



Finnish
Refugee
Council

Mid-term evaluation for project “Connecting refugees and Ugandans for social cohesion”

UG102

20.12.2024

1. Introduction

Finnish Refugee Council (FRC), established in 1965, is a Finland-based civil society organization whose mission is to secure the rights and protection of displaced people and to enhance their ability to survive and build peace. FRC works to strengthen the resilience of refugees and conflict affected persons through vocational, livelihood, literacy, numeracy and life skills training provision and the enhancement of inter and intra communal peace building. FRC's international programme is operated through its four Country Offices with urban and rural refugees and host communities in Uganda, with urban and rural refugees, internally displaced persons and rural and urban host community members in Ethiopia, with internally displaced persons, returnees, resettled persons, and host communities in Myanmar and internally displaced persons and repatriates in South Sudan.

FRC is implementing a project "Connecting Refugees and Ugandans for Social Cohesion in Adjumani district" in the refugee settlements of Ayilo and Pagirinya and hosting villages. The three-year (October 2022- December 2025) project is being implemented in partnership with Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) and it aims at contributing to peaceful and safe co-existence within the refugee-hosting district in Northern Uganda. The project is designed to reduce social conflict and violence and strengthen social cohesion, with a specific focus on the refugees and host communities.

It's on this note that FRC is obligated to conduct a mid-term evaluation to measure the achievements against targets that have so far been attained and to assess the effectiveness of the various approaches applied in the implementation of the project. The Mid-Term Evaluation will focus on the Cohorts of both leaders and peace committees from 2022-2023 and 2024 first cohort of leaders and targeted community members. The mid-term evaluation was conducted between October and December 2024 with FRC staff in Uganda and Finland.

2. Project description

2.1. Project details

The "Connecting Refugees and Ugandans for Social Cohesion in Northern Uganda" project is implemented by FRC and its partner Justice and Reconciliation project (JRP) in Adjumani. The project implementation takes place specifically in Ayilo 1 and 2, Pagirinya refugee camps as well as Lewa Central, Ayilo, Okawa, Pagirinya, Mukoloyoro and Pawinyo hosting communities. The four-year project (2022-2025) project is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The project's overall goal is to "Contribute to peaceful and safe

co-existence within the refugee-hosting district in Northern Uganda”. This goal is expected to be achieved through two outcome objectives:

- Enhanced capacity and knowledge of refugees and host communities to access their rights and fulfil their legal obligations in selected refugee settlements and nearby host areas in Adjumani, and
- Targeted refugee and host communities supported to peacefully resolve inter- and intra-community conflicts and to have access to justice.

Under the two outcomes FRC is responsible for providing civic education training to community leaders and JRP manages the capacity strengthening and support to the operation of local peace committees. The FRC civic education aims to create awareness of the human rights and fundamental freedoms and provide guidance on how to demand, uphold and protect human rights. The training manual focuses on:

- The concept and key principles of human rights, and access to justice: universality, inherency, equality, inalienability and interdependency of human rights, non-discrimination, children’s rights, legal rights, moral rights and natural rights and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, reporting on rights abuse and violations, respecting other people’s rights, rights and responsibilities, rights of refugees, animal rights, protection from forced return, role of UNHCR and OPM in protecting refugees
- Law, administration of justice: rule of law, types of law (criminal law, civil law, public law, private law, international law, metropolitan law and municipal laws), key laws (constitution of Uganda, acts and statutes), gender-based violence and harmful social practices, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, ways of resolving disputes, courts (family and children’s court, high court, constitutional court, supreme court, local council courts), alternative dispute resolutions
- Land rights and tenure system in Uganda, handling land disputes and environmental protection: land use in Uganda, tenure system, land formalization, land disputes, environmental protection,
- Conflict management, peace and alternative dispute resolution: definition and types of conflict, conflict identification, alternative dispute resolution, conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm approach, peace building and reconciliation
- Leadership and governance: characteristics, roles and responsibilities, types of leaders, challenges faced by leaders, good governance

2.2. Project context

According to UNHCR, by the end of December 2023, Uganda was hosting over 1.6 million refugees and asylum seekers. New arrivals have continued to enter the country, mainly from the DRC, Sudan, and South Sudan. Adjumani district alone has received over 8,094 refugees since January 2024.

Uganda’s government is pursuing an open-door refugee policy where refugees are welcomed into the country in record numbers and allowed to freely interact with host communities as opposed to other countries where refugees are kept under restrictions in camps. With the enactment and coming into force of the 2006 Refugee Act, refugees in Uganda are entitled to internationally recognized refugee rights, freedom of movement in

Uganda, the same rights as nationals with respect to practicing their religion and are entitled to elementary education for which they also receive the same treatment as nationals. This policy, however, is reaching its limits and has brought about social tensions within the receiving communities as basic services are becoming limited and scarce. In turn, gender-based violence, human rights abuses and violent conflicts have become prevalent in the refugee settlements, as well in the vulnerable population groups of the local communities. The main causes include the lack of clear knowledgeable and skilled leadership structures among the community leaders in addressing the injustices among the community. This has also been compounded by the lack of awareness of the human rights and access to justice for the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the community.

3. Purpose, scope and methodology

3.1. Evaluation objectives

The main purpose of the midterm evaluation is to assess achievements towards the project goal and objectives during the period of implementation (2022-2024) the effectiveness of the project plan to reach these goals. The evaluation will provide a detailed critical analysis assessing results and outcomes with evidence-based documentation, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations to support future designs and implementation. The Evaluation will also review progress towards sustainability.

Specific objectives of the evaluation:

- To assess the impact of the project on increased social cohesion and reduced violence;
- To establish the effectiveness of the project's theory of change in achieving the project impact including the localization approach (working through a partner);
- To capture lessons learnt and provide information on the project approaches identifying what has worked and what has not worked to inform future implementation and strategies.

The mid-term evaluation will respond to the following specific research questions:

1. What kind of impact has the project had on social cohesion in the target communities?
 - Progress against SUPER indicator: Improved awareness about human and legal rights and obligations among targeted refugee and host community members.
 - Progress against project indicator: Recorded improvement in social cohesion (inter- or intra-communities' social interaction)

2. What factors have contributed to achieving or have hindered reaching the intended outcome objectives?
 - **Outcome 1**: Enhanced capacity and knowledge of refugees and host communities to access their rights and fulfill their legal obligations in selected refugee settlements and nearby host areas in Adjumani.
 - **Outcome 2**: Targeted refugee and host communities supported to peacefully resolve inter- and intra-community conflicts and to have access to justice.
 - Looking also at the localization aspect of the TOC

3. To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to be sustained after the completion of this project?

3.2. Scope of the evaluation

The midterm evaluation will be conducted in the project location of Adjumani district in the settlements of Ayilo I, Ayilo II, Pagirinya and surrounding host communities of Lewa Central, Ayilo, Okawa, Pagirinya, Mukoloyoro and Pawinyo. The evaluation will target the leaders and peace committees identified, trained and supported between 2022-2023 as well as the 2024 first cohort of leaders as well as the targeted community members, project implementing partner and key project stakeholders. The evaluation is planned to take place between October- December 2024. The mid-term evaluation will be implemented internally with FRC Uganda and HQ resources.

The beneficiary scope which includes leaders, peace committee members, communities is as below:

No	Respondent category	Location	Numbers
1.	Leaders, peace committee members & other community members	Adjumani District (Ayilo I, Ayilo II, and Pagirinya)	1,989

3.3. Evaluation approach

The mid-term evaluation utilized the following methodologies:

- Key Informant Interviews with key stakeholders
- Field visits in the implementation areas for data collection and observations;
- Focus group discussions with sampled community members, peace committees and trained leaders, project and partner staff.

The evaluation was conducted internally by FRC. The data collection tools were developed in collaboration by the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, the Project Manager and Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant. The data was collected in-person by the Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant, the Project Manager, and the Project Officer with external note takers who were also responsible for transcribing the data. The final analysis and reporting were done by the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor. The evaluation data has been analysed in the light of the project Theory of Change.

3.4. Sampling

The evaluation used both simple random sampling as well as purposive sampling depending on the target group.

Sample for FGDs

Rights holders	Sample
Leaders (100 trained in 2023, 66 in 2024)	4 FGDs (host and refugees) 2 in Ayilo and 2 Pagirinya with around 15 participants in each FGD. Having representation from both years.
Peace Committee members (2023: 80 peace committee members, 2024: 80)	4 FGDs host and refugees 2 in Ayilo and 2 Pagirinya with around 15 participants in each FGD. Having representation from both years.
Community members	4 FGDs (1 women host group, 1 women refugee group, 1 host youth group and 1 refugee youth group) with 15 participants in each FGD. Including representation from elderly and persons with disabilities in the women's groups and considering men and persons with disabilities in the youth groups. 2 in Pagirinya and 2 in Ayilo.
Staff and implementing partners	2 (one FRC implementing staff and one for JRP implementing staff)
Total	14

Sample for KIs

Stakeholder	Sample
OPM Settlement commandants	2 (Ayilo, Pagirinya)
UNHCR Senior Community Protection Associate-Peacebuilding and Protection Associate	1
Subcounty Community Development Officer	2 (Pakele and Dzaipi)
Lutheran World Federation (LWF) representative	1
Refugee Law Project (RLP)	1
Police	2 (Ayilo and Pagirinya)
Total	9

4. Findings

This chapter presents the evaluation findings. Chapter 4.1. presents the changes observed at community level related to social cohesion and conflicts as well as other impacts to the programme participants, chapters 4.2. and 4.3. present the contributing and hindering

factors towards the project achievements and chapter 4.4. presents findings on project sustainability.

4.1. Changes in the target community and stakeholders

The evaluation identified several changes in the target community as well as in the leaders and peace committee members themselves. These identified changes are presented below under four headings: reduced rights violations, improved social cohesion, changes in the community, and changes in the leaders and peace committee members.

4.1.1. Reduced rights violations

When asked about changes in the violence and social cohesion in the project target areas nearly all the respondents across key informants, community members, leaders and peace committee members mentioned that in general conflicts had reduced.

“As I said, the magnitude has reduced. Even GBV violence, emotional abuses and even physical fights. It has reduced. Right now, even if you go to the police station. The rate these cases are coming is not as it used to be.” KII Dzaipi.

“There is great reduction in the conflicts situation in the two settlements of Ayilo and Pagirinya among the refugees and the host community and also among refugees themselves for the last two years. Although there are some isolated cases of gang attacks, these have not escalated into bigger community and community managed them successfully.” KII

Although the reduction in the number of conflicts was clearly present in the data (48 mentions on reduced conflicts) there were also some comments on increasing or remaining issues (14 mentions on increasing or remaining issues). Mostly the respondents talked about the increase in thefts which was contributed largely to the weakened economic and food security situation in the target area. A few also talked about crimes and disturbances committed by out of school or out of employment youth. The below sub-chapters present the specific reduced rights violations mentioned by the respondents.

4.1.1.1. Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence was the most often mentioned type of rights violation which was said to have reduced in the target communities (15 mentions in the data). Gender-based violence (GBV) was said to have improved both in the community (reduced early marriages, teenage pregnancies, rapes) as well as within households (intimate partner or domestic violence).

Amongst the different respondents especially the peace committee members talked about reduction in intimate partner or domestic violence. These positive changes were mentioned by all the peace committee FGDs. Based on the discussions with the peace committees they have been especially active and involved in handling GBV cases at household level which can explain why the committees mentioned the reduction in the cases in particular.

“Before women and husband would fight and after the training, they now talk about the issue of domestic violence.” Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

“The cases of GBV have reduced. Men also join their wives in weeding and also do harvest of the crops together.” Community FGD Pagirinya

Gender based violence awareness creation, identification and legal response is one of the topics that both the peace committees and the community leaders are trained on as part of the FRC intervention. Based on the evaluation data it seems that the FRC trainings have been effective in equipping the peace committees and the community leaders to address GBV related conflict cases.

4.1.1.2. Land conflicts

Land related conflicts were also said to have reduced in the communities (12 mentions on the reduction of land use and ownership related conflicts). The land use and ownership related conflicts were identified in the project conflict analysis as one of the main areas of conflict between the refugees and the host community. These conflicts have been mostly related to improper agreements on the land use and ownership as well as on stray animals eating crops. Like GBV land ownership and tenure system as well as environmental protection and animal rights were included in the FRC training where leaders have been equipped to solve land ownership and tenure issues. Reported decrease in the land conflict cases can indicate that the trainings have been impactful in supporting the leaders to address the land conflicts in the target communities.

“Land conflict cases have also dropped in the community because of the community awareness on the land rights.” Leader FGD Ayilo

“The elders have contributed to the reduced cases of land conflict because they are preaching the gospel of using land equally with the refugees without segregation.” Community FGD Ayilo

4.1.1.3. School dropouts

The respondents also talked about the reduction in school-dropouts (7 mentions in the data). The changes in school-dropouts were especially highlighted by the leaders, and it came out in all the leader FGDs.

“The problem of children dropping out of school has reduced because the parents are now able to send their children to school because of the awareness of the importance of sending children to school.” Leader FGD Ayilo

“Rate of school dropout has reduced because of the awareness on the importance of education.” Community FGD Pagirinya

The FRC leader training includes a section focused on children’s rights including children’s right to education. Reported decrease in school dropouts can indicate that the trainings have been impactful in supporting the leaders to address children’s rights violations, namely school dropouts.

Besides the three above rights-violations in the community a few mentions were given on reduced violence as such, reduced thefts, and reduced substance abuse (alcohol consumption).

4.1.2. Improved social cohesion

Besides the actual reduction in conflicts and rights-violations many respondents also talked about the improvement in social cohesion between the refugees and the host community members (31 mentions on improved social cohesion or peaceful co-existence). The respondents talked about increased friendships between refugee and host

communities, increased sharing of resources such as land and reduction in tribalism as concrete examples of improved relationships between the different groups.

“The host and refugees have now come together on the issues of sharing, even with land; collaborating together and sharing.” Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

“There is good relationship between the hosts and the refugees as a result of the training they even greet each other.” Leader FGD Pagirinya

“The cases of misunderstanding in the community have reduced because the peace committees have sensitized the community about peaceful co-existence.” Community FGD Ayilo

“Because Pagirinya and Ayilo have been settlements regarded as hotspots for conflicts due to the various tribal clashes and other conflicts but honestly for the last two years they have become exemplary for peace.” KII

Peace building is one of the elements of the leader and peace committee trainings under the FRC project in addition to which the project aims to enhance social cohesion between refugees and host community members through an inclusive participant approach.

Besides improved relations between the refugee and the host community there were also two mentions around improved relations between leaders and between youth.

4.1.3. Changes in the community

When asked about the reasons for the changes in rights-violations and social cohesion the community members identified many contributing factors some of which can be directly linked to the project. All the reported contributing elements are presented in the below sub-chapters.

4.1.3.1. Changed community practices and mindset

The different respondents described incidences of changes in community practices and mindset as the reason for the changes in social cohesion and reduction in rights violations (13 mentions in the data where the respondents explained the positive changes in the community through changes in the community mindsets or practices and as stemming from the peace committees' and leaders' interventions). The leaders, peace committee members and KII informants mentioned mostly changes in the community's practices related to land (sharing land between refugees and host community members, changes in land registration practices and relocating animals), gender equality (men's improved engagement in household tasks, changes in men's use of household money (from alcohol to household needs)) as well as general changes in the mindset, positive thinking, attitude and ability to forgive. The project has been providing information to the communities on the need of having witnesses to the land registrations as a way of formalizing the agreements. One community FGD participant also said that people had started planting trees. The leaders have been trained on environmental protection and have been talking about this to the community members, which can have contributed to improvements in tree planting.

“Land registration by the individuals who own land has led to reduced cases of land conflict”. Community FGD Ayilo

“Men are spending the little they have on alcohol instead of food but now because the peace committee is talking to men, they are starting to change their lifestyle.” Peace Committee FGD Pagirinya

“Aspect of forgiveness among the refugees has improved” KII

4.1.3.2. Changed legislation and punishments

The community members and leaders also talked about changes in local legislation and punishments had helped to reduce conflicts in the communities.

There were four mentions on the positive impacts the shutting of the night disco during weekdays had had on early pregnancies and GBV. The night discos were closed by the local leaders and could now only be run during weekends or then during the weekdays with the permission of the district/sub-county. Likewise, the local leaders had banned community members from fetching water late at night to reduce early pregnancies and GBV.

“They stopped people from fetching water at night which led to reduction in the number of early pregnancy”. Leader FGD Ayilo

“Uncontrolled night disco dance in the community has been stopped which led to the reduced cases of early marriage”. Community FGD Ayilo

The leaders also mentioned that a by-law had been introduced that penalized children working at the local markets during the weekdays (fine of 50 000 Ugandan Shillings) to help to reduce school dropouts. Besides these the respondents also mentioned by-laws on early marriages, stray animals and thefts as helping to reduce to conflict situations. The impact of the by-laws was only mentioned by the community members and the leaders (14 mentions on the impacts of by-laws).

“The leaders helped in solving the issues in the community by setting bylaws to guide the people in their operation”. Community FGD Ayilo

The community members also mentioned that punishments such as giving fines, police arrests and mob justice had contributed to reducing conflicts in the community (5 mentions on the impacts of punishments all from Community FGD in Ayilo).

“The problem of stray animal has reduced because the elders fine those who have left their animals to move freely without tying them”. Community FGD Ayilo

4.1.3.3. Increased understanding and awareness about rights, laws and regulations

The most mentioned contributing factor to the changes in social cohesion and the realization of rights the community members mentioned was increased awareness and understanding of rights, laws and regulations (18 mentions on increased understanding and awareness amongst the community FGDs). Understanding and awareness was said to have increased particularly on land rights and procedures but also on children’s rights and education and on rights in general. The community members further mentioned that

they had gained this knowledge from the community leaders and the peace committees, thus connecting the changes to the project's activities.

“He is able to know the procedure of acquiring land from the host for renting through awareness on land conflict issues in the community”. Community FGD Pagirinya

“The land conflict has reduced to a smaller extend as a result of the awareness creation the land rights by the peace committee.” Community FGD Ayilo

“The leaders sensitize the community about the rights of children”. Community FGD Ayilo

The peace committee and leader FGDs and the KIs provided further evidence that the FRC trained leaders and peace committees had contributed to the community level improved awareness and understanding on rights. The FRC leader training manual equips the leaders with knowledge on basic understanding of human rights, Uganda's law and regulations, including their implications to refugees, women and children and focuses particularly also on land rights. The leaders have been subsequently supported to spread this knowledge to their communities, while peace committees have organized community discussions to manage conflict cases.

“The peace committees have tried to sensitize the community about the land rights and it contributed to reduced cases of land conflict”. Peace committee FGD Ayilo

“He acquired the knowledge on human rights which he didn't know before the training he has tried to counsel the parents to send their children to school”. Leader FGD Pagirinya

4.1.3.3.1. Understanding and awareness on rights

The community members were also asked about the different human rights they were aware of. There were altogether 26 mentions of different rights in the data. Majority of the human rights the community members mentioned were social rights such as education, food, marriage and health services. Right to movement and freedom were also mentioned more than once. The respondents also named a few practices that were not rights such as correcting their husbands, and socialization. In general the community members talked about individual rights rather than the principles related to human rights although there were 3 mentions on the universality, equality and non-discrimination aspects of human rights. Overall based on the evaluation data it seems that the general understanding on human rights which the leaders and peace committees have been trained on has not been reflected yet well at the community level, although the evaluation's questions around human rights awareness and understanding were limited.

4.1.3.4. Awareness on the negative consequences of conflicts

The community members, leaders and peace committee members also talked about the communities' increased awareness on the negative consequences of conflicts as contributing to the increased peaceful co-existence. The respondents also mentioned that the project-initiated community dialogues and awareness raising activities had contributed to this increase in community awareness (7 mentions on the impacts of awareness raising on the impacts of conflicts). The project has supported the trained leaders to arrange community awareness raising sessions on the trained topics, and the leaders and the peace committees have been trained on peace building and conflict management.

“Regular awareness to the community on peaceful coexistence. This time one thing I have seen is the way leaders have stepped up their efforts on awareness sessions which has

helped the community to understand the dangers of conflicts to the peace they are enjoying". KII

"Fighting cases have reduced in the community as a result of the peace community who carried community awareness on the dangers of violence in the community". Community FGD Pagirinya

"The awareness by leaders helped to change the mindset of the community. During the awareness sessions leaders are able to emphasise the benefits of peace and togetherness". KII

4.1.4. Changes in the leaders and peace committee members

Besides the changes in the target communities the evaluation also identified changes that had taken place in the trained leaders and peace committee members because of their participation to the project. These changes (42 mentions of changes in the behaviour, attitudes or situation of the leaders and peace committee members) were partly outside of the changes expected by the project's theory of change and are considered in the below sub-chapters.

4.1.4.1. Changed role in the community

Based on the evaluation findings the project has contributed to a change in the role of the leaders and peace committees in their respective communities both in relation to the community members as well as to the other key stakeholders particularly on matters around conflict management. In general, the project has helped to emphasize the role of leaders and peace committees on community conflict management and on peace promotion.

"Before the training they didn't bother to go and sensitize the community about peace, but they now do it because of the training". Leader FGD Ayilo

The leaders' and peace committees' increased involvement in conflict management was said to have lessened the work of the police and OPM who were previously called to handle all conflict cases and crimes (9 mentions on the reduced workload of the police/OPM because of the leaders and peace committees' involvement in case management). The leader's and peace committees were said now to be more involved in handling especially GBV, land and theft related cases whereas all killings were still referred to the police. This same finding was confirmed by the Community FGDs where it was revealed that the community members were said to prefer bringing their conflict cases to the leaders, elders and the peace committees rather than the police.

"Yes, there are some cases which dont need to come up to my desk. There's some domestic violence between a husband and a wife. These people always come here. Because of their trainings they handle these cases. As a result, the workload for me has reduced greatly. That is the impact in the settlement. And that one applies both in the refugee settlement and then the host." KII Ayilo

"Reporting cases to the police has reduced because it now the peace committees to handle cases which used to be handled by the police." Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

“She used to take the children below the age of 18 to police when they have stolen other items but because of the training they handle such cases at home with the parents other than police.” Leader FGD Ayilo

The Key informants, peace committee members and leaders also noted on increased respect and trust towards the peace committee members and the leaders within the community and amongst stakeholders (10 mentions on the improved trust and respect towards leaders and peace committee members).

“The collaboration of peace committees and leaders and other protection partners is so good that most of the partners rely on them even me as (the representative of the organization/institution) I very much appreciate their work.” KII

“Yes, the leaders play a vital role in these changes because the community even now days trust the leaders more than us the police. I think there is some thing different the leaders are doing now which they were not doing before.” KII

“People change their behavior when they see a peace committee member wearing a t-shirt even leaders behave differently now”...“We are now known by the leaders of the blocks; now they call on us to solve issued and we are working together with the leaders”... “If there is a case that arrives, they go to peace committee members first before the police; community members have began reporting differently than before.” Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

It was also mentioned the KIIs that the peace committees in particular had started to take the role of “eyes and ears” in the community which had helped to better capture and communicate the different conflicts taking place in the communities for the benefit of the different stakeholders working in and for the communities.

“Some of the issues that were never known are now coming up because of the peace committee (GBV cases are recorded, theft recorded) – understanding of what are the issues the communities are struggling with (this helps partners to identify needs and design interventions)”. Staff/partner FGD

4.1.4.2. Self-confidence

The leaders’ and peace committee members’ improved self-confidence and self-esteem was mentioned both by the trainees themselves and by project staff and Key Informants (13 mentions on improved self-confidence or self-esteem). The improved self-confidence had positively affected how they leaders and peace committee members acted with their neighbours as well as with other leaders and stakeholders.

“Even when OPM invites them to give opening remarks, you can see that these leaders are so competent. And they always attend meetings, even at times we’re inviting them in the OPM boardroom in Adjumani, even in district headquarters, they are representing the community very well, meaning they are impacted with the trainings.” KII

“The training has made them to build confidence in themselves (the peace committee members)”. Peace committee FGD Ayilo

“Before the training, she (the interviewee) used to isolate herself from others, but the training made her interact freely with her neighbors”. Leader FGD Ayilo

4.1.4.3. Personal relationships

The leaders and the peace committee members mentioned that the training had changed the way they related to their family members and how they managed their emotions in relationships with other people (8 mentions of changed relations or behaviour in relation to others). The respondents mentioned about being now more forgiving and having more patience and self-control when dealing with other people.

“She (the interviewee) used to be a short-tempered person, but she has now changed to be a nice person and solving the problem of people.” Leader FGD Ayilo

“The training has made her (the interviewee) to leave fighting which used to be the case in the past.” Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

Further the respondents, especially the peace committee members, mentioned about improved consideration towards their family members.

“She (the interviewee) is a guardian to 10 but she doesn’t segregate when it comes to taking care of them through some of them are not her own this is because of the training”. Peace Committee FGD Pagirinya

“The training has made her to respect her husband and also respect for others”. Peace Committee FGD Pagirinya

4.1.4.4. Inclusivity

Besides the changes in personal relationships at large there were also mentions in the data on the leaders’ and peace committee members’ improved attitude and relationships towards refugees/host community members and on tribalism (4 mentions of improved relationships). The improved relationship meant both improvement in the sharing of resources as well as advocating for peaceful co-existence.

“Before they came to Uganda, they used to be wild people but because of the training they have now become good people and they also advocate for peaceful co-existence between the refugees and host communities”. Leader FGD Ayilo

“The training has made them share resources with the refugee.” Leader FGD Ayilo

“The leaders have changed their attitude of tribalism while helping the community. There is the aspect of valuing every one in the community.” KII

4.1.4.5. Personal views on rights

Two of the leaders also mentioned that they had started to support children’s education more because of the training also within their own households as well as in the community at large. Children’s rights were one of the topics covered by the leader training.

“Before the training, she used to support early marriage but because of the training she is now advocating for girl child education”. Leader FGD Ayilo

“Through the training she makes sure that her children go to school every day because she has realized the importance of education”. Leader FGD Pagirinya

4.1.4.6. Integrity

Some of the leaders also mentioned having stopped asking for money when supporting with conflict management at the community because of the training he had received. Likewise in one KII it was mentioned that the leaders had a changed attitude towards their work and they were more willing to do work on voluntary basis.

“He used to solve problems with money but because of the training he now does it free of charge.” Leader FGD Ayilo

“There is mind set change among the leaders especially on voluntary work which has helped to reduce on some of these conflicts”. KII

4.1.4.7. Livelihood benefits

Besides the behaviour and attitude changes participation in the project had also provided some livelihood benefits for the leaders and the peace committee members (5 mentions). The KIIs and peace committee members mentioned that the training certificates as well as the skills and experience gained through the training had been helpful for the leaders and peace committee members in search of employment:

“Another Lady who attended the leaders training is now working with one of the refugee lead organisation called-Women Empowerment Initiative Centre”. KII

“I tried to apply to a job with the training certificate and it has helped”. Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

The peace committee members also mentioned having started a Village Saving and Loans Association amongst themselves:

“They managed to open or form a VSLA meeting as a result of having monthly meeting”. Peace committee FGD Ayilo

Further government stakeholders had advocated that some of the trained people were included in government poverty alleviation initiatives as a way of supporting their continued work in the area:

“For the good work they are doing down there. We had to include some of them to benefit from the government fund which is given to alleviate poverty. So that is one of the support I gave to them. To make sure that they also continue to exist and do their work perfectly.” KII

Further the knowledge about landownership had enabled the leaders to access land for farming.

“She did not know about the land rights of Uganda but because of the trainings, she is now in position of acquiring land with ease.” Leader FGD Ayilo

4.1.4.8. Improved capacity

Besides the changes in the leaders’ and peace committee members’ behaviour, attitudes and roles the evaluation also observed changes in their capacities. These changes are presented below.

4.1.4.8.1. Conflict prevention and management

The leaders’ and peace committee members improved capacity to prevent and manage conflicts was mentioned in several KIIs and FGDs as one of the main gains of the project (30 mentions in the data). As part of the FRC project the leaders and peace committee members receive training on different conflict prevention and management approaches as well as gain knowledge on handling specific rights violations that are common in the target communities.

“He acquired problem solving skills by first digging into the root cause of the problem before handling a case or jumping to conclusions before analyzing a case being reported.”
Leader FGD Ayilo

The respondents highlighted that there was a clear difference in how especially the leaders managed conflict cases now to how they used to manage them before, as well as a difference to the leaders trained by FRC to those who had not yet been trained by FRC. The main differences in the conflict prevention and management that were mentioned included:

- Proactivity to respond to conflict cases at early stages and not letting issues to escalate
- Identifying worrying signs well in advance and increased communication to different stakeholders on community issues
- Being more organized and skilled in conflict management also on topics they used to shy away from such as tribalism
- Better quality of case documentation
- Timely referral of conflict cases to other stakeholders
- Active follow up of cases from other stakeholders

“The leaders are now days more organised in managing cases at community level. The timely identification of conflicts and mediation by the leaders. Timely referral of cases that are criminal in nature to police has greatly improved. Identification of conflicts worrying signs in the community and communicating it to OPM, UNHCR and other stakeholders like the police before it escalates in the community.” KII

“The change I have seen is that, when there is a conflict the refugee community, the leaders normally call the parties and resolve them and those that are criminal are referred to police and we as RLP we are some times contacted for support.

The leaders do frequent awareness to community about the dangers of conflicts has improved the peace of the community and has reduced the burden of work on us as legal team since there are few people to be represented in court.

The leaders training have contributed a great deal to the above. Because the leaders where I see FRC operating work differently from those where FRC is not working which confirms that the training have worked well.” KII

4.1.4.8.2. Counselling skills

Besides the conflict handling skills the leaders and peace committee members also noted that they had gained counselling skills through the training (8 mentions on counselling skills). The leaders and peace committee members observed that the counselling skills had helped them to advice for example on GBV issues and excessive drinking, as well as enabled them to provide psychological support and awareness to the community members especially around suicides.

“She is now able to do counselling services because of the training” (Leader FGD Ayilo)

“She acquired the skills and knowledge of solving issues of and also advising the children who used to drink a lot in the community.” Leader FGD Pagirinya

4.1.4.8.3. Knowledge about rights, awareness raising and advocacy

The leaders and Key Informants also noted that the leaders were now more active and willing to conduct community awareness raising on peace as well as advocate for the rights and benefits of their communities. Likewise, the leaders indicated that they had gained more understanding and knowledge on rights through the trainings, especially land rights and children's rights. This is also in line with the topics of the FRC training manual which encompasses children's rights, land rights and human rights at large.

"He learned about the different kinds of rights (land rights, human rights, law and order)." Leader FGD Pagirinya

"Advocacy among the leaders has improved and they do it in an organised way." KII

"Before the training they (the leaders) didn't bother to go and sensitize the community about peace, but they now do it because of the training." Leader FGD Ayilo

4.1.4.8.4. Cooperation skills

The key informants also noted on the leader's improved and increased cooperation skills both with different organizations and government stakeholders as well as with other leaders and even with the peace committees. The respondents indicated that the leaders were now more active in their communication and cooperation with partners and other leaders organizing regular meetings and coordinating amongst themselves for peace related issues. The leaders were also said to be more active in linking the community members to other stakeholders when needed.

"I have seen great improvement in the leaders who have been trained by FRC. Previously, the leaders were not cooperative with partners, they were not taking their roles seriously, their communication was poor and they would even incite the community against partners. But the last two years I have seen FRC training the leaders, they are now best to work with them. Things have changed positively." KII

4.2. Contributing factors for change

The findings related to the second evaluation question i.e. contributing factors for the project achievement are discussed in this chapter. The contributing factors are divided into factors to do with the programme and the programme approach, and factors related to FRC and JRP partnership.

4.2.1. Programme approach

The evaluation identified several key factors that were said to have contributed to the positive changes in the target community and the training leaders and peace committees as described above, as well as the successful implementation of the project. These contributing factors are presented in the below sub-chapters in descending order based on the number of mentions for each contributing factor in the data.

4.2.1.1. Collaboration with stakeholders and partners

The collaboration with different stakeholders and partners both at organizational and activity level was mentioned often in the data as well as its importance for achieving the

project objectives (32 mentions on positive collaboration). At organizational level FRC had provided training on the project related points to other organizations working in the area and FRC and JRP had been able to utilize their participation in the different coordination groups and working groups to share updates on conflicts taking place in the communities as well as receive inputs from other organizations working in the area. Likewise, FRC had collaborated with other organizations doing similar social cohesion work in the area through joint trainings and planning. The peace committees also reported having received conflict resolution training from Care International. The project was also working closely with different official institutions to set up trainings and meetings to ensure their positive reception in the communities.

At the activity level the project involved other organizations and government institutions and actors for conflict resolution on needs-basis. This included both providing referrals to other organizations as well as bringing in subject owners to mitigate issues and find solutions to conflicts. Likewise, the peace committees and leaders were mentioned to work together with the police and other organizations on conflict management where the police would sometimes come and help with conflict management cases and the leaders and peace committees would refer cases including rape, killings and murder directly to the police. The peace committees would also collaborate with other organizations to ensure that they had no overlapping cases to handle as well as participate to some of their trainings and meetings to coordinate work and collaborated with the local churches to further spread the message of peaceful co-existence. The peace committee members also said to have worked in close collaboration with different local leaders on conflict management in that the local leaders would sometimes refer easier cases for their handling.

“The LCs use the peace committees to handle simple cases. The LCs even call them at night to solve some cases because they have trust in them e.g. handling cases of fights.” Peace Committee FGD Pagirinya

Finally, the positive attitude and commitment of the different key stakeholders towards the project was mentioned as one key contributing factor. Different stakeholders such as the Refugee Welfare Committee and other community leaders had a key role in identifying the leaders to be included in the project trainings as well as the peace committees.

4.2.1.2. Participant targeting and managing expectations

One of the key factors said to have contributed to the project's success was the participant targeting (leaders) and the composition of the peace committees (12 mentions on targeting). The key elements on the targeting and group composition were:

- Mixing host community members and refugees in the same peace committees/trainings, as this also helps to increase social cohesion.
- Choosing both women and men, as well as persons with disabilities and the elders
- Selecting community acknowledged leaders including elders, cultural leaders and elected leaders alike as having the most influence in the communities.

Besides the careful participant selection done by the FRC and JRP staff the importance of managing the participants expectations about the project and the related trainings was also mentioned as contributing to the participants' motivation and level of

commitment to the project (3 mentions on managing expectations). For example, the peace committee members have been told from the start that their work is voluntary (no compensation to be expected), and the leaders were provided with the training expectations at the start of the training as a way of identifying those who are truly interested and able to continue with the project.

“JRP has managed their (peace committee members) expectations from the beginning. The peace committee work is voluntary work. They who were not willing to work voluntary left and others were identified to replace them.” Project FGD

There were however some peace committee members and leaders who indicated that the expectations had not been clear or agreed on by all participants:

“No motivation to do the work; we are not employed or paid; we are only given phones with no airtime and you expect us to mobilize and do reports; no transport; we need bicycles.” Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

4.2.1.3. Functional capacity building approach

The project activities consist largely of trainings: a FRC developed civic education package to the leaders and JRP’s training and support module to the peace committees. Both training packages have been developed to respond to and provide the leaders and peace committees with the understanding of and skills to address the key conflicts in the communities such as land conflicts and gender-based violence while the leader training also includes topics such as the laws of Uganda, leadership skills and good governance. The contextualization of the trainings to the particular conflicts in the Adjumani communities as well as their comprehensiveness were mentioned as key factors contributing to the project’s achievements (11 mentions). Likewise, the trainings were commended for their empowering and discussion-based training approach.

“Training conducted to the peace committees: the topics have been well chosen and tailored to the local context - to the actual issues and the solutions to these issues. And taking the needed time – no rush.” Project FGD

4.2.1.4. Community-based and hands-on approach

The project’s community-based and hands-on approach to project implementation was also one of the mentioned positive contributing factors (6 mentions on community-based and hands-on approach). Using the local leaders and locally grounded peace committees were seen as the main ways of promoting peace both because of the existing standing of the target group in the communities as well as their ability to readily identify and tackle issues in the communities.

“There is a diversion. Let us use our elders. Let us use our leaders here. Let us use our local experts to solve some of these problems here. You know, community problem calls for community solutions. So that was why I appreciate the FRC so much.” KII

The project and partner staff also highlighted the importance of the hands-on approach for the project implementation. The project staff were closely collaborating and working with the trained leaders and peace committees providing them mentoring and support when needed. Likewise, JRP was providing support for the peace committee case handling. It was further emphasized that project partner JRP had a high level of expertise with the local community and that both teams worked closely with the different community stakeholders.

4.2.1.5. Material support

The material support provided by the project to the peace committees and leaders was noted to have enabled their work especially around case management (5 mentions on the role of the material support). The project has provided:

- Airtime and phones for selected peace committee members and leaders
- Writing materials to peace committees
- Gumboots and raincoats for peace committee members
- Vests/t-shirts for peace committee members
- Bags for peace committee members
- Transportation to trainings and meetings to leaders and peace committee members
- Logbooks for leaders

The project staff indicated that the material support although not costly had been important in enabling the trainings as well as the work of the target groups. Especially the role of transportation was seen important because of the long distances to the training venues from either the host or the refugee communities. The peace committee members and leaders were also appreciative of the received material support although they noted gaps in the support:

- Lack of bicycles to help with transportation when managing cases within the communities
- Replacement for lost or stolen raincoats or gumboots
- Limited amount of airtime for case management and needed communications
- Limited or unequal distribution of phones between peace committees, committee members not sharing the use of the phone equally and limited capacity of the phones
- Lack of referral forms
- Lack of refreshments during the case mediation and awareness raising
- Torches for nighttime case management
- Others: soap for washing uniforms, payment for the case management, office for case management and chairs for meetings.

4.2.1.6. Synergies with other FRC operations

During the period under evaluation (2023-2024) FRC was implementing four projects in Adjumani three of which were funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. One of the main activities FRC has been implementing in Adjumani is functional adult literacy (FAL) and English for Adults (EFA). It was noted in the project FGDs that the existence of the FRC FAL and EFA activities had had a significant contribution to the organization's ability to implement the UG102 project in the area as key government stakeholders as well as the target groups were aware of FRC and had seen positive impacts of its activities before (4 mentions on joint benefits). This was further confirmed by some of the key informants mentioning knowing also about the other FRC led

programming in the area and even having participated as volunteers in some of the activities. Likewise, the inclusive participant selection FRC adopts in its activity implementation across projects was said to have contributed to the general improved relationships between the refugees and the host communities. It was further mentioned that many of the leaders involved in the UG102 trainings were former FAL and EFA trainees which would have already contributed to their abilities to manage for example case documentation and referrals better due to improved literacy skills. Besides the positive benefits the other FRC implemented projects had had on the UG102 results the UG102 was said to have also helped with the implementation of the other projects in that the same leaders trained under UG102 were engaged with under the other projects in enrolling project participants.

4.2.1.7. Adequate and available resources

Having skilled and experienced staff members as well as needed material resources such as vehicles for staff to reach training and monitoring locations and being able to utilize community venues for project training were also indicated as key contributing factors by the project staff (3 mentions).

4.2.2. Partnership between JRP and FRC

Both FRC and JRP were appreciative of their partnership and saw many benefits from it for the success of the project. The main aspects that the partners appreciated about the partnership were:

- Partners technical and contextual expertise and the sharing of technical training also on operational and monitoring matters
- Regular joint monitoring and meetings to address possible gaps
- Working together as one team: both organisations are well aware of each other's plans and JRP invited to team meetings
- Flexibility and openness

The organizations had also identified some challenges during the implementation namely in:

- The flow of information
- Delays in procurements; and
- High reporting requirements

4.3. Hindering factors

Besides the contributing factors the evaluation also looked into factors that had hindered the project implementation and target achievement. These hindering factors are considered in this chapter, and they are divided into organizational, programmatic, trained leader/peace committee related, and context related factors.

4.3.1. Organizational factors

The evaluation identified one hindering factor to do with FRC as an organization.

4.3.1.1. Lack of resources

Lack of staff or material resources were mentioned as factors hindering the project implementation. For example, the changes in the project staff during the project implementation (resignation of project MEAL) had created a gap in the (timely) collection of monitoring data. The onboarding of the new MEAL took some time which further hindered the project implementation. The project team further indicated that the limited number of vehicles available for the FRC staff working in Adjumani had hindered timely implementation especially when collecting participants to the trainings. The project MEAL staff also work for multiple projects which is a strain on their resources especially during reporting times. It was also mentioned that the dwindling funding overall has limited the number of organizations working in Adjumani which also brings more pressure to the remaining organizations to scale up their interventions although their financial resources are also diminishing.

4.3.2. Programmatic

The evaluation identified hindering factors to the project implementation and achievement of project objectives to do with the project design and implementation strategies.

4.3.2.1. Segregation of project components

The evaluation found that the project partners JRP and FRC were implementing different approaches namely on material support provided to the respective target groups (peace committees and leaders). Under Outcome 2 of the project implemented by JRP the peace committees are provided a number of material support to operate ranging from writing materials to gum boots and airtime whereas under Outcome 1 implemented by FRC the leaders are provided only with airtime. These differences in the approaches within the same project pose challenges and risks for the project implementation and sustainability. For example, the staff commented that the difference in the number of material support provided to the peace committees and the leaders was causing some feeling amongst the leaders that the peace committees are favoured more than them.

Besides the different approaches taken to material distribution the two project Outcomes although thematically linked seemed to be separated from each other in the sense that there was said to be limited programme initiated collaboration between the peace committees and the leaders, as well as little awareness between the two groups as well as the different cohorts of peace committees on each other and each other's activities. The KIIs further noted that the lack of collaboration between the peace committees and the leaders was causing some friction and feeling of competition between the two parties both working on conflict management.

“The peace committees are doing some good work but the challenge is they work in isolation with the leaders which brings a bit of friction amongst their operations. They need to harmonise their work with the leaders.” KII

4.3.2.2. Separation from local structures

Although the project had been able to establish good collaboration with key local stakeholders including between the leaders and the local police the evaluation identified some gaps in the level of integration into the local structures. Although both the peace committees and the leaders were working on conflict management it seemed based on the KIIs that the local police collaborated only with the leaders on the same. Likewise, the respondents raised the need to establish stronger connections between the leaders and

the peace committee members and the sub-county leaders for conflict management and prevention. Based on the data the leaders had an established process of engaging a range of different stakeholders for conflict management whereas the peace committees seemed to be working somewhat in isolation and through JRP, especially for referrals. It was highlighted that at the moment OPM, UNHCR and the police were not included in the peace committee case reporting, but reports were submitted directly only to JRP.

4.3.2.3. Targeting

The project had been overall successful with its targeting criteria, but some gaps and limitations were identified around targeting.

- The time of implementation is not conducive of including youth in the project activities such as the leadership trainings. This is a limitation as a growing majority of the target population are young people.
- Exclusion of some key leaders, such as cultural leaders, to the trainings was mentioned in the leader FGDs
- Exclusion of police in the capacity trainings as the existing institution in charge of upholding peace and conflict resolution

4.3.2.4. Referral system

As part of their conflict and case management both the leaders and the peace committees are supported to refer to partners cases beyond their scope. The project team noted that at the moment the project was relying on JRP to manage referrals from the peace committees and the committees did not have adequate knowledge on which actors or institutions to contact in different scenarios. Likewise, the project team suggested that the project should improve the general understanding on referral pathways by providing more community level information sharing on the same to improve access to different response and justice services.

4.3.2.5. Visibility

Low visibility of the peace committees was said to hinder the impact and work of the committees. The project has been working with only a few committees covering specific project areas. Some KIIs also indicated that the communities were not sure of the nature of the peace committees.

“The Work of peace committees is not widely known although they are doing work, many people think they are partner staff. There is need for them to widen the scope of work for many people to know about them and their role.” KII

“I would say many of the peace committees are known to the community members because after training them, they only organise dialogues on specific issues in specific areas where the issues come from and they come in when there is conflict to address to address the conflict reported. Which limits their popularity to few areas where they have been engaged.” KII

4.3.3. Leader and peace committee capacities and resources

The evaluation also identified some hindering factors to do with the limited capacity and resources of the peace committees and the leaders.

4.3.3.1. Lack of transportation

The leaders and the peace committee members raised often the issue of lack of transportation as hindering their ability to effectively manage especially conflict resolution. The coverage areas are wide for both groups and especially so for the peace committees who work both in host and refugee communities. By far the leaders and peace committee members had received transportation from JRP and FRC to join different project related trainings and meetings but they were depending on their own resources for conflict management related movements.

“Distance between blocks are far and we need transportation.” Peace Committee FGD Pagirinya.

4.3.3.2. Workload

The peace committees and leaders do conflict management in the communities on voluntary basis. As a result of the training and project support the leaders' and peace committees' involvement in conflict management at the community level as well as their workload had increased. The peace committees mentioned that they were approached to manage cases 24/7. Likewise, the increased tasks hindered at least some the leaders and committee members ability to manage their other tasks and competed with their income generation activities. For this reason some participants felt that they should be compensated for work they were providing for conflict management.

“Too much workload; we work Monday to Monday and have no time for our domestic work.” Peace committee FGD Pagirinya

4.3.3.3. Language and literacy skills

Some of the leaders and peace committee members raised the issue of their limited language and literacy skills to manage referral documentation as well as to participate to project related trainings that were provided in English.

“They (leaders) need EFA. To improve on their English both spoken and written so that they can document well.” Leader FGD Ayilo

“Richard used to train in English only they request the office to engage a translator in the next training.” Leader FGD Pagirinya

4.3.3.4. Competing activities

Besides increasing thefts and insecurity in the settlements the food aid cuts had also affected the leaders' motivation and availability to join the project trainings and activities as more time was needed for household income and food generation. Some of the leaders also serve as focal points to other agencies and institutions including the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and had to sometimes prioritize these relationships to FRC trainings.

4.3.4. Context related

The evaluation also identified context related issues that hindered the achievement of the project objectives. These challenges are discussed below.

4.3.4.1. New community challenges

Some new conflicts were mentioned to have emerged in the communities especially because of the recent WFP and UNHCR cuts to refugee food support. These cuts were said to have increased for example the number of thefts and suicide in the communities which had also led to new and different kinds of conflicts and unrest in the community.

4.3.4.2. Local capacities

The community members marked that the limited police and other justice related official resources was a challenge for the timely handling of cases and sometimes led to delayed justice. Likewise, the community members mentioned that the police were known to take money for following up cases or making arrests which weaken the peace in the area.

4.3.4.3. Mobility of refugees

The mobility of the refugees was one observed challenge especially for the delivery of the project trainings. The trained leaders and peace committee members are likely to move outside of the settlements in Uganda as well as travel temporarily back to their countries of origin which creates gaps both in the capacity trainings as well as hinders the positive impacts the project intends to have on the target communities in Uganda. The mobility of the trainees also poses challenges for the project monitoring.

4.3.4.4. Weather

The project implementation was sometimes delayed by weather and changing climate conditions such as heavy rains and related access issues. As the target community relies heavily on agriculture for livelihood the project implementation also needs to adjust to weather related farming cycles to ensure adequate participation to training activities.

4.4. Project sustainability

The third evaluation question focuses on the sustainability of the project achievements. The related findings are discussed under this chapter and are divided between the sustainability of Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 related achievements.

4.4.1. Sustainability of Outcome 1 related achievements

Based on the evaluation the project has succeeded in increasing the knowledge of the trained leaders on rights but there was less evidence on the improved knowledge of rights as such at the community level. However, the community had improved understanding on some particular legal rights and their fulfilment such as land ownership and the importance of children's education which were also specific cases covered by the FRC training. The leaders have played a key role for example in enabling the refugees' access to land as well as promoting education by pushing for by-laws that penalize child labour as well as through awareness raising work. The trained leaders seemed well connected to the other local structures, including the police and other organizations, on conflict management. The leaders would for example invite key stakeholders such as the police, CDOs, OPM, RWC, humanitarian partners and women and youth leaders to participate in the conflict mitigation processes.

4.4.2. Sustainability of Outcome 2 related achievements

The project has been successful in increasing community level awareness on the importance of peaceful co-existence and in promoting positive relationships between refugee and host communities. The project has also succeeded in building the capacity of the peace committees and the leaders on conflict management and peace building and has helped to establish their role as alternative case management units in the community. The project approach for the reductions of conflicts has been contextualized to a selected number of identified key conflicts. Based on the data new conflicts and challenges are rising in the community. It is not clear from this evaluation to what extent the capacities of the leaders and peace committee members will enable them to address the new and emerging conflict cases. Likewise the local resources for official case management remain low and with the limited scope of the leaders and the peace committees they will not be enough to fill in all the remaining needs in access to justice in the communities.

The project investigated the operations of peace committees established/supported in both 2023 and 2024. All the interviewed peace committees had elected official leaders and regular set meeting times (usually twice per month). Likewise, the participation to committee meetings seemed regular and there had not been notable changes in the committee memberships.

There are however some potential risks for the sustainability of the work of the peace committees. Although well connected with the local leaders and the community members for conflict resolution there seem to be gaps in how well the committees related to the police and other government institutions as well as other organizations working in the area for referrals, information sharing on cases and community conflict issues. Likewise, although the material support such as the phones and airtimes had been important for the operation of the peace committees it was not clear from the evaluation if the peace committees would have the financial capacities to maintain these materials once the closure of the project or to replace items when they got stolen or went missing. The lack of means of transportation for case management would likewise be an issue because of the committees' current inability to purchase or maintain bicycles. The lack of transportation would be an increasing issue for the operation of the committees if their scope of operations would widen based on increased visibility and trust in the communities. Although the mixing of refugees and host community members in the same peace committees had contributed positively to social cohesion also within the committees the committee composition is a possible risk for the continuation of the groups once the project implementation ends as during the project operations the project team has facilitated transportations to the peace committee meetings which take place alternately in the refugee and host communities. Now the peace committee members would not have alternative ways to continue with this mode of meeting because of the long distances between the refugee and host communities.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions to the evaluation questions and provides recommendations for future action for the evaluated project as well as for the design of similar projects.

5.1. Conclusions

5.1.1. What kind of impact has the project had on social cohesion in the target communities?

The project's objective is *"To contribute to peaceful and safe co-existence within the refugee-hosting districts in Northern Uganda"*. This objective is expected to be reached through two outcome level changes:

- **Outcome 1:** Enhanced capacity and knowledge of refugees and host communities to access their rights and fulfill their legal obligations in selected refugee settlements and nearby host areas in Adjumani.
- **Outcome 2:** Targeted refugee and host communities supported to peacefully resolve inter- and intra-community conflicts and to have access to justice.

According to the project concept note refugees' justice needs are significantly unmet due to limited and overstretched local and institutional capacities as well as limited community level awareness and knowledge about rights, entitlements and services. Likewise the target communities prefer traditional justice systems that however have limited incentives and support. The project's theory of change will then utilize the informal justice processes found among host and refugee communities to address the challenges to access to justice, by bringing justice closer to the most marginalised. The project will raise awareness about the informal justice system, enhance the capacity of the local structure to resolve conflicts, promote joint social activities, community dialogues, inter-generational knowledge sharing. Through participatory and inclusive approach, the action intends to provide targeted groups with rights focused information on laws relevant to their daily challenges and other key information adequate to the specific context where they live and enhance the protection of targeted communities and improve the inter- and intra-group relations towards a more cohesive society where people are protected, trust their neighbours and duty-bearers.

Based on the mid-term evaluation the project has had a positive impact on the reduction of conflicts especially related to land issues, GBV and school dropouts and in the improvement of social cohesion as such through the improved peaceful relations between host and refugee communities all of which reflect the topics and skills the leaders and peace committees have been trained on. There were notable improvements in the community mindsets, practices and awareness about the specific rights addressed under the project (land rights, children's rights and women's rights) and the negative consequences of conflicts which are in line with the project Theory of Change.

The evaluation further observed changes in the trained leader and peace committee capacities especially on conflict management which based on the evaluation have contributed to the improvements in the community level social cohesion and the realization of rights. As per the project Theory of Change the project has been successful in strengthening the role of local structures in resolving conflicts and bring justice closer to the target group through awareness raising on particular rights such as land rights and children's education as well as making referrals to other justice services as was also evidenced by the KIIs where the number of cases brought to the police was said to have reduced as a result of the increased activity of the leaders and peace committees. The leaders had also contributed to the reduction in some rights-violations through the implementation of by-laws which as such was not expected by the project.

The evaluation also observed changes in the lives of the trained leaders and peace committee members that were outside of the project theory of change, namely changes in the leaders' and peace committee member's own personal relationships, and livelihoods.

The project results framework is structured so that changes in the community member's awareness and understanding on rights takes place at the same time with the changes in the leaders' and peace committees' enhanced engagement in conflict resolution and awareness raising. However as confirmed by the evaluation data the changes in the leaders and peace committees should precede the changes in the community awareness and practices. Based on the evaluation it seems that the leaders have had a stronger role in peaceful conflict resolution than what the project theory of change has expected. The project Outcome 2 which is focused on peaceful conflict resolution focuses only on the work of the peace committees although the leaders have likewise been trained in conflict resolution and have been actively engaged in promoting peace as well as in dispute resolution. The project results framework further expects that the peace committees would conduct case mediation and referrals at outcome level independently but based on the evaluation data JRP has been managing the referrals for now on behalf of the committees.

The project Outcome 1 is the "*Enhanced capacity and knowledge of refugees and host communities to access their rights and fulfil their legal obligations*". Although the project results framework promotes the access and fulfilment of rights and legal obligations in general the leader and peace committee trainings have been tailored to address specific rights-violations found in the community with less focus on general rights-awareness and promotion. The evaluation looked into the understanding and awareness of the target community on human rights but these results can not be generalized because of the data collection method. When asked about human rights the sampled target community mostly named individual rights rather than human rights principles, and social rights were most mentioned. Some respondents were mixing human rights with personal preferences. The particular rights addressed by the project, land ownership and right from discrimination and women's rights, were not mentioned by any of the respondents, although right to education was mentioned in the data. There were also signs in the evaluation data that some of the measures the leaders had taken to address and prevent conflicts and rights-violations in the communities were not following the rights-based approach, such as preventing rapes by closing the discos or prohibiting fetching water after dark.

The project theory of change envisions the projects close collaboration with different community stakeholders including the implementation of the rights-based approach in relation to duty bearers. Based on the evaluation the project has been partly successful in creating good working relationships between the leaders and local stakeholders, including duty-bearers, by involving them in dispute resolution discussions. The role of the duty-bearers is however not clearly defined in the project results framework and achievements related to the collaboration are not as such monitored or targeted. Based on the evaluation it further seems that there are some gaps in the collaboration of the peace committees with local structures which also pose some threats to their sustainability.

5.1.2. What factors have contributed to achieving or have hindered reaching the intended outcome objectives?

Contributing factors: The evaluation was able to identify a number of factors that had contributed positively to project achievements. The main factors consisted of meaningful collaboration with key stakeholders, successful identification of trained leaders and managing the expectations of the leaders and peace committee members on the project

benefits, the contextualized capacity building training on conflict management, the synergies between different FRC projects, the partnership between JRP and FRC.

Hindering factors: The evaluation identified some hindering factors and possible risks for project achievements and the sustainability of the achievements. The main hindering factors consisted of different approaches considered by FRC and JRP in their activity implementation, especially with regards to material support provision, separation of some project components from the local structures, the overlap between the peace committee and leader roles on conflict management and awareness raising, and the lack of collaboration between the different peace committees supported through the project as well as between the project supported leaders and peace committees.

5.1.3. To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to be sustained after the completion of this project?

Based on the evaluation the project has been successful in improving the leaders understanding, skills and practices related to conflict resolution and the leaders seemed to have strong working relations with other local actors relevant to conflict management. Likewise the peace committee members had improved understanding and skills for conflict management, seemed to be trusted by the local community and the committees seemed to have well established and stable structures. However the peace committees worked somewhat in separation from the other local structures which is risk for their continued operations. Likewise the conflict management conducted both by leaders and peace committees seemed to focus strongly on a few thematic topics and based on the evaluation data it is unclear how effectively they would be able to work on responding to and prevent other types of challenges when they would arise. Lack of transportation is likewise a considerable risk for the continued operation of the peace committees also given that the committees consist of both refugee and host community members who have now been conveyed to project activities from distant locations by the project. The lack of group specific financing for transportation as well as for the maintenance of other needed materials such as phones, airtime for phones can pose challenges for the continued case management of both the peace committees and the leaders.

5.2. Recommendations

- The project should harmonize its approach to material support between the different project components and support the participants in collecting funding to maintain and purchase needed materials for example through VSLAs.
- The project should ensure the collaboration between the peace committees and the leaders, between the different peace committees as well as the connection of the peace committees with other local stakeholders and structures including through support for the peace committees to do referrals independently.
- The project should consider further collaboration between the FAL and EFA trainings to ensure the capacity of the leaders and peace committee members to manage conflict cases and referrals.

- Future projects should consider including an element of Trainer of Trainees into the project plans as ways of efficiently widening the scope of the leadership and peace committee trainings.
- Future projects should consider having youth-tailored training components to enhance the leadership and conflict management skills and rights awareness of youth in particular as the biggest age cohort in the target area.
- Future projects could benefit from including the work done with the duty-bearers and with the aim of strengthening their capacities and service delivery roles in the project results frameworks to further follow related achievements. This could also include training provided to police on case management to support multiple access to justice channels.
- Future projects should consider to specify the objectives and indicators used to measure in awareness of and the realization of rights as well as consider the intervention logic with regards to the target community members' awareness and understanding on rights.