cohort 1 to ensure that their inclusion did not skew or bias findings. This approach allowed for continuity in data collection while maintaining the integrity of the evaluation process.

Key informants on the other hand were purposely selected and included officials from the Ministry of Education, Local government, implementing partners, community development officers, extension officers and community leaders among others.

Sample Size

1,012

respondents were ultimately reached with 265 new respondents included to replace those who could not be traced or missed their interview appointments for various reasons.

2.2.2. Data collection methods and tools

Data collection for the evaluation was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the project impact. The primary tools employed included Structured survey, Key informant Interview guides and Focus Group Discussion guides which were adopted from the baseline and reviewed to ensure consistency and relevance to the midterm evaluation.



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Structured Survey: This method was mainly used to collect quantitative data from caregivers. Questionnaires were administered to collect quantitative data on key indicators such as ECD development outcomes, access to quality ECD services and livelihood. This method allowed for statistical analysis and comparison of baseline and midterm results.

Key Informant Interviews: This method involved the use of interviews guides to collect qualitative insights into their experiences with the project and the sectors of ERD and ECD programing. The interviews provided an opportunity to explore individual experiences, system related challenges and personal perceptions of the project effectiveness. In total, 21 KIIs were conducted.

Table 2: Summary of Key Informants interviewed

Title of KII	Number
Senior Education Officer, Kyegegwa district	1
Community development officers	4
ECD Champion	2
Project Managers	4
Education Officer in charge of Special Needs, Ministry of Local Government	1
Education Officer in charge of Special Needs, Ministry of Local Government	2
Extension worker	1
Senior probation officer	2
Officer Basic Education, Ministry of Education.	1
ECD focal person, Ministry of Local Government	1
ECD Focal Person, Ministry of Gender	1
FCA, ECD focal person	1
Total	21

Focus Group Discussions: To facilitate discussion and gather diverse perspectives, focus groups were organized with participants from each location. FGD sessions were held within both the refugee and host communities targeting male and female caregivers. This method encouraged interaction and allowed respondents to share their experiences and observations in line with project activities which provided a richer context to the quantitative data. 12 FGDs were conducted across the 3 locations.

Document review: This mainly involved the review of the project proposal and baseline report to enable the alignment of findings to the different themes and outcome areas to establish any changes resulting from project implementation. These provided a contextual framework for interpreting qualitative and quantitative data ensuring that conclusions drawn are grounded in the project design and intended outcomes.

2.2.3. Data quality assurance plan

Several quality assurance measures were deployed during the design and delivery of the evaluation. These included:

- Review and validation of draft data collection tools by project officers and MEAL team to ensure relevance to the survey objectives and data needs.
- Use of smartphones (Commcare application) during data collection by programming the survey tool in such a way that necessary skips and mandatory questions are included to minimize non-response/missing cases.
- Securing informed and voluntary consent from respondents before participating in data collection, this made it possible to collect unbiased data.
- Deployment of vigorously trained enumerators who were equipped with proper knowledge and skills to use the data collection tools including building rapport with respondents.
- Tools were pretested prior to actual data collection to ensure consistency and all programming errors were resolved.
- Data collected was downloaded from Commcare daily to check for any quality issues and feedback discussed with enumerators every morning before commencement of data collection for that day.

2.2.3. Data quality assurance plan

Quantitative data collected from caregiver surveys was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics aligned with key variables of interest that directly contribute to indicator progress values. For Early Childhood Development (ECD) indicators, the Caregiver Reported Early Development Instruments (CREDI) Scoring app was utilized to generate CREDI scores which data was then exported to Excel for further analysis. Data was disaggregated by district, gender and residential status of respondents and presented using graphs, frequency tables and percentages.

In addition, SPSS was used to conduct Z-tests for proportions to evaluate whether there was a statistically significant difference between the baseline and mid-term indicator values, as data from both surveys was collected from the same participants. The null hypothesis (H_0) assumed that there was no significant difference between the baseline and mid-term values while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposed that a significant difference existed. The tests were performed for each indicator and p-values obtained to assess the results. If the p-value was less than 0.05 (the 5% significance level), the null hypothesis was rejected indicating that the difference between the baseline and mid-term indicator values was statistically significant.

i.e.

$H_0: P_0 \neq P_1,$

$H_1: P_0 = P_1,$

where P_0 is the baseline indicator value and P_1 is the midline indicator value.

On the other hand, the qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs was transcribed and coded into themes. This provided deeper insights into the respondents' experiences which complemented the quantitative findings. An Excel template was designed and used to summarize qualitative findings across various themes, helping to explain some aspects of the quantitative analysis while also offering insights into other dimensions of the evaluation.

2.2. Limitations of the evaluation

The main limitation across all locations was the high mobility of respondents, which significantly hindered efforts to reach some participants for interviews. Additionally, many clients engaged in retail business activities had busy schedules leading to frequent interruptions during interviews as they attended to customers. This prolonged interview durations especially in Kampala. However, respondents who could not be reached despite all efforts were replaced with clients who had been equally involved in the intervention at baseline.

3.0. Presentation of findings

This section presents findings from the evaluation highlighting progress made towards achieving project outcomes and targets. It outlines key achievements, lessons learned and other aspects that demonstrate the impact of project interventions.

Table 2: Summary of Key Informants Interviewed

Demographics	Kampala	Kyegegwa	Yumbe	Overall
#Respondents reached	288	353	371	1,012
	28%	35%	37%	100%
Gender				
Female	81.20%	60.30%	85.20%	75.40%
Male	18.80%	39.70%	14.80%	24.60%
Nationality				
Host	37.30%	27.80%	32.10%	32.00%
Refugee	62.70%	72.20%	67.90%	68.00%
Marital status				
Divorced/separated	3.50%	11.60%	13.70%	10.10%
Married	54.40%	73.90%	79.50%	70.40%
Single	39.70%	8.50%	0.80%	14.50%
Widow/widower	2.40%	5.90%	5.90%	4.90%
Household main occupation				
Casual	11.10%	4.80%	2.40%	5.70%
Farm worker	0.70%	2.50%	1.60%	1.70%
Farming	0.30%	70.80%	76.00%	52.70%
Fishing	0.00%	0.30%	0.00%	0.10%
Housekeeping	1.00%	0.60%	0.30%	0.60%
Salaried Employment	5.90%	2.50%	0.80%	2.90%
Self-employed/off-farm	70.70%	10.20%	5.70%	25.70%
None	7.00%	4.50%	6.70%	6.00%
Other	3.10%	3.70%	6.50%	4.50%
Reference child Age Group (Months)				
0 - 5	0.70%	8.50%	0.50%	3.40%
Jun 11, 2025	0.00%	2.30%	0.00%	0.80%
Dec 17, 2025	3.80%	0.80%	1.90%	2.10%
18 - 23	6.60%	1.40%	1.90%	3.10%
24 - 29	15.30%	7.60%	8.90%	10.30%
30 - 36	5.90%	7.90%	11.10%	8.50%
Above 36	67.60%	71.40%	75.70%	71.90%

- Most respondents were refugee (68%) which is consistent with the project design
- 75% were female
- Yumbe had the largest share of respondents because of its client population size – 37%
- Most clients across all locations were married – 70%
- In Kyegegwa and Yumbe districts, majority of households identified farming as their primary occupation with 71% and 76% respectively engaged in agricultural activities. In Kampala however, 71% were self-employed.
- Analysis further shows that most of the project targeted children in the households were above 3 years across all locations

From the demographic analysis, it can be noted that 6% of households did not report being engaged in any economic or income-generating activities which highlights the need for follow-up to assess whether the financial assistance provided to them was utilized effectively or to identify any barriers that might be hindering their participation in economic activities.

3.1. Progress on project outcomes

3.1.1 School readiness and development outcomes

Goal: Improved well-being and school readiness for children aged 0-5 years in refugee and host communities in Yumbe, Kyegegwa and Kampala

Overall, the Kulea Watoto project aims to enhance the wellbeing of children by implementing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) activities that integrate essential services including health, education, nutrition and protection. This integration is crucial for creating a holistic support system that nurtures and encourages the development of children aged five (05) and under.

To measure progress on the outcome, the result framework focuses on children's socio-emotional, cognitive and physical development outcomes as measured through a standard ECD assessment discussed below;

The assessment combines 2 components of the standard ECD assessment tools i.e: the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) and the Caregiver Reported Early Development Instruments (CREDI). ECDI was used to establish development outcomes in children aged 3 to 5 years while CREDI on the other hand was used to assess children aged 0 to 35 months.

3.1.1.2 The Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI)

A child's experiences in the early years are linked to educational achievement later in life as well as the development of skills, capabilities and productivity in adulthood (UNICEF, 2023). The ECDI measures the proportion of children aged 24 to 59 months who are developmentally on track in 4 early development domains of literacy-numeracy, physical, social emotional and approaches to learning. Mothers or primary caregivers were asked 20 questions about their children's behavior, skills and knowledge which responses were rated and analyzed to establish children's development levels. A child was considered to have passed if their scores were consistently above the mean in each domain.

Table 4:ECDI scores disaggregated by residency status

		National	Refugee	Total
	N	234	493	727
Domains	Physical pass			
	count	141	267	408
	%age	60%	54%	56%
	Learning pass			
	count	153	312	465
	%age	65%	63%	64%
	Literacy pass			
	count	77	173	250
	%age	33%	35%	34%
	Numeracy			
	count	163	337	500
	%age	70%	68%	69%
	Socio emotional			
	count	112	245	357
	%age	48%	50%	49%
ECDI Total	Overall pass			
	count	94	176	270
	%age	40%	36%	37%

The Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) assessment results for 727 children, comprising 234 National children and 493 Refugee children as presented in table 4 above highlights significant trends across various developmental domains with no significant disparities between the two groups. Findings show significant gaps in children's literacy and socio-emotional outcomes with scores of 34% and 49% respectively. On the other hand, the numeracy scores show a relatively stronger performance with a pass rate of 69%. Overall, the ECDI score was established at 37% which is far below average.

This low overall pass rate shows significant developmental challenges across multiple domains, especially literacy. However, compared to the baseline overall score of 5%, the midterm score indicates a significant improvement in children's development.

Table 5: ECDI scores disaggregated by districts

		Kampala	Kyegegwa	Yumbe	Overall
		194	252	281	727
Domains	Physical pass				
	count	117	141	150	408
	%age	60%	56%	53%	56%
	Learning pass				
	count	149	150	166	465
	%age	77%	60%	59%	64%
	Literacy pass				
	count	107	47	96	250
	%age	55%	19%	34%	34%
	Numeracy				
	count	144	166	190	500
	%age	74%	66%	68%	69%
	Socio emotional				
	count	114	111	132	357
	%age	59%	44%	47%	49%
ECDI Total	Overall pass				
	count	90	76	104	270
	%age	46%	30%	37%	37%

The ECDI scores reveal significant differences in developmental outcomes across districts. Kampala leads with a mid-term score of 46%, a significant increase from baseline score of 7%. Yumbe follows with a mid-term score of 37% up from 1% at baseline while indicating Kyegegwa improved by 24%. Overall, the score across all districts rose from 5% at baseline to 37% at mid-term demonstrating significant increase children's development. Kampala's strong performance suggests effective support and learning opportunities for children while Kyegegwa and Yumbe need targeted interventions to enhance developmental outcomes and address their specific needs.

3.1.1.3. The Caregiver Reported Early Development Instruments (CREDI)

CREDI was used to assess children aged 0 to 35 months in four development areas: Cognitive, Language, Motor development and Socio-emotional domains. The assessment also exclusively relies on caregiver reports and observations. A child is considered to have passed if their scores were consistently above the mean in each domain. The assessment includes a short set of questions across the domains typically ranging from 2 to 5 questions. To be considered at a specific level of development, caregivers must correctly answer at least half of the questions in that domain. A total of 285 children (91 Nationals, 194 Refugees) were assessed and table 3 below presents findings from the assessment.

Table 6:CREDI outcomes disaggregated by residency status

Domains (%)	National		Refugee		Overall	
	Baseline	Mid-term	Baseline	Mid-term	Baseline	Mid-term
Cognitive pass	44%	73%	40%	65%	42%	67%
Language pass	46%	67%	42%	62%	43%	64%
Motor pass	45%	74%	40%	65%	42%	68%
Socio emotional	49%	75%	44%	64%	46%	68%
Overall	17%	77%	18%	70%	18%	72%

Unlike the ECDI scores, children exhibited strong development levels under the different CREDI domains registering scores that were above average across all categories. However, children from the host community generally registered slightly higher scores compared to the refugees as presented above. Overall, CREDI performance was established at 72% demonstrating great improvement from 18% at baseline. While both groups showed relatively strong overall development, national children consistently outperformed refugee children across all domains, especially in socio-emotional and motor development.

Table 7:CREDI outcomes disaggregated by district

	Kampala		Yumbe		Kyegegwa		Overall	
Domains (%)	Base-line	Mid-term	Base-line	Mid-term	Base-line	Mid-term	Base-line	Mid-term
Cognitive pass	50%	80%	38%	68%	39%	55%	42%	67%
Language pass	52%	70%	41%	68%	38%	53%	43%	64%
Motor pass	50%	81%	38%	69%	39%	55%	42%	68%
Socio emotional	57%	82%	41%	68%	43%	54%	46%	68%
Overall	18%	82%	21%	78%	13%	57%	18%	72%

In terms of locations, Kampala continued to perform better than other locations with 82% of the children assessed passing the mid-term test. This was followed by Yumbe with 78% while performance in Kyegegwa was slightly above average at 57%. Compared to baseline, all locations registered a significant increase in overall performance. i.e. 82% vs 18%, 78% vs 21% and 57% vs 13% in Kampala, Yumbe and Kyegegwa respectively.

Outcome 1.0: % of young children aged 0-5 that are developmentally "on-track" according to a standard ECD assessment measuring social-emotional, cognitive, and physical outcomes.

The overall developmental status of children was established by integrating ECDI and CREDI scores since the 2 approaches target children of different age groups. Combining findings allowed for a comprehensive assessment of children's development across the different domains of cognitive, social-emotional, motor skills and language.

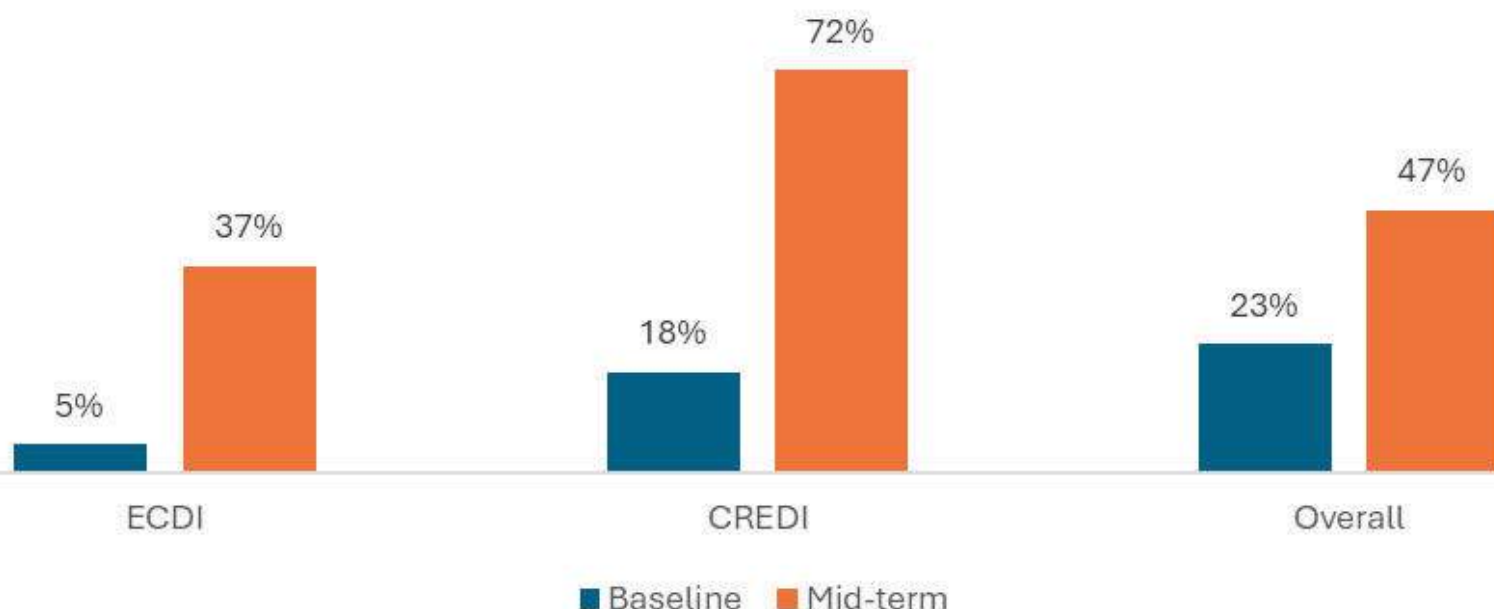
Table 8 below provides an overview of the overall ECD outcomes for children in the Kampala, Kyegegwa and Yumbe districts. Overall, Kampala continued to show the highest performance with 58% while Kyegegwa continued to record the lowest scores. The combined mid-term performance from the two tests indicates an overall score of 47% from 23% at baseline. Although the overall score remains below average, the mid-term performance reflects an improvement of more than 100% in indicator performance.

Table 7:CREDI outcomes disaggregated by district

Standard ECD test scores	Units	Kampala	Kyegegwa	Yumbe	Total
CREDI sample		93	101	91	285
ECDI sample		194	252	281	727
Overall sample		287	353	372	1,012
ECDI Overall pass	count	90	76	104	270
	%age	46%	30%	37%	37%
CREDI overall pass	count	76	58	71	205
	%age	82%	57%	78%	72%
Overall combined pass (ECDI + CREDI)	count	166	134	175	475
	%age	58%	38%	47%	47%

Further statistical analysis reveals a p-value of 0.0000 which suggests that the improvement in performance from baseline to mid-term is statistically significant since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level. These findings suggest that caregivers are providing responsive care, nutrition, nurturing and a safer environment which have contributed to children's growth and development.

Figure 1: Percentage of young children aged 0-5 that are developmentally "on-track" according to a standard ECD assessment.



3.2. Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning Skills among households

Objective1: Empower Households with Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning Skills in homes and at group level

This component is aimed at empowering caregivers of children aged 0-3 (and their family members) with knowledge and skills to offer inclusive, responsive caregiving and play-based early learning at home. According to the project Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), a total of 7,852 caregivers had been reached by September 2024 with different engagements that included among others training on Key Family Care practices (KFCP), health and nutrition good practices, home visits and ECD services.

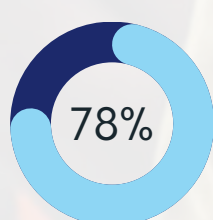
3.2.1. Caregiver capacity building and awareness sessions

The midterm evaluation among other outcomes followed up on the impact of parenting sessions conducted with caregivers and other members of their households. According to the ECD project manager from Kyaka II, these engagements are intended to improve caregivers confidence, knowledge, skills and attitudes towards providing a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes the healthy development of children.

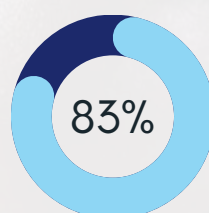
Outcome 1.1: Percentage age of caregivers and family members of children 0-3 have increased knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions that promote inclusive, responsive caregiving and play-based early learning behaviors

Indicator progress was assessed by considering the following practices among households in the past one month from the time of the survey.

- Households that engaged children in play-based learning activities such as reading books, storytelling, drawing and naming objects among others.
- Caregivers and family members who did not spank or slap children with their bare hands.
- Caregivers and family members who did not shout, yell, or scream at the child.
- Caregivers and family members who do not believe that physical punishment is necessary for raising or educating a child



of the households interviewed at mid-term met this criterion as presented in figure 2 below compared to 68% at baseline



refugees had the highest score at 83% compared to caregivers from the host community who scored 66%.

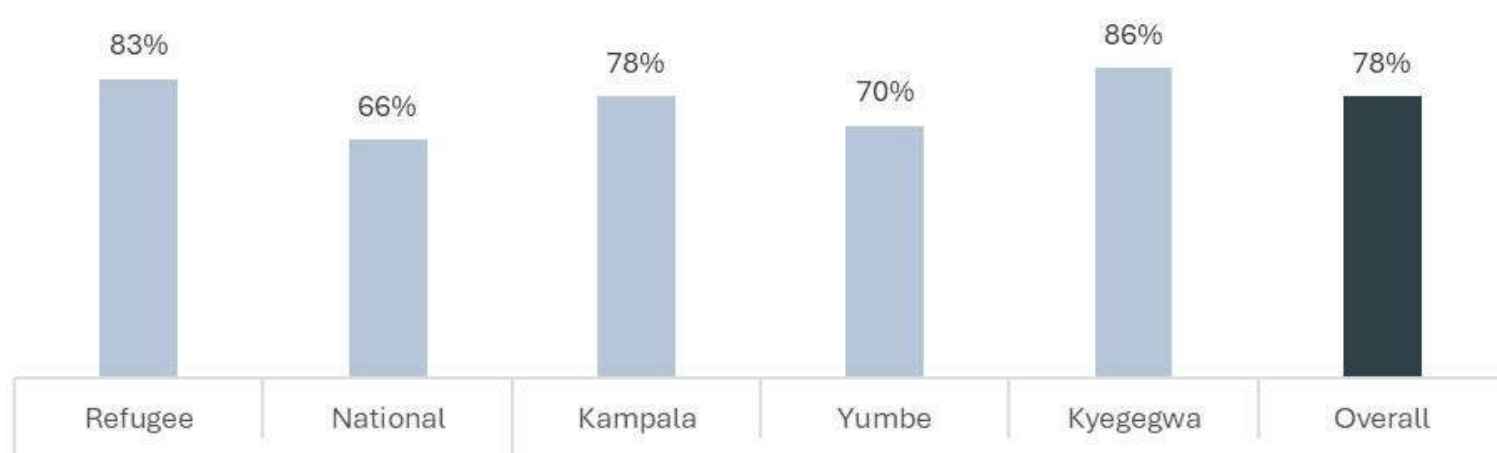
Households/caregivers found to be observing 2 or more practices were considered to have increased knowledge and attitude towards responsive caregiving and play-based early learning. Analysis shows that 78% of the households interviewed at mid-term met this criterion as presented in figure 2 below compared to 68% at baseline. Statistical analysis yielded a p-value of 0.000 which is below the 0.05 significance level thus indicating that the improvement in caregivers' knowledge, skills and attitudes is statistically significant.

The graph below further indicates that knowledge levels and positive attitudes towards responsive caregiving were higher in Kyegegwa (86%) and Kampala (78%). In terms of nationality, refugees had the highest score at 83% compared to caregivers from the host community who scored 66%.

These positive results further suggest the impact of the training sessions on influencing caregivers to adopt acceptable practices that promote child development and wellbeing. During caregiver's FGDs across all locations, caregivers noted the immense impact parenting sessions have had on improving their attitude, skills and knowledge towards child nurturing.

"...we learnt that balanced diet is very important for children. When they are fed well and not exposed to dirty places, they will grow well and we shall not spend much money on treatment..." Men FGD, Makindye, Kampala.

Figure 2: Percentage of caregivers and family members of children 0-3 years with increased knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions that promote inclusive, responsive caregiving and play-based early learning behaviors



Despite the improvements however, more effort is still needed to promote positive practices around disciplining children and play-based learning. Findings indicate that while 66% of caregivers refrain from spanking or using physical punishment as a disciplinary method, it leaves 44% who believe otherwise. Strategies need to emphasize the importance of nurturing, supportive interactions and the benefits of play-based learning for child development.

Outcome 1.2: % of caregivers who report increased access to essential ECCD services

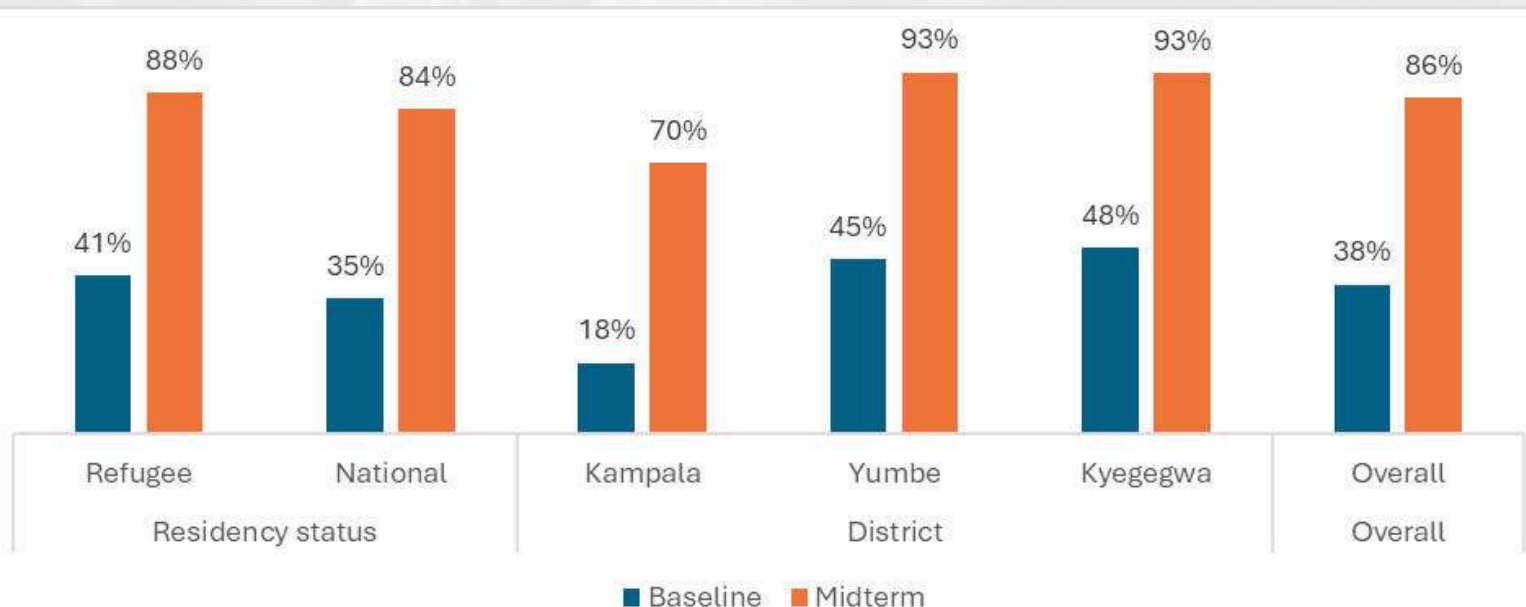
3.3. Access to essential ECD services

According to project proposal, access to essential ECD services primarily refers to caregivers having improved opportunities to utilize programs that support the development and well-being of their children. These services include among others access to early learning centers that promote children's cognitive and social skills, health services such as immunization and nutritional support, parenting sessions, learning and play materials. Thus, increased access indicates that successful initiatives are in place to help caregivers and their children benefit from these services ultimately leading to better child development outcomes.

The evaluation both at baseline and mid-term considered caregivers whose children are accessing ECD learning services including ECD centers, homebased learning and children who had transitioned to primary school at the time of the mid-term survey as a measure of access to essential ECD services. This was largely due to the integrated nature of ECD service provision.

The results as presented on the graph below indicate a statistically significant increase in access to ECD services among supported households with 86% of caregivers reporting that their children were either currently attending ECD programs, participating in home learning center or had transitioned to primary one this year compared to baseline status of 38%. The Z-test yielded a p-value of 0.000 which provides strong evidence that the project interventions have had a meaningful impact on improving access to ECD services for children. The most significant improvements were observed in Kampala where the percentage of children attending ECD services increased from 18% to 70%, followed by Yumbe which saw an increase from 45% to 93% and Kyegegwa where the score rose from 48% to 93%. Both nationals and refugees experienced similar improvements with differences of 49% and 47% from baseline respectively.

Figure 3: Percentage of caregivers who report increased access to essential ECCD services



The increase in the proportion of children participating in ECD activities may be attributed to the improved attitudes, skills and knowledge about ECD education among caregivers. During focus group discussions, many caregivers expressed a deeper understanding of the critical role that ECD plays in children's overall development. More children are now benefiting from the nurturing environments and educational opportunities that are essential for their growth and development.

"...children have been trained to make use of their environment as an opportunity through making materials and playing with them, you find children playing and knowing the local materials to make toys, these days you find children using bottle lids to make car toys and in future, these children might even make real cars...." Male FGD, Kampala.

Further analysis reveals that 87% of the 1,012 households interviewed had documentation of child immunization and vaccination. They had updated immunization cards or in some instances exercise books containing vaccination records. Compliance was higher in Yumbe (93%) and Kyegegwa (90%) compared to Kampala where only 77% had such documentation. This further demonstrates the assertiveness among caregivers in accessing essential services for the healthy development of their children.

“...now I know how to handle my children. I know that children must be taken for immunization and complete all doses so as to be protected against diseases. They also told us to give our children a balanced diet for them to be healthy...” Men FGD, Kampala.

Meanwhile, the LABE team leader in Yumbe highlighted that the establishment of additional learning centers including home-based learning facilities by the project and its partners has increased children's participation in ECD activities. However, he further observed that in some communities, the long distances to the learning centers and poverty levels influence caregivers to enroll their children directly in primary one. According to the Kampala senior education officer, children missing ECD learning opportunities compromises their foundational development and may hinder their readiness for the academic and social challenges of primary school. This highlights the need for more support towards caregivers in making informed choices for their children's early education.

3.3. Access to essential ECD services

- Long distances to learning centers in some communities. This has contributed greatly to children staying at home as caregivers often find it challenging to travel such distances regularly.
- Lack of feeding programs in some centers. Caregivers noted that some ECD centers do not provide meals for children which affects children's concentration during learning activities. “... children leave the centers before time to go back home because they are feeling hungry and some parents also don't pack food for their children. We were taught that packing food for children is good but some parents still don't do it...”
- The mobile nature of some refugee households disrupts children's learning processes as families frequently relocate in search of food and basic necessities. In the FGDs, caregivers revealed that sometimes they move to the host communities to look for casual work especially digging. This has deprived children of a stable learning environment.
- Many caregivers lack proper training affecting their ability to effectively interpret and implement the teaching framework. As noted by some respondents, some centers lack qualified caregivers to handle children's learning needs.

- Lack of proper learning shelters, in some centers children study under trees which does not allow them to concentrate and also rises some safety concerns.
- Play materials are inadequate. Respondents note that many ECD centers lack enough playing materials for children, both locally made or manufactured. *"... children don't play enough due to the few play materials available, it results into fighting and injuring themselves..."*
- Child protection issues, particularly child neglect, pose significant challenges in some communities. Caregivers reported instances where mothers leave their children in the care of others or older relatives who may not provide adequate supervision or support.
- Some unlicensed privately owned ECD centers reportedly do not adhere to the established curriculum, often providing content that is above the developmental levels of the children. *"...some ECD private owners tend to teach children things that are not of their age because of the pressure from parents who want their children to speak English..."*
- High fees charged at some centers has further deprived children of access to learning opportunities as caregivers cannot afford them. *"...the community has seen the quality of children that are going to ECD centers and more parents want enroll their children but there is a challenge of money. Centers are expensive and some parents cannot afford, that is why they opt to them directly to PI..."* Men FGD, Kampala.
- Unrealistic expectations from parents have also compromised the quality of services at the learning centers, placing unnecessary pressure on both ECD caregivers and children. *"...when a parent takes his or her child to ECD, they expect the child to come back speaking English and if not they transfer to other centers..."*
- In Kampala, respondents observed that many parents enroll children in ECD centers because they lack alternative childcare options while they go to work but not for learning purposes. According to the CDO from Central Division, parents need more awareness to recognize that ECD provides a valuable educational experience among children as opposed to treating it as an alternative for child supervision. *"...Parents are not taking their children to ECD because of its benefits but for convenience purposes for them to engage in their businesses. So, you find that they are not interested in whatever is happening at the centers and all they care about is just a place to leave their children for them to stay at their jobs or do their businesses..."* CDO Kampala Central division



3.3.2 Transition of children to primary school

The transition of children into primary education is an important achievement that according to education experts influences their future academic and social development. While many respondents reported that their children successfully transitioned to primary one, several barriers were identified that hinder some learners from this experience. These include;

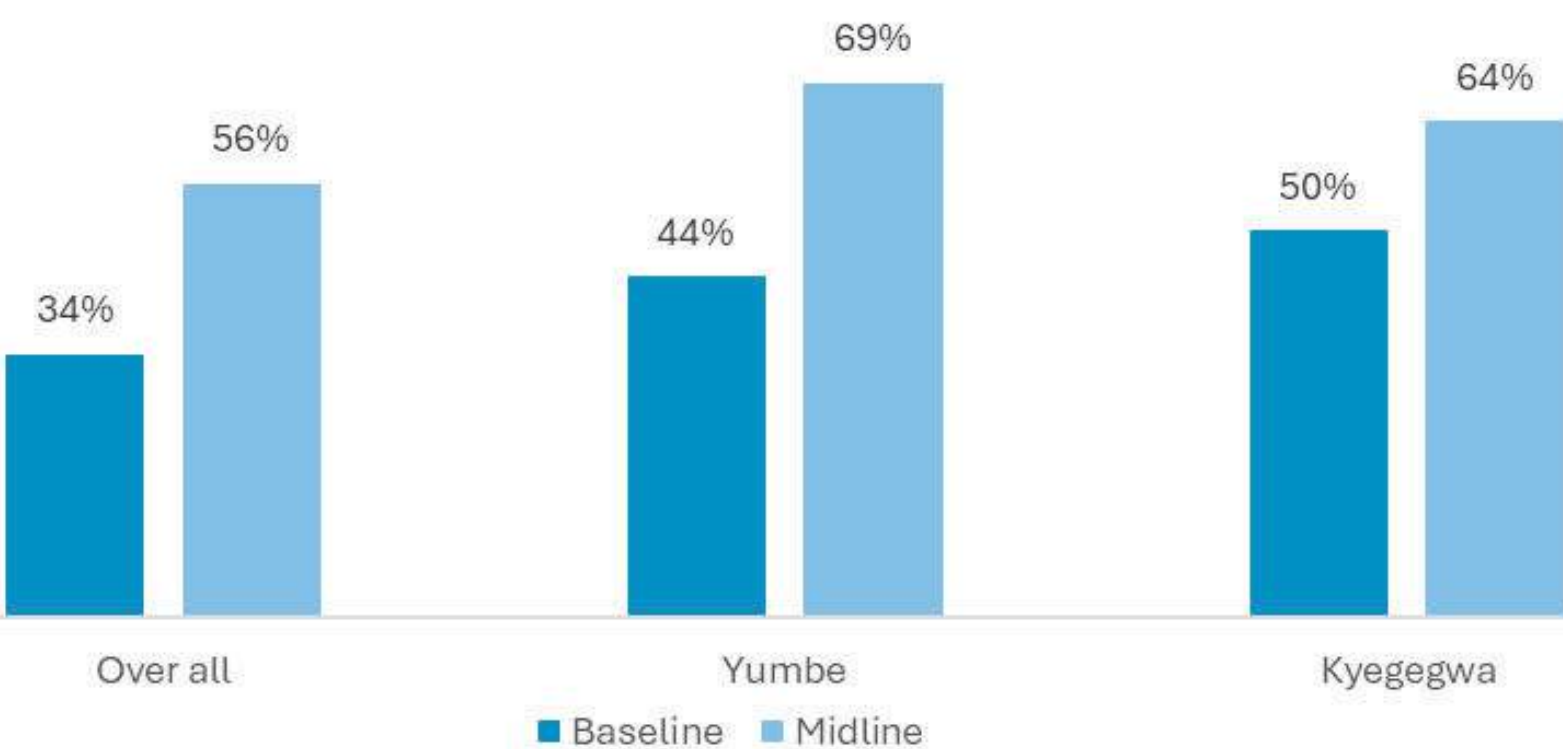
- Missing final “exams”. It was reported that some children repeat top class because they miss their final assessments. This apparently is due to their parents failing to pay fees on time.
- Irregular attendance of some children is another barrier cited. Parents make them repeat to catch up with the lost learning to prepare them for transition the following year.
- Long Distance to primary schools. Many caregivers expressed concern about the long distances to some primary schools noting that it makes it difficult for young children to walk.
- Need to care for siblings. Respondents especially in Yumbe and Kyegegwa revealed that sometimes parents make children stay at home to care for their baby siblings as they prioritize work to provide for their families.
- Poor performance. It was noted especially in Kampala that parents decide to have their children repeat ECD due to concerns about their performance believing that another year would better prepare them for the challenges of primary school. *“... I have one child in P1 now, he repeated ECD because I realized he wasn’t performing well and he didn’t know anything. So, I made him repeat and right now he is okay and his performance is good....”*

Objective 2: Improved Economic Wellbeing and Household Income Generation Opportunities

3.4. Economic Wellbeing and Household Income generation

Improving financial stability and promoting sustainable livelihoods among supported households has been a major focus of the project aimed at enabling families to meet essential needs of their children including education, shelter and nutrition that are crucial for their overall well-being and development. Project progress reports highlight that through coordination with various stakeholders, a total of 4,921 households so far have received entrepreneurship support including cash start-up capital, income-generating activities (including poultry, piggery, goat-rearing, tailoring and bakery among others) and skills training. The mid-term evaluation aimed to assess the impact of these initiatives on improving the economic status of these households.

Figure 4: Percentage of Households reporting increased agricultural yields of focused crops or productivity of livestock in selected value chains



Findings as presented above show an overall increase in agricultural yield and productivity of livestock from 34% at baseline (August 2023) to 56% at midline (Sept 2024) with Yumbe registering the highest increment of 25 percentage points compared to Kyegegwa with 16 points. This is largely attributed to the intensive training activities on climate smart agriculture, livestock management and other modern farming methods. Additionally, the availability of agricultural extension workers, fertile land and favorable rainfall were further highlighted among other contributing factors to this progress.

3.4.1.1 Access to Land

Findings revealed a 4% increase in land ownership among households with 54% of respondents confirming they own land. Similarly, the percentage of households renting land improved by a similar margin while access to free communal land increased by 6%. Due to restrictions imposed by refugee policies on land ownership, the highest levels of ownership were found among the host community as refugees families continued to rely on rented land consequently maintaining the trend observed since baseline across all districts.

Figure 5: Access to land by category and district

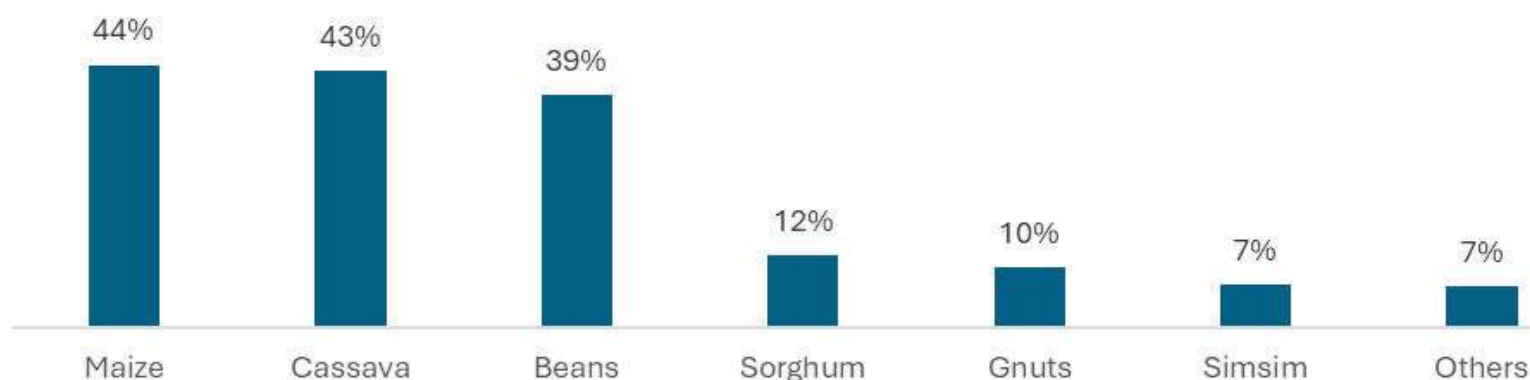


Outcome 2.1: % of Households reporting increased agricultural yields of focused crops or productivity of livestock in selected value chains

3.4.1.2 Crop Productivity

Findings indicated that 84% of households had cultivated their land in the past 12 months with maize (44%), cassava (43%) and beans (38%) being the most commonly grown crops. Other crops, including sweet potatoes, matooke, rice, peas, millet and soyabeans accounted for 7% of the cultivation. Overall, households experienced an increase of 43 percentage points in agricultural yields from 34% at baseline reflecting a relatively good improvement in productivity.

Figure 6: Most grown crops among households at midterm



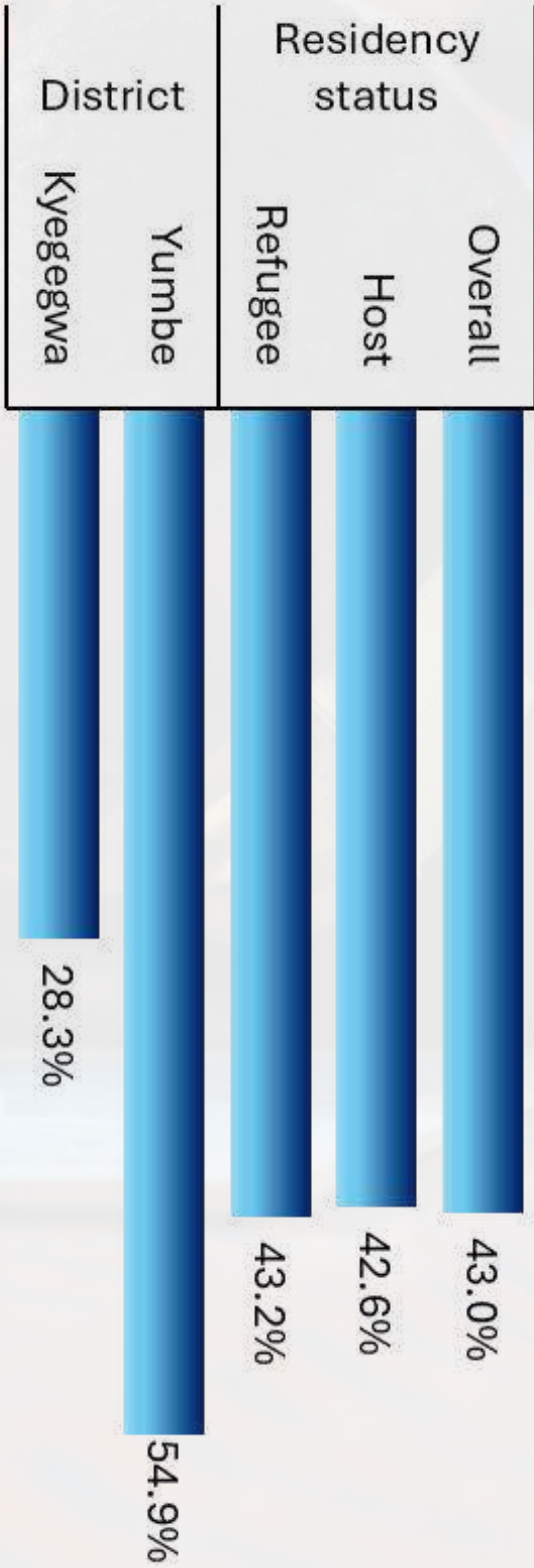
The results as illustrated above show little change from baseline regarding the most commonly grown crops. Maize remains the most cultivated crop among households with a slight increase of 4% from baseline. However, while beans held the position of the second most grown crop at baseline, findings indicate that more households have adopted cassava which has now emerged as the second most grown crop while beans on the other hand dropped to third place.

Meanwhile, ground nuts and simsim registered increase in preference among households. The difference in farmers preferences could be attributed to the variances in yield and prices in the last season thus the need to adopt other crops. In fact, 44% of households reported growing 2 or more crops which demonstrates their understanding of agricultural diversification to mitigate risks of relying on one crop. According to the extension officer from Kyegegwa district, growing different crop types improves food security and resilience against market fluctuations hence increased stability.

“... i encourage farmers to cultivate a variety of crops to manage the unpredictable climate conditions. Our farmers have understood that when one crop fails due to unpredictable weather or market prices, having others to fall back on means they can still feed their families and support their livelihoods...” Extension worker, Kyegegwa district.

Further analysis revealed that the average yield for all crops cultivated was 775 kg while the median was 100 kg. While comparing individual household yields, it was found that 43% (263) of the 611 households engaged in cultivation over the past 12 months surpassed the median yield. This included 77 households (28%) in Kyegegwa and 186 households (55%) in Yumbe indicating a significant variation in crop productivity between the two districts. No significant difference between the host and refugees.

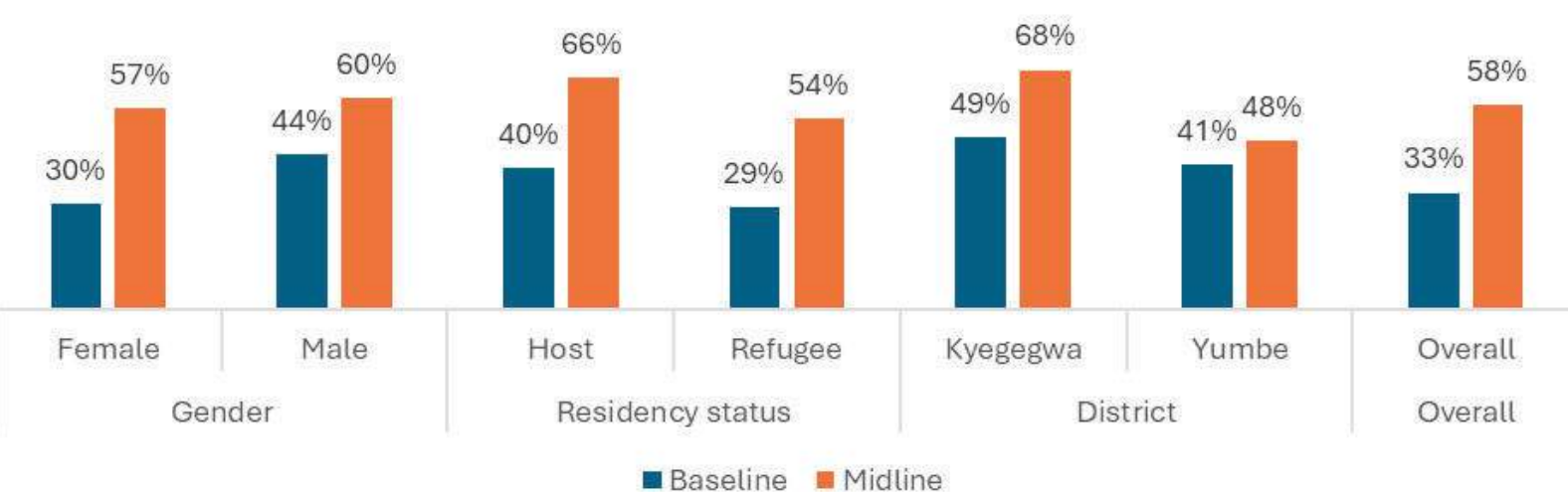
Figure 7: Percentage of households with increased yield



3.4.1.3 Livestock Productivity

In regard to livestock, midterm results indicate that the proportion of households engaged in livestock production increased from 33% to 58%. Kyegegwa experienced the highest increase from 49% to 68% compared to Yumbe that only realized increment of 7 percentage points from baseline. According to project activity reports, more than 900 households benefited from the distribution of livestock which included chicken, goats, sheep and pigs among others tailored to their preferences. Respondents noted that many of these enterprises have not only survived but also multiplied thus contributing to an increase in their livestock stock.

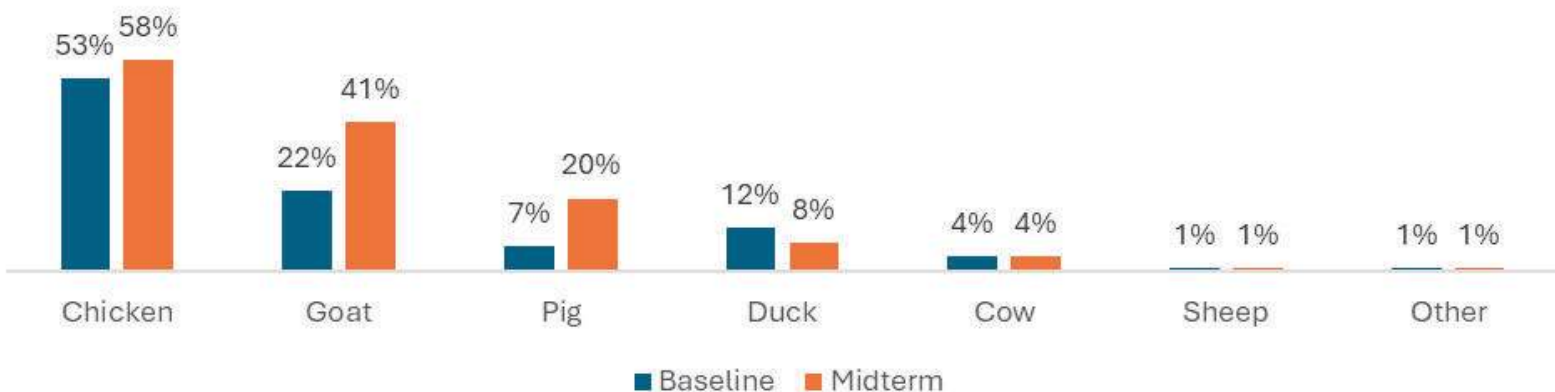
Figure 8: Percentage of households with increased livestock productivity



It can further be observed that despite the significant increase in the proportions of households rearing livestock among both the host and refugees at midterm, the 2 groups improved by almost the same margin with the host increasing by 26% and 25% among refugees. On the other hand, great improvement was noted among female headed households (27%) and 16% among male households.

In terms of types of livestock reared, no difference from baseline though variations in proportions can be noticed. According to the figure 9 below, goat rearing experienced the highest increase of 19% followed by Piggery with growth of 13%. Despite slight increase of just 5%, chicken rearing remains the most widely practiced livestock activity across the 2 districts which suggests that while other livestock activities are gaining traction, chicken rearing continues to hold a central role in the livestock production among households.

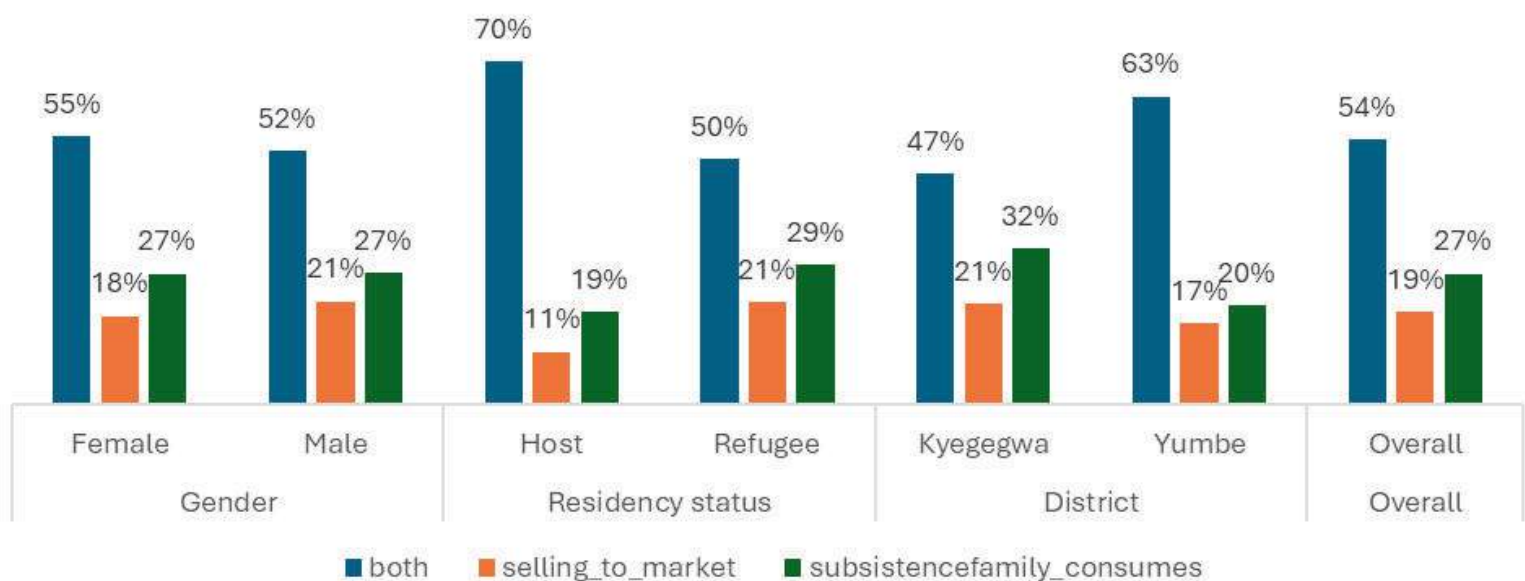
Figure 9: Type of livestock reared among households



3.4.1.4. Main use of agricultural production among households

When asked about the primary use of their agricultural production, 54% of the respondents reported that they utilize their crops and livestock for both home consumption and selling. The ability to sell a portion of their produce indicates an effort to generate income which can be used to support children's needs.

Figure 10: Main use of crop and livestock production among households



More so, the low score for households that focus solely on selling implies that households are increasingly recognizing the importance of food security and nutritional health for their children. This trend is consistent across household gender, residency status and district. Additionally, when compared to the baseline findings, a slight reduction in the percentage of households prioritizing the sale of output can be noted (from 23% to 19%) while home consumption increased from 18% to 27% at midline.

3.4.2. Challenges faced in market accessibility for agricultural production

Accessing markets for agricultural produce is key for the sustainability of farmers' activities as it directly affects their productivity and profitability. In the survey, respondents identified several challenges that hinder their market access, these include;

- Households involved in crop farming highlighted fluctuations in market prices as a major concern. While they generally have access to markets, they are increasingly struggling with declining prices driven by overproduction which affects their profit margins. As a result, they are unable to re-invest in buying inputs such as seeds and pesticides.
- Erratic rainfall patterns. According to respondents, the inconsistency in weather conditions has not only disrupted their planting and harvesting plans but also has affected quality of yield which has resulted in low prices “...we are faced with unpredictable rains and dry spells which sometime exceed our expectations making our cultivated crops die due to too much rain...” FGD participants, Yumbe.
- Market dues/fees. Respondents further indicated that they sometimes struggle to pay market fees due to low demand for produce.
- Poor roads. Respondents highlighted that they sometimes fail to transport their produce to final customers due to poor road conditions especially during the rainy season. Furthermore, it was noted that these conditions sometimes raise transport costs which further strains them resulting in the sale of produce locally at low prices.

3.4.3. Opportunities for enhancement of livelihoods in the communities

The survey attempted to explore opportunities including resources, programs and initiatives available to empower households to improve their economic growth and stability. Respondents shared insights on existing training programs, small business support services and local partnerships for entrepreneurial support. These are as highlighted below;

- Government development initiatives such as the Parish Development Model (PDM) and various funds targeted at small businesses and vulnerable groups. Across all surveyed locations, key informants emphasized the positive impact of these programs particularly in empowering youth. The PDM, for instance, according to the CDO from Rubaga division in Kampala aims to facilitate sustainable economic growth by providing resources and support for local enterprises to strengthen entrepreneurship and job creation. *"...the government has recently introduced PDM which offers loans of 1 million shillings to support local entrepreneurs. For individuals aged 18 to 30, there is a youth program that encourages group formation for financial assistance. Additionally, women aged 18 to 79 can access funding through the Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) by forming groups. people living with disabilities even have a grant of 5 million free of charge which can be given to a group to support their businesses...."* CDO, Kampala central.
- Respondents observed that the presence of various implementing actors providing complementary interventions has created an opportunity for communities to enhance their livelihood opportunities as they can collaborate, share expertise and best practices leading to more support for community. *"...we have many stakeholders we partner with to support the livelihood of our people, what we need is getting organized and prioritize their needs, we can have programs such as skills training, access to markets and financial services so that they benefit from a wider range of options and support systems to sustain their economic activities..."* CDO, Rubaga division, Kampala.
- Formation of producer groups and saving groups to increase bargaining power in market share and loan acquisitions. According to the extension worker from Yumbe local government, different actors have supported producer households to form groups including saving groups to increase access to credit. This was iterated by the CDO from Kyegegwa district who noted that formation of groups increases their bargaining power in the market and access to loans which can help them grow.
- Further findings revealed that households have been successfully connected to financial institutions that have not only offered financial literacy training but also provided opportunities for long-term business engagement including access to loans. *"..we have successfully facilitated the connection between our clients and banks by helping them open bank accounts through which they are now receiving their start-up capital. We are optimistic that this partnership will continue to grow and enable access loans at favorable interest rates to boost their business ventures,.."* Project ERD manager, Yumbe district

3.5. Improving Household income among households.

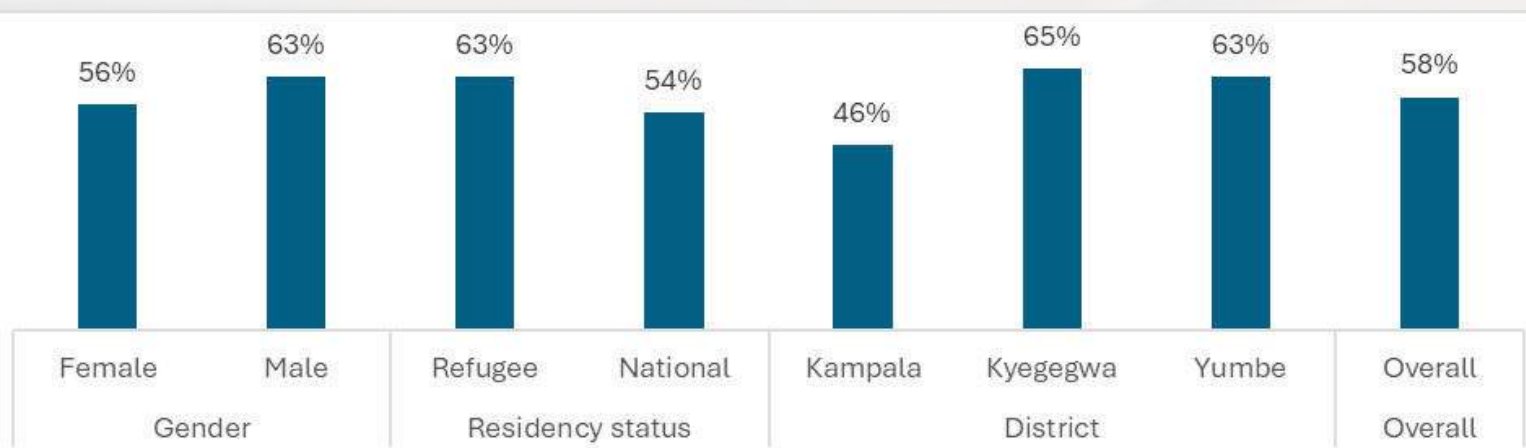
Increasing household income as previously noted is a priority area essential for enabling families to provide proper care for their young children and improve their overall quality of life. The survey assessed income levels among households accumulated from various income sources including employment and other business ventures. However, this was to a large extent aimed at measuring the impact of the various income-generating opportunities the project has extended to these households. The survey sought to understand how these engagements have influenced household income levels and overall economic well-being.



Outcome 2.2: % of Surveyed client households whose monthly household incomes increased from baseline to endline

To determine the proportion of households with increased income, comparison of baseline and midterm income data was done for each household. Households that showed a positive income difference between the two surveys were considered to have experienced an increase in income. The proportion of such households was then computed and findings are as summarized on the graph below.

Figure 11: Percentage of surveyed client households whose monthly household incomes increased from baseline



Overall, 58% of households reported an increase in income highlighting a positive impact of the IGAs. Disaggregating findings by gender indicates a slight disparity with male headed households experiencing more income growth (63%). Additionally, more refugee households (63%) registered increase in income compared to the nationals (54%). In terms of location, Kyegegwa emerged with the highest proportion of households with increased income (65%), closely followed by Yumbe with 63% while income growth in Kampala was lower at 46%. These variations could be attributed to several factors. For example, since the baseline survey in August 2023, households have received support through small business and agricultural enterprises which have played a significant role in boosting their incomes. In Kyegegwa and Yumbe, where refugee communities are more prevalent, the introduction and support of small-scale businesses have likely led to more opportunities for income generation helping households increase their financial stability.

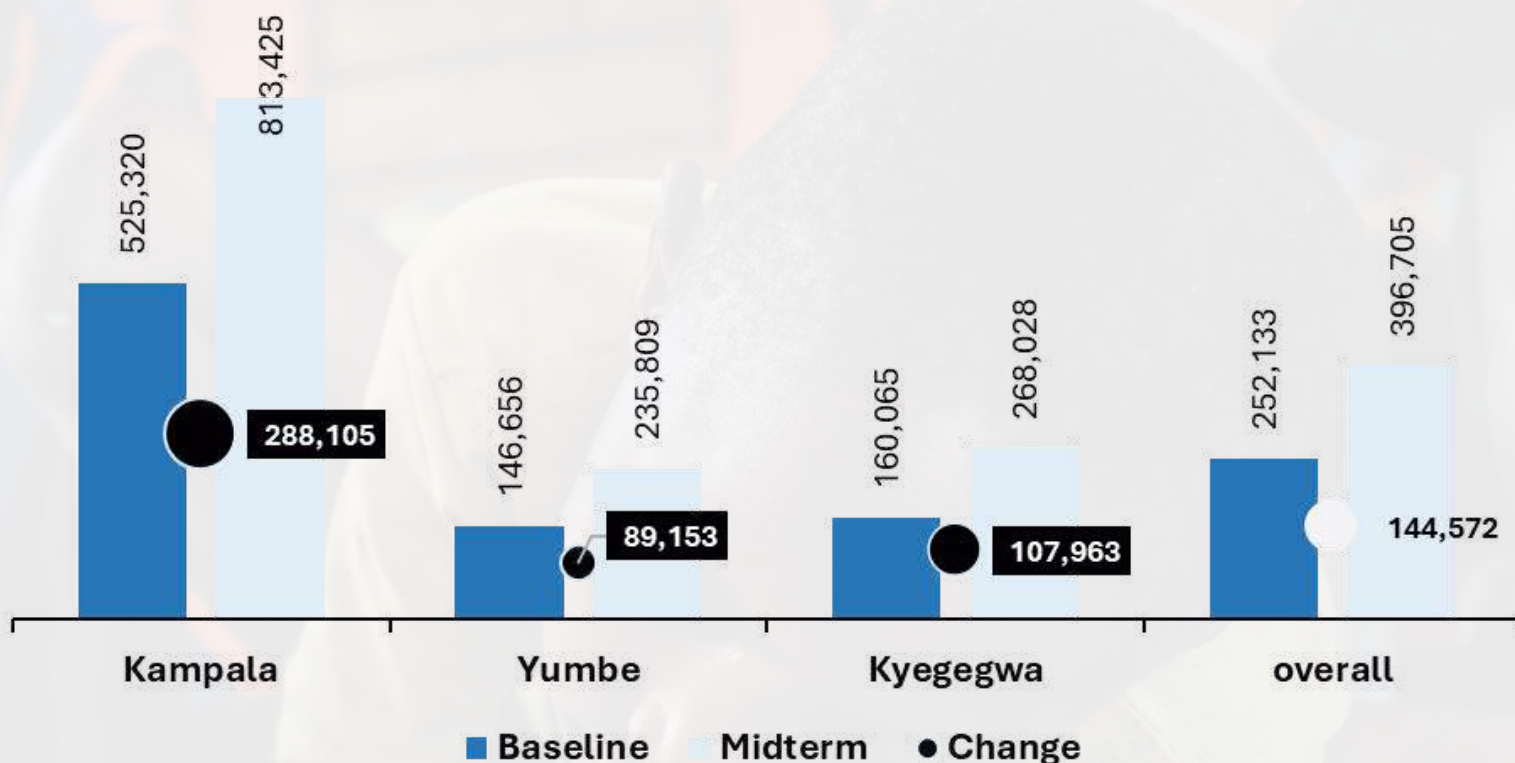
In Kampala, however, factors such as the higher cost of living, limited access to resources and possibly fewer targeted support programs for local households may have hindered the same level of income growth experienced in Yumbe and Kyegegwa. The urban environment of Kampala also presents challenges like competition, market saturation and logistical constraints which may have limited profitability of the new business ventures compared Kyegegwa and Yumbe with a more rural set up and support programs that might have had a greater impact on household incomes.

Findings from FGDs highlight that households have experienced improved economic conditions through diverse livelihood interventions including crop and animal farming, small business enterprises and other ventures as per their business vision plans. This has been supplemented by other income streams including remittances from relatives. Participants further noted how training in financial management and capital injection into small businesses have transformed their ability to manage household resources more efficiently. More so, the role of savings groups and vision mapping has also been instrumental in the income growth experienced by the households. In Yumbe, participants noted how the group savings schemes have provided a financial safety net and opportunities for re-investment into their businesses.

"...we were trained on having a vision for the business, most families have vision maps which have helped us to stay focused because our facilitators help us to monitor progress. We can notice challenges and address them to ensure our visions are realized. We have also formed saving groups which have helped us in boosting business capital..." Host FGD, Yumbe.

In Kyegegwa, households equally attributed their economic improvement to receiving livestock such as pigs, goats and chickens among others which have not only contributed to income generation but also nutrition within the households.

Figure 12: Household average monthly income by district



Further analysis shows that the change in household average income was highest in Kyegegwa (67.4%), followed by Yumbe (60.8%) while Kampala registered the lowest increase with 54.8%. Despite households in Kampala registering the highest average income compared to other locations at both baseline and midterm evaluations, the change in average income was the lowest. This discrepancy could be attributed to several factors including business disruptions caused by law enforcement. Furthermore, there is a possibility that households under-reported their income due to concerns that revealing higher earnings could lead to reduced or eliminated future financial assistance.

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Table 9: Household average monthly income by residency status

Locations	Kampala		Yumbe		Kyegegwa		overall	
	Refugee	Host	Refugee	Host	Refugee	Host	Refugee	Host
Average HH Income	813,425	820,030	232,440	139,385	268,521	272,806	396,705	395,698
Percentage	50%	50%	63%	37%	50%	50%	50%	50%

Analysis further shows that in Kampala, households regardless of refugee status recorded high average incomes of UGX 813,425 (approx.\$220) and UGX 820,030(approx.\$222) respectively which indicates a relatively equal income distribution among the two communities. Similarly, Kyegegwa presented a more balanced average income distribution with refugee households having an average of UGX 268,521(approx.\$73) closely aligning with the host households' average of UGX 272,806 (approx.\$74). Yumbe on the other hand registered higher average income among refugee households averaging UGX 232,440(approx.\$63) compared to the host households with UGX 139,385 (approx.\$38).

3.5.1. Challenges faced in managing business activities

As noted earlier, households were supported in various income-generating activities across all locations to improve their income stability. However, findings reveal that the operation of these business activities has faced significant challenges key among which include:

- Inadequate capital emerged as a strong concern among respondents who expressed that limited operating funds have constrained their ability to expand their businesses. Many farming households and small business owners noted to be struggling to cover business expenses such as buying seeds, pesticides & vaccines for poultry, hiring additional labor for cultivation and license fees among others.
- Limited financial management skills were also identified as another barrier. Despite receiving training in financial literacy, many respondents expressed lack of sufficient knowledge in developing operational budgets and tracking expenses to guide business decisions. Activity reports, however, indicate that these topics were addressed during the training sessions. To close this gap, ongoing mentorship and refresher courses would be essential in reinforcing these skills and ensuring better financial decision-making.
- Furthermore, respondents widely cited the limited land for agricultural expansion as another major challenge. Many farmers revealed that most refugee households possess less than an acre of land which is insufficient to yield a substantial amount of produce and they cannot afford to hire on an individual basis. Additionally, some respondents expressed frustration with the fertility of the available plots. They noted that many of these lands are infertile and fail to produce serious yield rendering their efforts unproductive. However, according to the ERD manager from Yumbe, some crop farmers have formed groups to address these challenges. She noted that these groups have been able pull resources together to rent larger plots of land ranging from 0.5 to 3 acres which has allowed them to increase their agricultural output.

Objective 3: Improved availability of quality ECCD services in homes and centers

3.6. Improving quality of ECD services in homes and learning centers.

According to project progress reports, increasing access to quality ECD services has been enhanced through upgrading infrastructure in selected ECD centers, formation of play and supervised care groups and strengthening the capacity of center management committees (CMCs) to oversee learning, safety and nutrition activities at the learning centers.

3.6.1. Access to safe and conducive care and learning environment

Creating a safe and conducive learning environment is important for the healthy development of young children. Such an atmosphere nurtures their ability to explore, learn and grow. The midterm survey sought to determine the extent to which supported children have access to this type of environment.

Outcome 3.1: % of young children participating in the program who access safe, and conducive care or learning environments

To establish progress, the assessment focused on several key factors that included children's access to play toys at home (either locally made or manufactured), the presence of older caretakers, children not being left at home alone for more than one hour and children whose caregivers engage in at least four of the following activities; reading, telling stories, singing, naming/counting, or playing with the child as reported by the caregivers/respondents.

Table 10:Percentage of young children with access to safe and conducive care or learning environment

Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term	Change
% children with access to secure homemade toys	56%	83%	27%
% children with access to secure/safe manufactured/shop toys	36%	54%	18%
% children not left in care of another child less than 10 years	47%	60%	13%
· % children not left alone for more than an hour	59%	62%	3%
% of children with access a conducive learning environment (Practice at least 4 of the following; Read, tell stories, sing, name/ count or play with the child.	50%	87%	37%
Average score	50%	69%	19%

Overall findings as presented above shows improvement in the conditions supporting children’s development including safe play, supervision and caregiver engagement. Compared to baseline, mid-term results show statistically significant levels of improvement in children's access to a safe and conducive learning environment. i.e. from 50% at baseline to 69% at mid-term, with a p-value of 0.0000.

Notably, there was a great improvement in the proportion of children benefiting from developmentally supportive activities with their caregivers. Midterm indicate that 87% of caregivers engaged in at least four out of the five learning activities compared to 50% at baseline. More so, all households were found to be practicing at least one activity with over 98% engaged in multiple activities especially singing and storytelling.

Table 11: Number of child development activities practiced by households

# Activities	% caregivers/households
1	2%
2	5%
3	6%
4	14%
5	73%

Regarding access to play materials, there was a 27% increase in the availability of homemade play items while access to manufactured toys purchased from shops rose by 18%. This suggests that families are increasingly prioritizing safe play options to improve their children’s play experiences.

Further findings suggest a positive trend in supervision practices among caregivers to ensure the safety and well-being of children. This is highlighted by the increase in the proportion of caregivers who don’t leave their young children in the care of other children under the age of 10 as well as caregivers who don't leave their young children alone for more than an hour showing improvements. These improved by 13% and 3% respectively.

Table 11: Number of child development activities practiced by households

Indicators	Kampala	Kyegegwa	Yumbe	Overall
% children with access to secure homemade toys	68%	94%	84%	83%
% children with access to secure/safe manufactured/shop toys	73%	44%	52%	54%
% children not left in care of another child less than 10 years	88%	56%	44%	60%
% children not left alone for more than an hour	77%	64%	49%	62%
% of children with access to a conducive learning environment (Practice at least 4 of the following; Read, tell stories, sing, name/ count or play with the child.	97%	75%	92%	87%
Average score	80%	67%	64%	69%

Further analysis presented above reveals that caregivers in Kampala demonstrated more involvement in creating a safe and conducive environment for children (80%) compared to those in Yumbe and Kyegegwa whose scores have no significant difference at 64% and 67% respectively. While Kyegegwa excels in creating homemade toys (94%), it struggles with caregiver supervision for children. Nonetheless, this high score in making play toys highlights the effectiveness of caregiver trainings in utilizing locally available materials compared to other locations particularly Kampala. Yumbe on the other hand demonstrated strong knowledge in creating a conducive learning environment (92%) despite facing challenges in other child safety practices.

3.7. Creating an enabling policy environment for quality ECD services and livelihood opportunities

Improving access to quality ECD services and livelihood opportunities has been at the core of the project implementation, working with different government stakeholders to establish and implement supportive policies, regulations and practices that prioritize the health, education and well-being of young children. This evaluation notes the following regarding the policy environment for provision of ECD services:

The ECD focal person at the Ministry of Education revealed that the Ministry has started developing the costed National Integrated Early Childhood Development Strategy to support the implementation of IECD interventions in the country following the the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Action Plan 2016 - 2021.

3.7.1 Dissemination and Implementation of IECD Policy

The most successful advocacy engagement according to respondents has been the dissemination and implementation of the Integrated Early Child Development Policy (IECD) 2016. The Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development has made efforts to ensure that the IECD policy is well implemented across the country including the refugee hosting districts. The ECD focal person at the Ministry of Education revealed that the Ministry has started developing the costed National Integrated Early Childhood Development Strategy to support the implementation of IECD interventions in the country following the the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Action Plan 2016 - 2021.

During the key informant interviews with the District Education Officers and officials from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Gender, it was noted that the rollout of the IECD policy is top priority for government to streamline the quality of ECD services provision. They further noted that several engagements that include dissemination workshops, training sessions, sharing policy documents and guidelines as well as community outreach and sensitization programs are ongoing. According to the Senior Education Officer from Yumbe district local government, these engagements involve local government leaders, teachers and caregivers, community leaders and civil society organizations.

According to the Project Advocacy Manager, the project organized district level meetings to support these efforts, bringing together stakeholders including district leaders to review the policy and raise awareness about their roles and responsibilities in ensuring its effective implementation

3.7.2. Approval of the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy

According to the MoE ECD focal person, the Ministry of Education and Sports got an approval of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy from the Cabinet in May 2024. The approval of the ECCE Policy is a big milestone and advocacy win in programming for ECD. The Policy vision is: "A country where all children have access to quality ECCE services." Consequently, the Ministry has embarked on developing the developing the implementation standards and guidelines for the ECCE policy. During the ECCE Working Group and the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Working Group meetings, the Kulea Watoto project advocacy team collaborated with other stakeholders to advocate for the approval of the ECCE Policy which was eventually approved

3.7.3. Implementation of Parish Development Model

The Parish Development Model (Program) by the government of Uganda is the main initiative of the government to improve the livelihoods of the households.

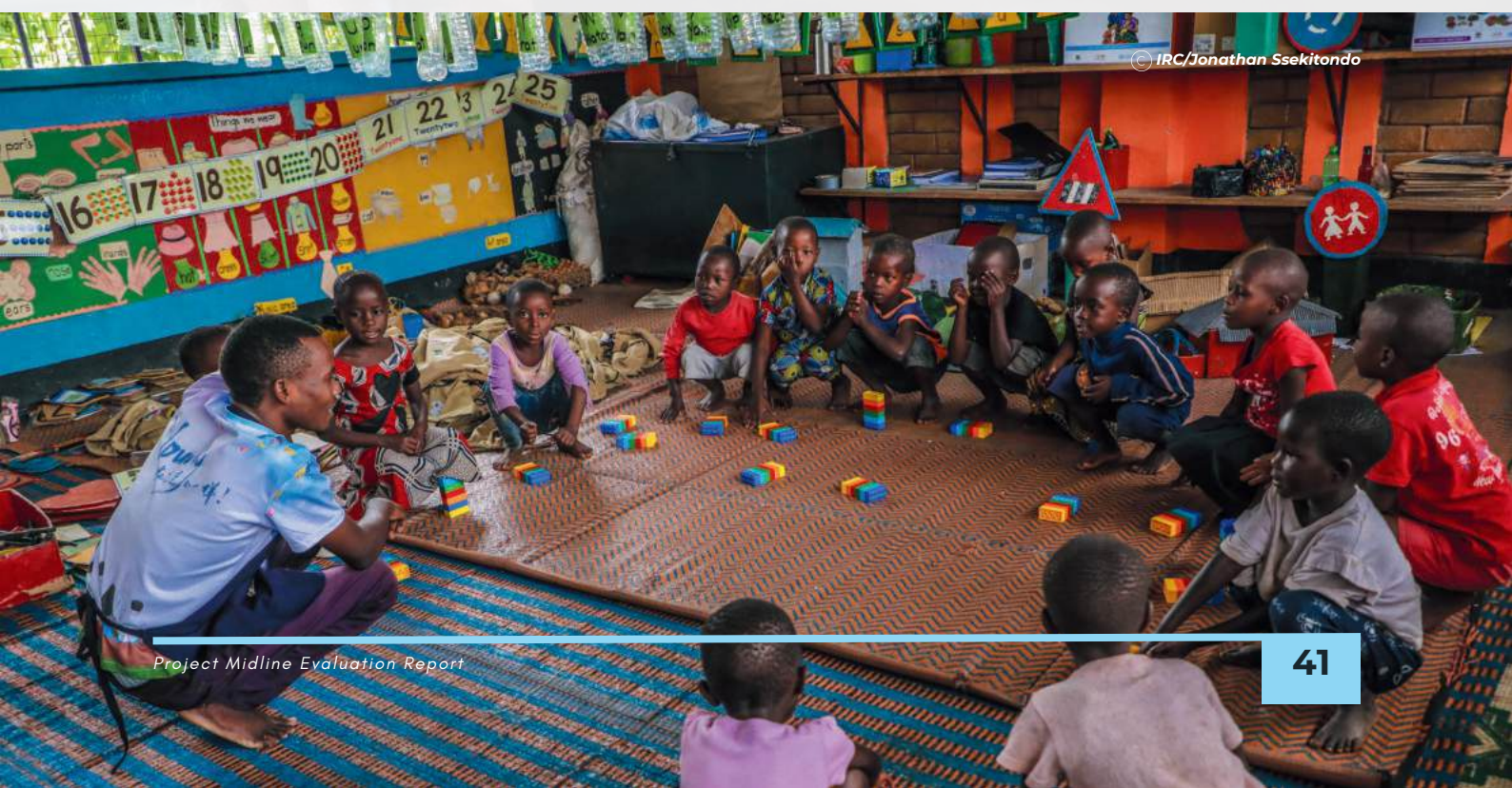
Through this program, the government has supported households to identify activities that can boost their incomes and improve their wellbeing. The local governments implementing the parish development model are encouraging households to effectively plan for the children under this program. However, whereas the refugees can benefit from the pillars of the Parish Development Model, they are not benefiting from pillar three which focuses on financial inclusion which is reserved for Ugandan nationals. The project has continued to engage with stakeholders to advocate for the prioritization of vulnerable households including refugees as revealed by the advocacy manager below;

"...our advocacy has focused on ensuring that the implementation of the PDM benefits vulnerable families including those with young children. Additionally, we have advocated for the inclusion of refugees in the PDM to ensure they too can access such opportunities for their wellbeing.."



3.7.4 Challenges affecting effective implementation of ECD and livelihood related policies

- Inadequate funding, infrastructure, and learning materials for the ECD centers. There has been improvement in the enrollment of learners in the ECD centers, however, the financing remains a challenge as most of them are financed by the private actors and the communities. As a result, the infrastructure and materials at most of the ECD centers are not adequate to accommodate the number of learners.
- Shortage of qualified and trained ECD teachers. Most of the ECD centers still lack qualified caregivers. This is because the government does not pay salaries to ECD teachers hence does not attract qualified staff.
- Limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and ensure accountability for ECD programs. The government still faces challenges in monitoring and supervising ECD and livelihood programs due to capacity gaps hence the need for continued capacity building.
- Refugees still face challenge of access to finances to start businesses due to system barriers, for example the requirement for accessing funds from the government under the Parish Development Model is the Uganda National Identity Card. Some refugees face challenges in opening bank accounts which limits their chances of accessing credit services.
- Coordination remains a challenge for the key implementors of ECD and livelihood programs. According to this assessment, whereas the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development has spearheaded the efforts for the implementation of the Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, there remains a coordination gap between the implementing Ministries and the key stakeholders. There is a need to strengthen coordination between the Ministries responsible for implementing integrated ECD and the district local governments.



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4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion.

Midterm findings strongly suggest that the project is on track in terms of achieving its intended objectives and set targets. This is demonstrated by the improved knowledge levels, skills and attitudes among households towards responsive parenting and child nurturing, improved household income levels arising from business enterprises and agricultural production, improved learning environment for children mainly through improved learning shelters, availability of play materials and strengthening the capacity of community structures.

4.1.1 Relationship among outcome areas in line with the 2 generational approach.

According to the project theory of change, the two-generational approach is intended to address the challenges faced by both young children and their caregivers/households. The approach recognizes that children's healthy development and growth is greatly influenced by the economic status of the households in which they live.

The improvement in child development outcomes with 47% of children assessed as developmentally on track may largely be associated with the increased knowledge and involvement of caregivers in ECD activities. Results indicated that 78% of caregivers demonstrated increased knowledge and improved attitudes towards ECD which could explain why majority (86%) have their children attending ECD centers including home learning programs.

Findings further showed that 58% of the households registered increase in household income. Despite the lack of evidence that clients are using the increased income to support their children's educational needs, findings suggest that households now have a stronger financial power compared to before and if well guided are more likely to afford the resources required for children's wellbeing including quality nutrition, health care and education.

In the same line, the improvement in children's access to safe, conducive learning environments rising from 50% at baseline to 86% at midline could be attributed to the improved knowledge among caregivers towards ECD. It suggests that caregivers understand and appreciate their role in supporting children to access services that are vital for their growth and wellbeing. Caregivers appreciate that when children have access to quality early learning, their foundational skills improve which strengthens their readiness for primary school.

Meanwhile, the adoption of the NIECD policy is a positive step towards ensuring the sustainability and delivery of quality ECD services in the target locations. Despite the challenges in its dissemination and implementation, it provides an opportunity for long term impact of ECD on children's wellbeing.

4.2. Recommendations

- To effectively manage client expectations, the project team should develop information-sharing packages or materials to ensure consistency in the information provided. Some clients reported being told they would receive 2 million shillings (appro. \$541) but instead received 800,000 shillings (appro. \$216). This misinformation creates distrust and may lead to persistent complaints, potentially damaging the project's reputation. With support from the communication officer, information briefs should be printed to manage client expectations. In addition, periodic information sharing and feedback sessions should be held to keep clients informed and engaged throughout the process.
- Child protection topics, particularly on positive parenting should be integrated into parenting sessions to ensure households are better equipped to support their children's protection needs. Respondents frequently highlighted instances of child neglect, especially among children living with non-primary caregivers. Additionally, 44% of caregivers demonstrated limited knowledge of positive parenting practices.
- The ERD team should increase engagement with district extension workers to provide timely extension services to farmers including information on market trends, pricing strategies, climate smart agricultural methods and effective marketing techniques which will equip them with the skills they need to sell their produce more effectively and maximize profits.
- The ECD team should conduct an assessment to identify any gaps in meeting quality standards and offer targeted support to ECD centers. This will help them address these gaps and expedite the process of securing their operational licenses from the district.
- The project ERD team should organize additional training sessions for households focused on financial literacy, emphasizing the importance of effectively managing improved incomes to support children's education needs. These sessions should equip families with the knowledge and skills to budget, save and prioritize educational expenses such as school fees, books, uniforms and other necessities.
- The project should provide financial assistance to the target sub-counties and districts to support the dissemination and implementation of the NIECD policy. Inadequate funding was identified as a key barrier to the successful implementation of the action plans. Supplementing the government's resource envelope for the districts will boost their ability to achieve the targeted outcomes.

The project MEAL team should conduct a follow-up survey to assess whether the financial assistance provided to the 6% of households that did not identify with any economic activity was utilized effectively. The survey should explore any barriers hindering their participation in economic activities, determine whether they received business grants and if so, gather insights on how the money was utilized. This will help identify challenges and opportunities for better targeting and support in future interventions.

Appendixes:

Appendix 1: Indicator summary table

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Midterm	Change
Impact	1.0: % of young children aged 0-5 that are developmentally "on-track" according to a standard ECD assessment measuring social-emotional, cognitive, and physical outcomes.	23%	47%	24%
Objective1: Empower Households with Responsive Caregiving and Early Learning Skills in homes and at group level	1.1: % of caregivers and family members of children 0-3 have increased knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions that promote inclusive, responsive caregiving and play-based early learning behaviors	68%	78%	10%
	1.2: % of caregivers who report increased access to essential ECCD services	38%	86%	48%
Objective 2: Improve Economic Wellbeing and Household Income Generation Opportunities	2.1: % of Households reporting increased agricultural yields of focused crops or productivity of livestock in selected value chains	34%	56%	22%
	2.2: % of Surveyed client households whose monthly household incomes increased from baseline to endline	0	58%	58%
Objective 3: Improved availability of quality ECCD services in homes and centers	3.1: % of young children participating in the program who access safe, and conducive care or learning environments	50%	69%	19%

Appendix 2: Reviewed documents

1. Project proposal
2. Baseline report
3. ECDI2030 Technical Manual Sept 2023.



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