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Center for Effective Global Action

Impact of Livelihoods Intervention on Social Cohesion among Refugee and Host Communities in Uganda

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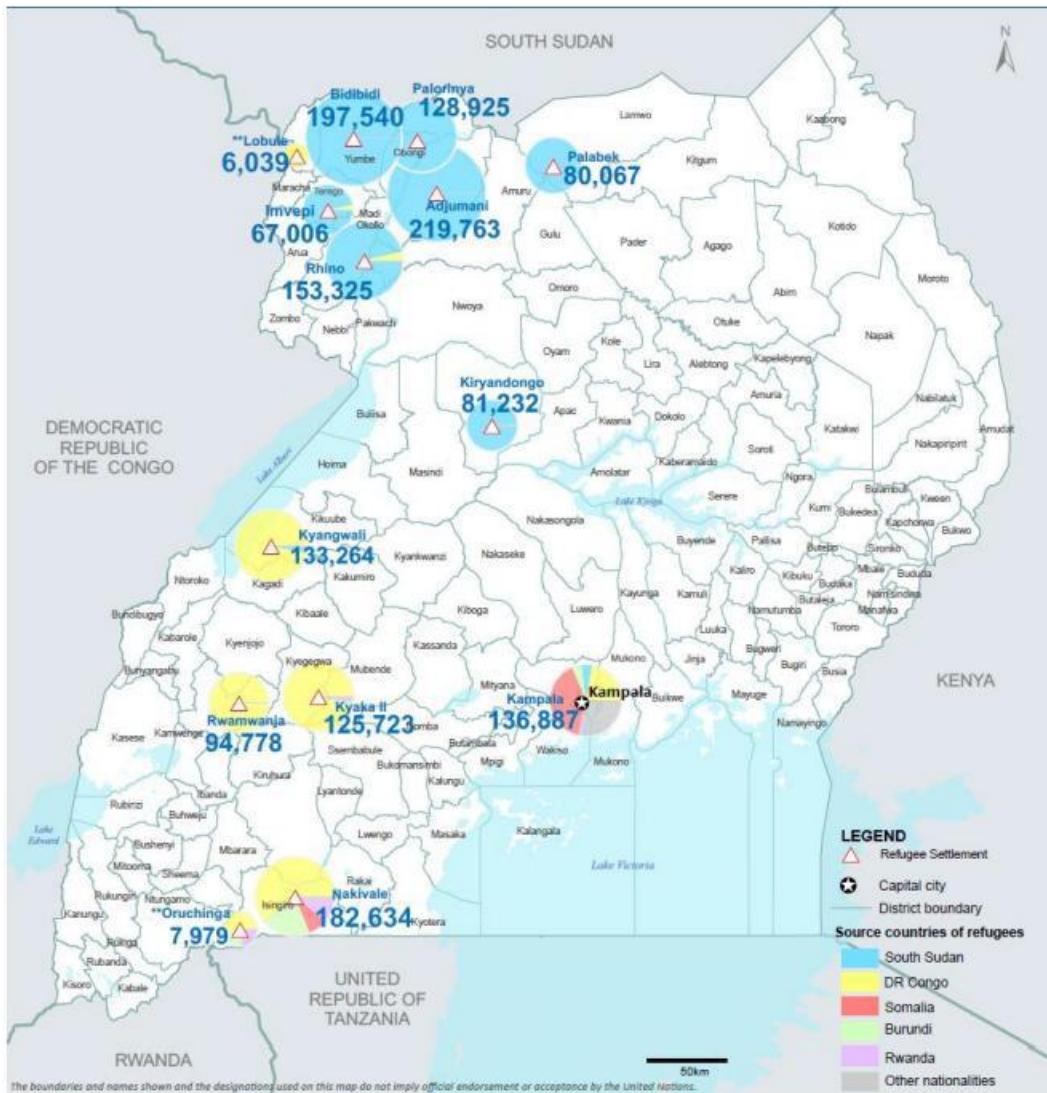
Outline



1. Introduction
2. The Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) overview
3. Community Driven Development (CDD) approach
4. Empirical strategy
5. Results and discussion
6. Key takeaways and policy implications

The Largest Refugee-Hosting Country in Africa

Figure 1.0 Showing refugee settlements in Uganda



Uganda is home to over 1.8 million refugees.

92% of these refugees reside in settlements integrated within host communities rather than in isolated camps.



UGANDA'S OPEN DOOR POLICY

Allows refugees to engage in economic activities, enjoy freedom of movement and access social services.

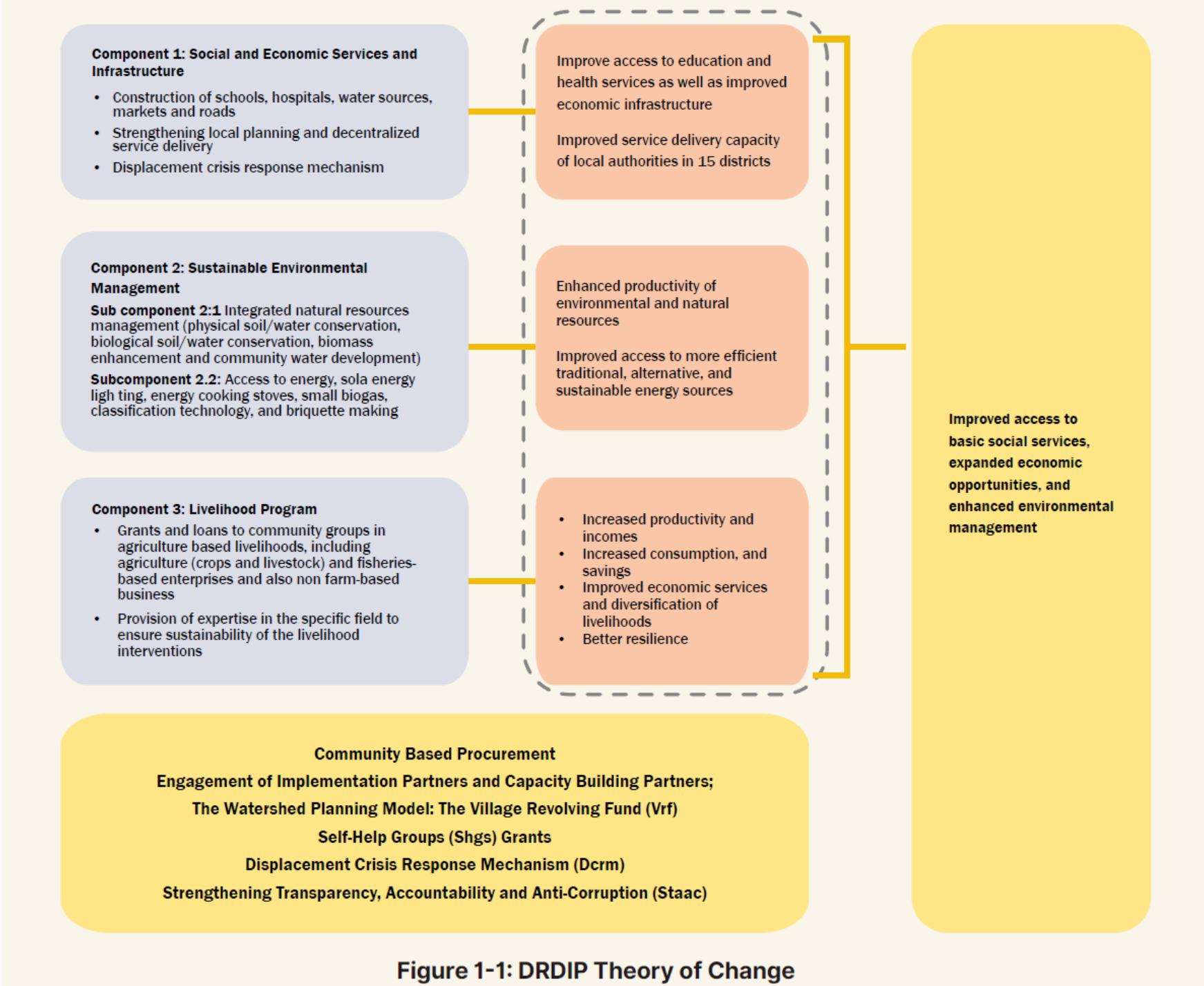
CHALLENGES WITH UGANDA'S OPEN DOOR POLICY

- The policy fails to achieve self-reliance and peaceful coexistence due to capacity and resource constraints (**Onyango, 2021**).
- Refugee arrivals increase pressure on local services like healthcare and education, leading to heightened social tensions (**Fajth et al., 2019**).
- Host communities may feel excluded when refugees receive more aid, fueling mistrust and resentment (**Hicks & Maina, 2018; Kreibaum, 2016**).
- In Uganda, visible disparities in aid delivery, such as food trucks for refugees, triggered local resentment among host populations (**Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2004**).
- Cultural and linguistic differences among refugee groups, combined with weak dispute resolution and unequal access to services, can intensify identity-based tensions and mistrust (**Blattman, 2022**).

The Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) overview

In response to high refugee influx, the Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda with support from the World Bank implemented DRDIP from 2018 to 2023, to support development needs and livelihoods in refugee-hosting districts.

The project had three components: **infrastructure**, **environmental management**, and **livelihood support**. These investment areas were intentionally interconnected to reinforce and amplify each other's impact.



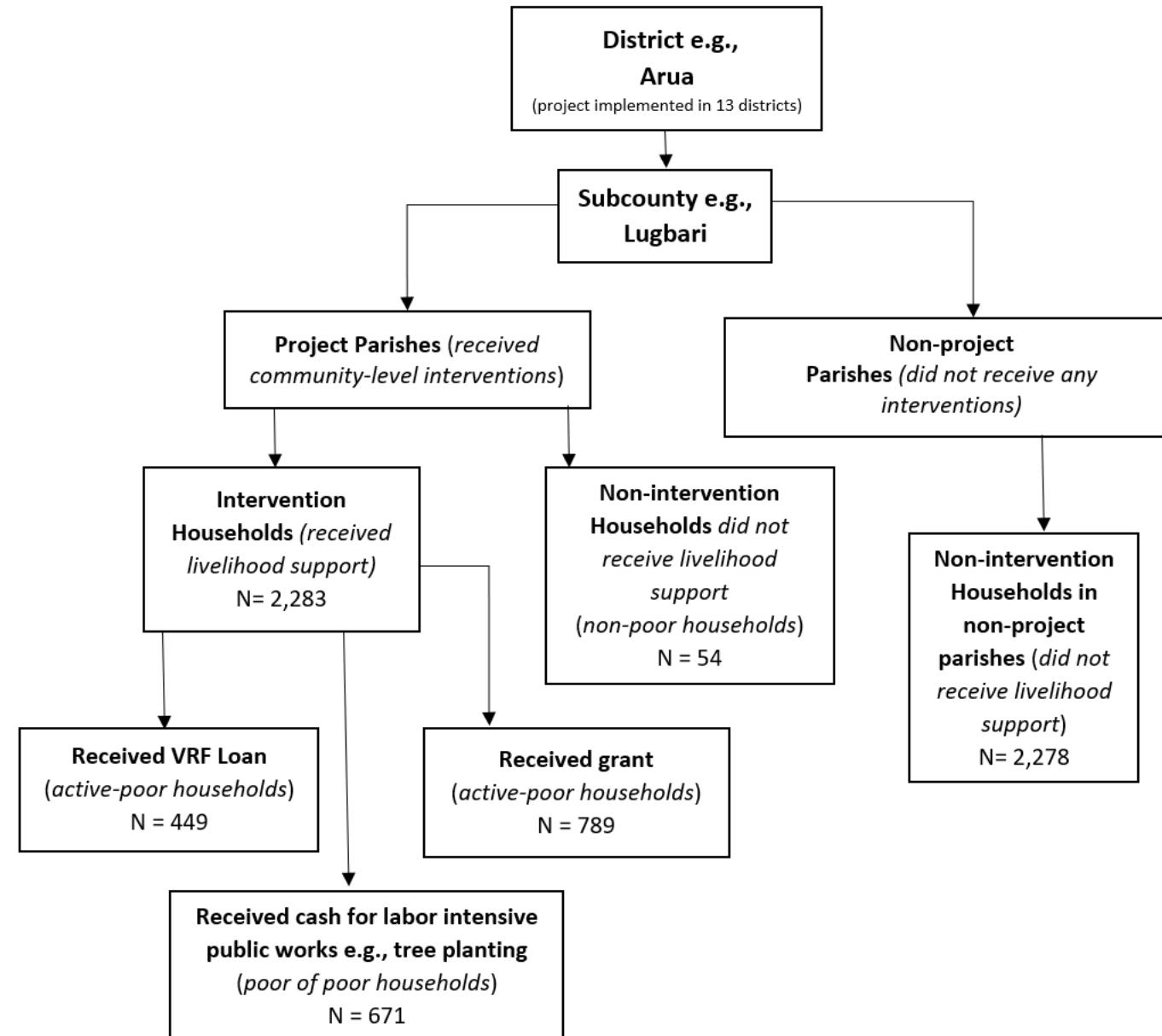
SELECTION OF PARISHES AND HOUSEHOLDS UNDER DRDIP

The project execution adopted a **Community Driven Development approach** delivered through community implementation structures

- Communities mobilized themselves to identify and prioritize local needs.
- Local procurement committees were composed of local leaders and community members.
- Parishes were selected based on refugee burden and locally identified development gaps to receive community-level interventions
- Households were selected based on a participatory wealth ranking approach (***cut-offs not available in data***) into the livelihood program to either receive a loan, grant or cash for labor intensive public work.

**A study by Harris & Posner (2019) finds that most MPs do not target the poor in their distribution of CDF projects, highlighting how decentralized programs may not effectively reach the poor due to political or personal incentives overriding equitable resource allocation.

FLOW CHART SHOWING PROJECT PARTICIPATION AT PARISH AND HOUSEHOLD LEVEL



This Study:

Research Question: What is the relationship between the DRDIP intervention and social cohesion between refugees and hosts? And how DRDIP affected other socio-economic outcomes that can act as mediators to conflict and cohesion?

Empirical Approach: Exploratory and descriptive, including estimations of a DID seeking to achieve the closest to the intervention's causal effect using data from 4,561 households in Uganda's refugee-hosting districts.

Hypothesis: Livelihood support may reduce financial pressure, competition for resources, and tensions, thereby improving social cohesion.

Treatment assignment



We begin by estimating the **determinants of treatment assignment** at both the community and household levels by regressing the binary treatment indicator (whether a household received a DRDIP community or family-level intervention) on a set of baseline variables.

$$DRDIP_{hj} = \alpha + \beta \text{ } Other \text{ } DRDIP_{hj} + \gamma \text{ } Controls_{hj} + \mu_j + \epsilon_{hj}$$

where:

- $DRDIP_{hj}$ is a dummy whether or not household h in district j received a DRDIP intervention (either community or family, depending on the column)
- $Other DRDIP_{hj}$ is a dummy for if household received other DRDIP intervention (either community or family)
- $Controls_{hj}$ are baseline (2018) socio-economic and demographic variables (such as household size, income and access to credit)
- μ_j are district fixed effects

Treatment Assignment on Baseline Variables (selected)

	(1) DRDIP Com.	(2) DRDIP Com.	(3) DRDIP Fam.	(4) DRDIP Fam.
DRDIP Fam.		0.302*** (0.021)		
DRDIP Com.				0.257*** (0.017)
Refugee Household (Dummy)	-0.051** (0.025)	-0.082*** (0.024)	0.104*** (0.024)	0.117*** (0.023)
Farmer Head of Household (Dummy)	-0.058*** (0.017)	-0.071*** (0.016)	0.042*** (0.015)	0.057*** (0.015)
Poverty Index	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.001* (0.000)
Per Capita income (USD)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Member of savings group (Dummy)	0.003 (0.017)	-0.013 (0.017)	0.051*** (0.017)	0.051*** (0.017)
Dist. primary school	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Observations	3,653	3,653	3,653	3,653
R-squared	0.134	0.201	0.107	0.176
District FE	YES	YES	YES	YES

Notes: "DRDIP Fam.": Family/Household-level DRDIP intervention. "DRDIP Com.": Community-level DRDIP intervention. A total of 19 explanatory variables in specifications (1) and (3) and 20 for specifications (2) and (4) - other variables not reported: head of household gender, marital status, age, and illiteracy; number of household members <18, >65; average monthly income, access to credit, entrepreneurial activity; donation as food source and children immunization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Intermediate outcomes

Next, we examine how the intervention influenced key intermediate outcomes that may impact conflict and violence, using the equations below:

Columns 1-5 DiD:

$$Y_{hjt} = \alpha + \beta_1 DRDIP_{Comun.hj} \times Post_t + \beta_2 DRDIP_{Fam.hj} \times Post_t + \\ + \beta_3 DRDIP_{Comun.hj} \times DRDIP_{Fam.hj} \times Post_t + \mu_h + \mu_t + \epsilon_{hjt}$$

where:

- Y_{hjt} is the outcome for household h living in district j in time t (2018 or 2023)
- $DRDIP_{Comm.hj}$ is a dummy for household live in a community that received an DRDIP community level intervention
- $DRDIP_{Fam.hj}$ is a dummy for household received an DRDIP family level intervention (VRF, grant or labor-cash)
- $Post_t$ is a dummy for t equals to 2023
- U_h is a household fixed effects
- U_t is a time fixed effect

Columns 6-8:

$$Y_{hj} = \alpha + \beta_1 DRDIP_{Comun.hj} + \beta_2 DRDIP_{Fam.hj} + \\ + \beta_3 DRDIP_{Comun.hj} \times DRDIP_{Fam.hj} + \mu_j + \epsilon_{hj}$$

where:

- Y_{hj} is the outcome for household h living in district j in 2023
- U_j is a district fixed effect

Intervention Effects on Family and Community Resources and Practices

	(1 - DiD) Log(Income)	(2 - DiD) Poverty Index	(3 - DiD) Credit Access	(4 - DiD) Dist. school	(5 - DiD) Time to water	(6) Irrigation	(7) Env. Practices	(8) Road Construct.
DRDIP Com.*Post	-0.027 (0.032)	0.644 (0.608)	0.025 (0.018)	-0.694*** (0.219)	-0.393 (1.028)			
DRDIP Fam.*Post	0.028 (0.039)	8.478*** (0.741)	0.138*** (0.021)	-0.272 (0.266)	-5.721*** (1.253)			
DRDIP Com.*DRDIP Fam.*Post	-0.102* (0.061)	-3.492*** (1.156)	-0.095*** (0.033)	0.991** (0.416)	-0.384 (1.955)			
DRDIP Com.						0.045*** (0.012)	0.128*** (0.019)	0.294*** (0.019)
DRDIP Fam.						0.008 (0.014)	0.139*** (0.023)	0.285*** (0.022)
DRDIP Com.* DRDIP Fam.						0.062*** (0.022)	-0.105*** (0.035)	-0.327*** (0.034)
Observations	8,211	8,217	8,217	8,217	8,217	4,561	4,561	4,561
R-squared	0.003	0.064	0.100	0.004	0.048	0.062	0.101	0.155
Mean of Outcome		34.39	0.182	7.972	29.83	0.106	0.445	0.422
Household FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Time FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
District FE	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES

Notes: "DRDIP Fam.": Family/Household-level DRDIP intervention. "DRDIP Com.": Community-level DRDIP intervention. "Dist. school": distance in km to closest secondary school; "Env. Practices": adoption of environmental practices; "Road Construct.": road construction; "Irrigation": use of irrigation. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Conflict outcomes



Next, we model the relationship between different arms of the intervention and conflict using the equation below

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Conflict}_{hj} = & \alpha + \beta_1 \text{ DRDIP Comun.}_{hj} + \beta_2 \text{ DRDIP Fam.}_{hj} + \\ & + \beta_3 \text{ DRDIP Comun.}_{hj} \times \text{DRDIP Fam.}_{hj} + \gamma \text{ Controls}_{hj} + \mu_j + \epsilon_{hj} \end{aligned}$$

where:

- Conflict_{hj} are conflict related variables (all conflict, land related conflict, non-receptive/hostile interactions) reported by household h living in district j
- Other variables are very similar to previous equations.

DRDIP and Conflict

	(1) Conflict	(2) Land Conflict	(3) Non-Receptive/Hostile
DRDIP Com.	-0.017 (0.017)	-0.028*** (0.009)	0.008 (0.009)
DRDIP Com.* DRDIP Fam.	0.125*** (0.034)	0.085*** (0.020)	-0.003 (0.012)
DRDIP Fam. (VRF Arm)	0.018 (0.028)	0.007 (0.014)	0.003 (0.005)
DRDIP Fam. (Grant Arm)	-0.093*** (0.020)	-0.081*** (0.014)	-0.040*** (0.010)
DRDIP Fam. (Labor-Cash Arm)	-0.042** (0.021)	-0.003 (0.013)	-0.024*** (0.008)
Observations	1,964	1,964	1,949
R-squared	0.137	0.129	0.083
Mean of Outcome	0.0998	0.0438	0.0174
Controls	YES	YES	YES
District FE	YES	YES	YES

Notes: "DRDIP Fam.": Family/Household-level DRDIP intervention. "DRDIP Com.": Community-level DRDIP intervention. "Conflict": dummy for experienced conflict; "Land conflict": dummy for experienced land conflict; "Non-receptive/hostile": dummy for classifying relationship with locals/refugees as hostile or non-receptive. Control variables (in the baseline) not reported: head of household gender, marital status, age, and illiteracy; number of household members <18, >65; poverty index; average monthly income; farmer household; per capita income; access to credit; entrepreneurial activity; donation as food source; and children immunization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Child abuse, violence against women/girls



Lastly, we model the relationship between different arms of the intervention and child abuse, violence against women/girls, using the equation below:

$$\begin{aligned} Violence_{hjt} = & \alpha + \beta_1 DRDIP_{Comun.hj} \times Post_t + \beta_2 DRDIP_{Fam.hj} \times Post_t + \\ & + \beta_3 DRDIP_{Comun.hj} \times DRDIP_{Fam.hj} \times Post_t + \mu_h + \mu_t + \epsilon_{hjt} \end{aligned}$$

where:

- $Violence_{hjt}$ are violence related variables (violence against women/girls) reported by household h living in district j in time t (2018 or 2023)
- Other variables are very similar to previous equations.

DRDIP and Violence

	(1)	(2 - DiD)
	Child Abuse	Violence against women/girls
DRDIP Com.	-0.062** (0.026)	
DRDIP Fam. (VRF Arm)	0.000 (0.043)	
DRDIP Fam. (Grant Arm)	-0.016 (0.036)	
DRDIP Fam. (Labor-Cash Arm)	-0.073** (0.030)	
DRDIP Com.* DRDIP Fam.	0.009 (0.050)	
DRDIP Com.*Post		-0.031** (0.015)
DRDIP Fam. (VRF Arm)*Post		-0.027 (0.025)
DRDIP Fam. (Grant Arm)*Post		-0.053*** (0.018)
DRDIP Fam. (Cash Arm)*Post		0.035* (0.019)
DRDIP Com.*DRDIP Fam.*Post		0.062** (0.027)
Observations	1,964	7,164
R-squared	0.157	0.005
Mean of Outcome	0.308	0.305
Controls	YES	NO
District FE	YES	NO
Household FE	NO	YES
Time FE	NO	YES

Notes: "DRDIP Fam.": Family/Household-level DRDIP intervention. "DRDIP Com.": Community-level DRDIP intervention. "Child Abuse": dummy for experienced child abuse; "Violence against women/girls": dummy for experienced violence against women or girls. Control variables (in the baseline) not reported: head of household gender, marital status, age, and illiteracy; number of household members <18, >65; poverty index; average monthly income; farmer household; per capita income; access to credit; entrepreneurial activity; donation as food source; and children immunization. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Results summary

DRDIP effects on intermediate outcomes

- No significant effect on income.
- Improved access to credit and environmental practices.
- Community interventions led to infrastructure gains (e.g., roads, irrigation, school proximity, less time to water source).

DRDIP effects on conflict and gender based violence

- Grant and labor-cash interventions associated with reduced conflict.
- Refugees benefited from grant, but less from VRF.
- Combined community + family interventions linked to increased conflict (*possibly due to coordination challenges, tree-planting, and ownership*).
- Reduction in child abuse and violence against women/girls correlated with community-level intervention, and household-level grant and cash for labor interventions.

Key Takeaways and Policy Implications for DRDIP Phase 2

1. Refugees were less likely to receive community-level interventions - equitable targeting concerns.
2. Unintended consequences from combining community and family (sometimes linked to increased conflict) – streamline intervention delivery, overlapping components.
3. Prioritize grant and cash for labor interventions – associated with reduced conflict, child abuse, and gender-based violence, especially among refugees.



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

We welcome your
feedback and
comments!

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