

The Realities of Self-reliance within the Ugandan Refugee Context

An assessment of livelihood barriers and enablers of refugees and host communities in urban and settlement locations

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Methodology

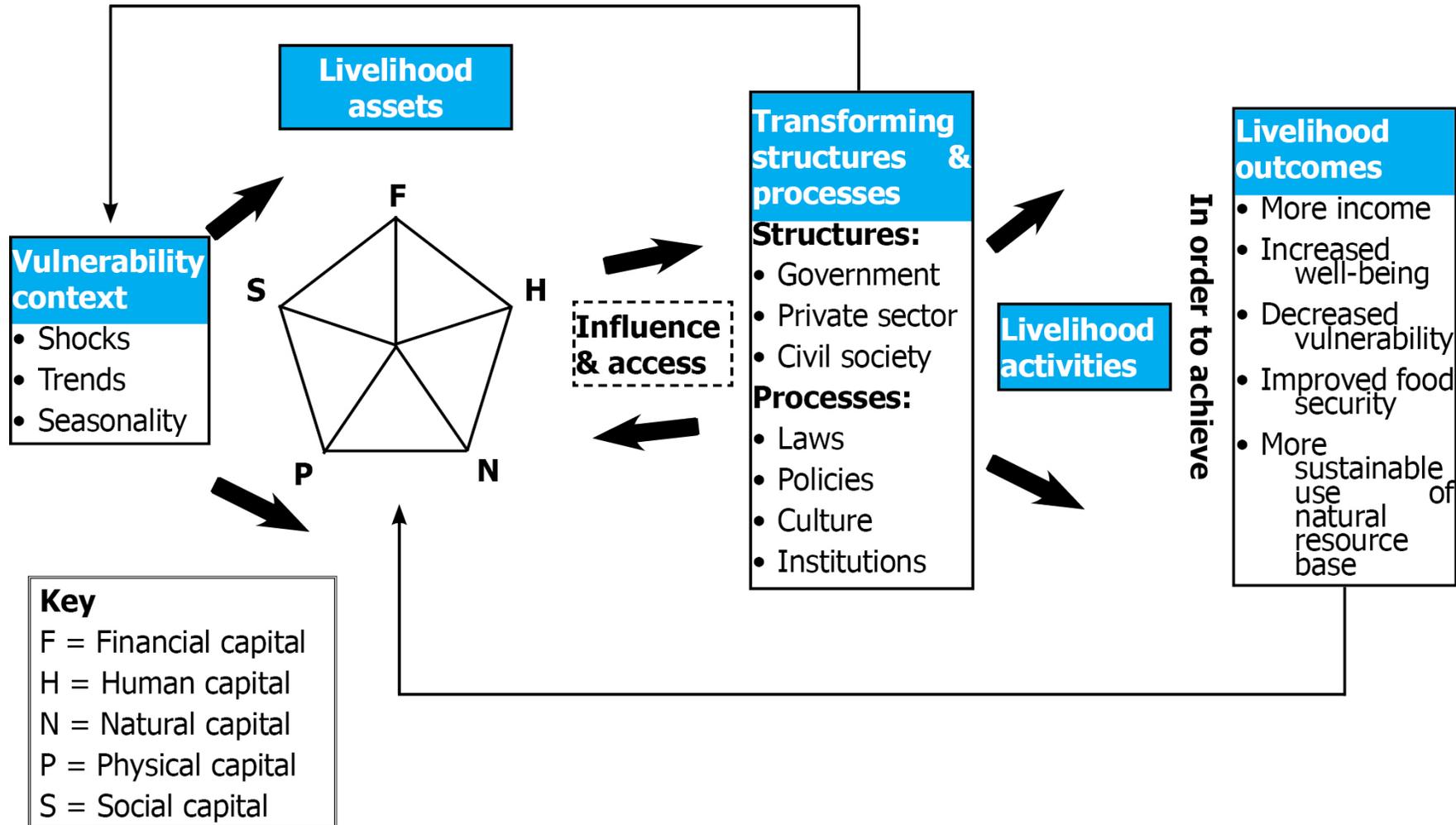
Objective of the assessment

To better understand the primary **barriers to the sustainable livelihoods** of refugees and host communities across **urban and settlement contexts**, in order to inform how the livelihoods of these groups can be best supported

Defining urban refugees

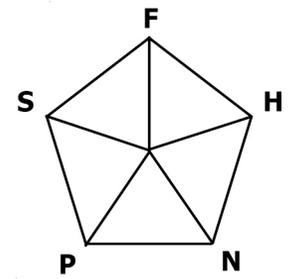
Urban refugees: For the purposes of this assessment, urban refugees were defined as any individuals or households that fled from their country of origin and are now residing in any urban centre, regardless of their official registration status.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)



DFID/FCDO,
 “Sustainable Livelihoods
 Guidance Sheets,” April
 1999.

Livelihood assets/household capitals



Financial



Availability of cash or equivalent to contribute towards livelihood activities

Human



Skills, knowledge, and physical ability of household members

Natural



Natural resource stocks and flows that households can use for livelihood activities

Physical



Infrastructure and physical goods that contribute to livelihood activities and access to key services such as markets

Social



Social resources, including social networks, memberships in formal groups, and relationships of trust

Methodology overview

Locations

Settlements:

- Bidibidi
- Nakivale
- Palabek
- Rhino Camp

Secondary urban centres

- Arua
- Gulu
- Kitgum
- Mbarara

Capital city:

- Kampala

Methods

Household surveys:

- 2559 surveys in total
- 95% confidence level, 10% margin of error at location and group level

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

- 36 FGDs in total
- Conducted with community leaders

In-depth Interviews (IDIs)

- 36 IDIs in total
- Conducted with female heads of households and persons with disabilities

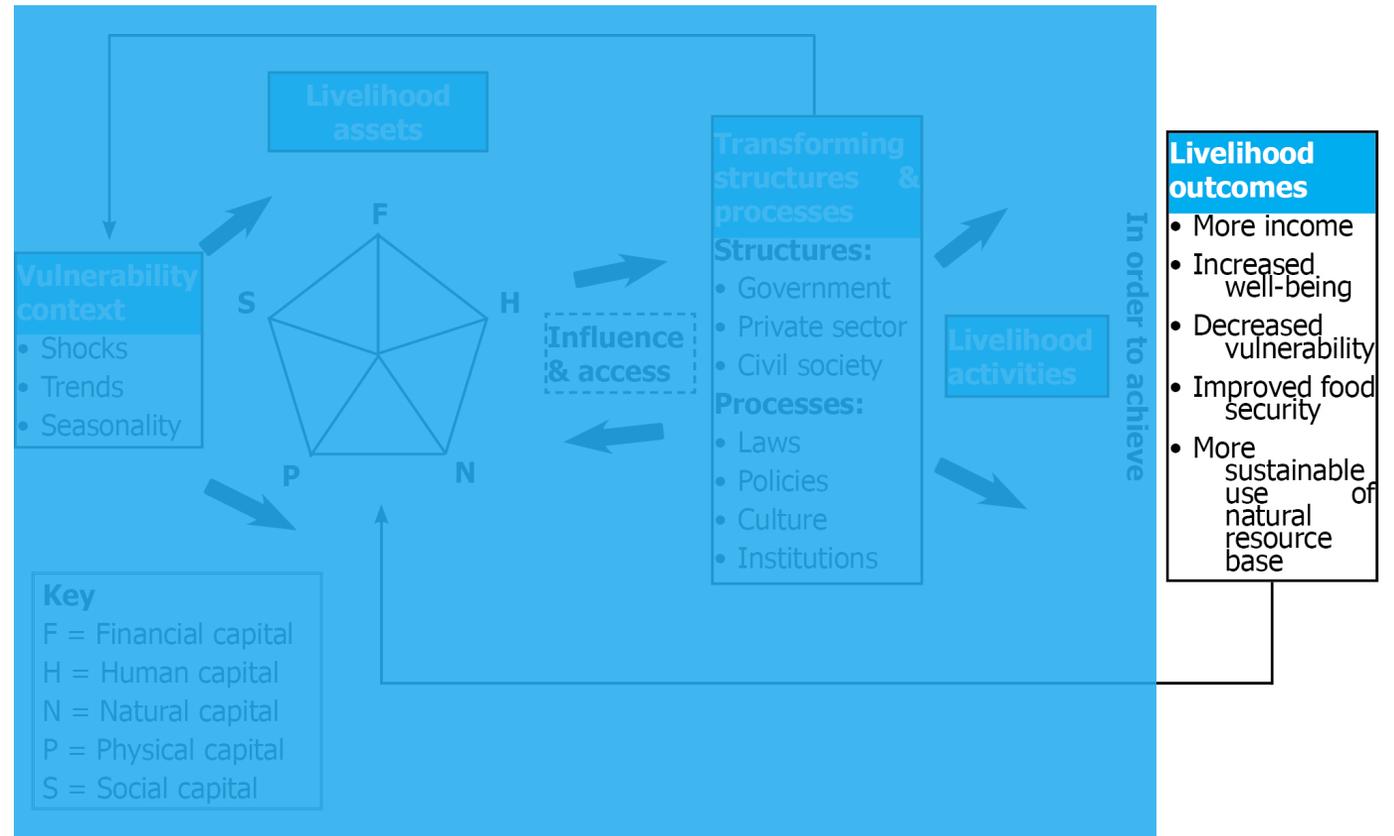
Participatory workshops

- 18 workshops in total
- Conducted with community members

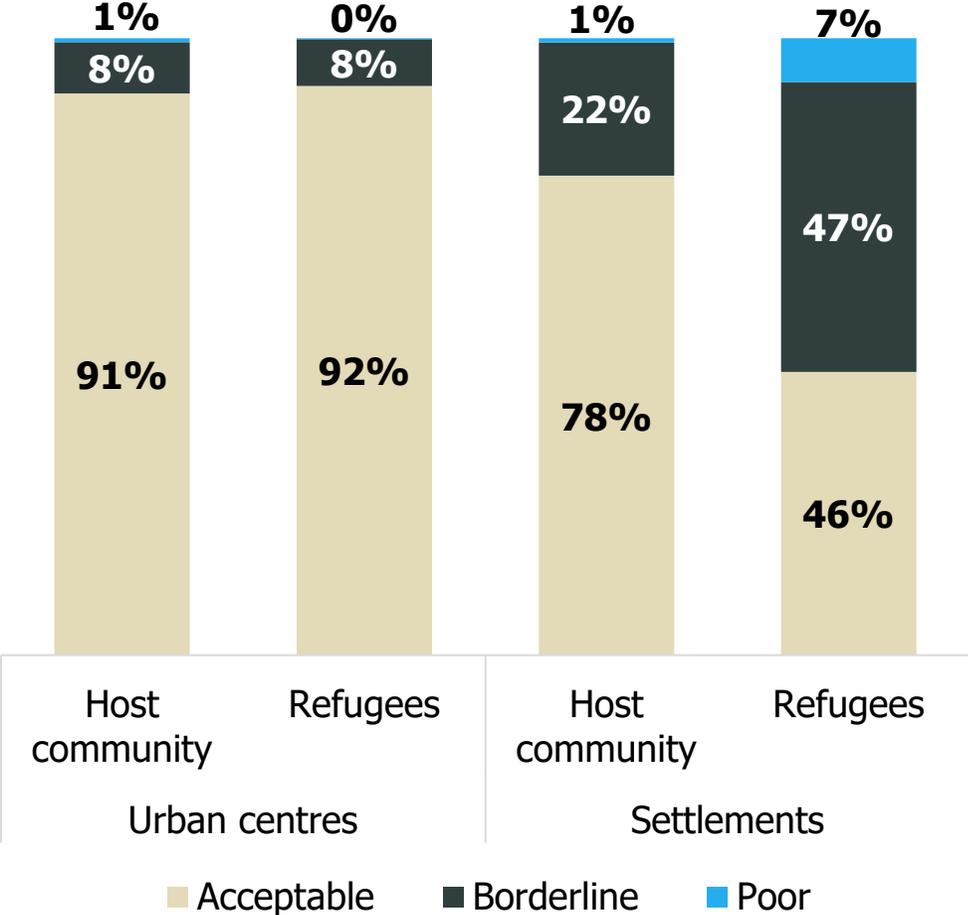
Limitations

- Data collection for **refugees in two locations (Gulu and Kitgum)** was not entirely random, because of which findings for these groups and locations cannot be generalised with a known level of precision and should be considered **indicative only**.
- The data is not, and cannot, be weighted because the population sizes of urban refugees in secondary urban centres are unknown. When data is aggregated in any way this likely means that certain groups are over- or under-represented. As a result, **aggregated data is not representative**, and findings should be taken as indicative only.
- It may be the case that data could be disaggregated for **gender** of respondent and/or head of households, however, the sample would be insufficient to guarantee representativeness.

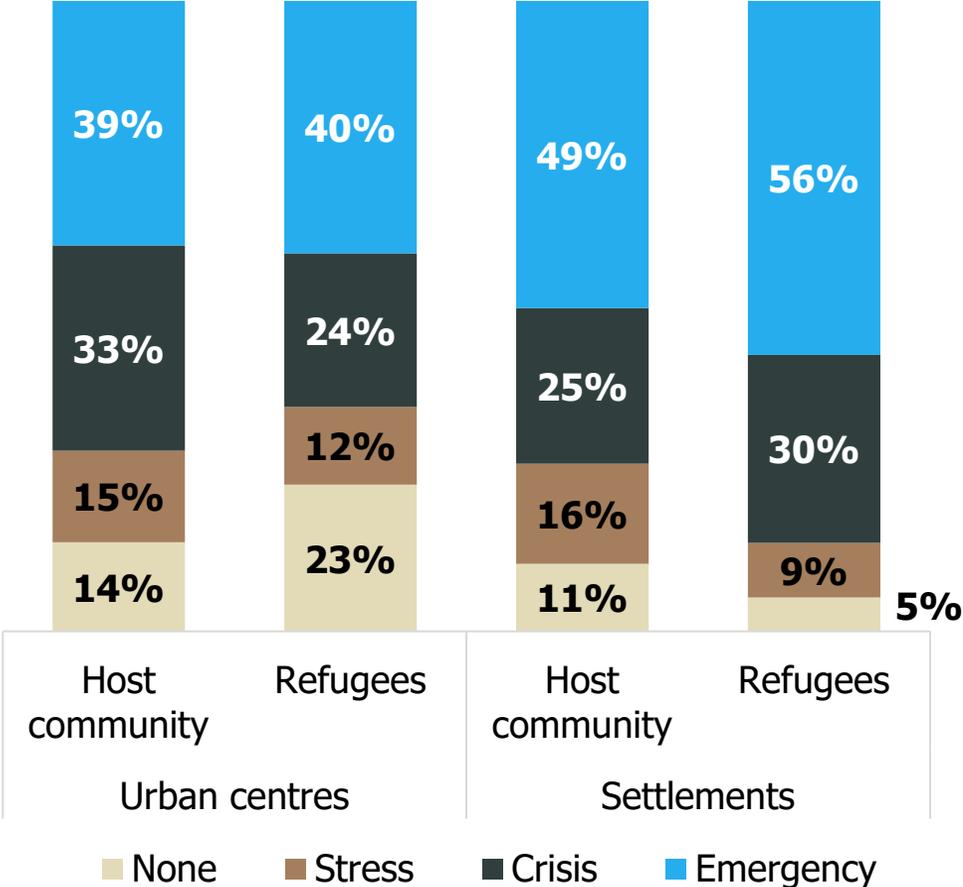
Livelihood outcomes



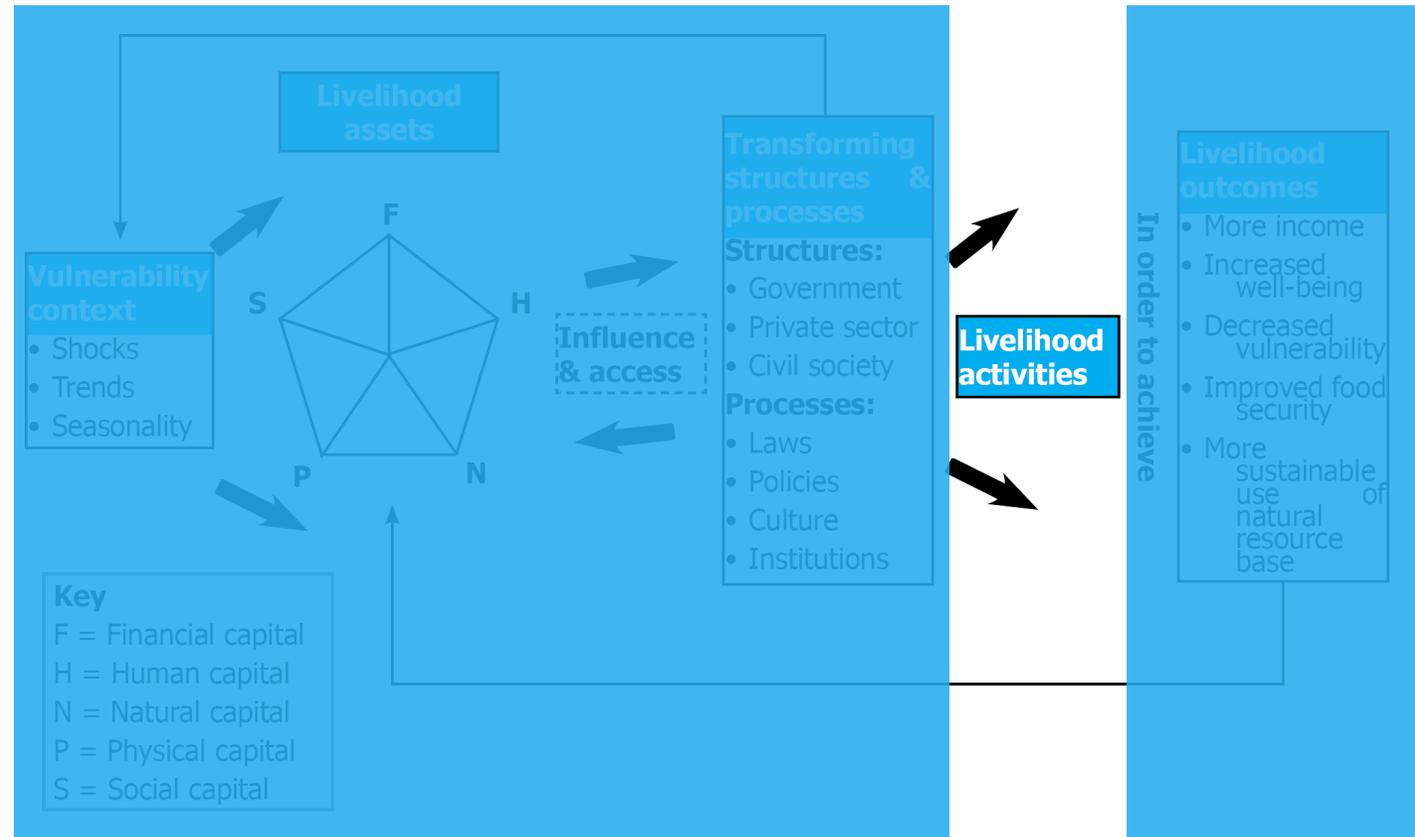
% of households per Food Consumption Score (FCS), per location type and population group



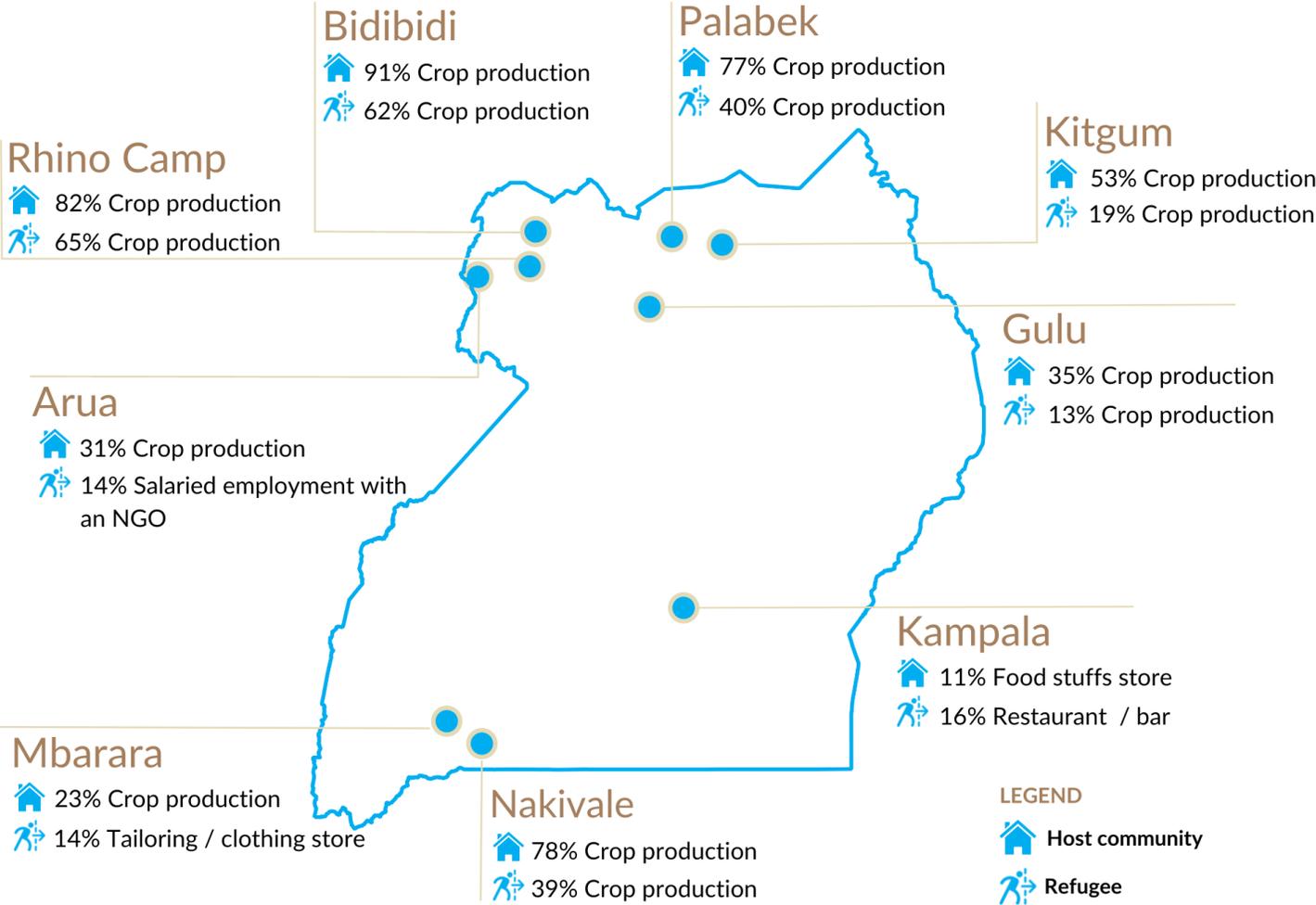
% of households per Livelihood Coping Strategies Index (LCSI) category, per location type and population group



Livelihood activities



Most commonly reported main livelihood activity of the household, per location and population group



Crop production was the most commonly reported main livelihood activity in most locations and for most groups.

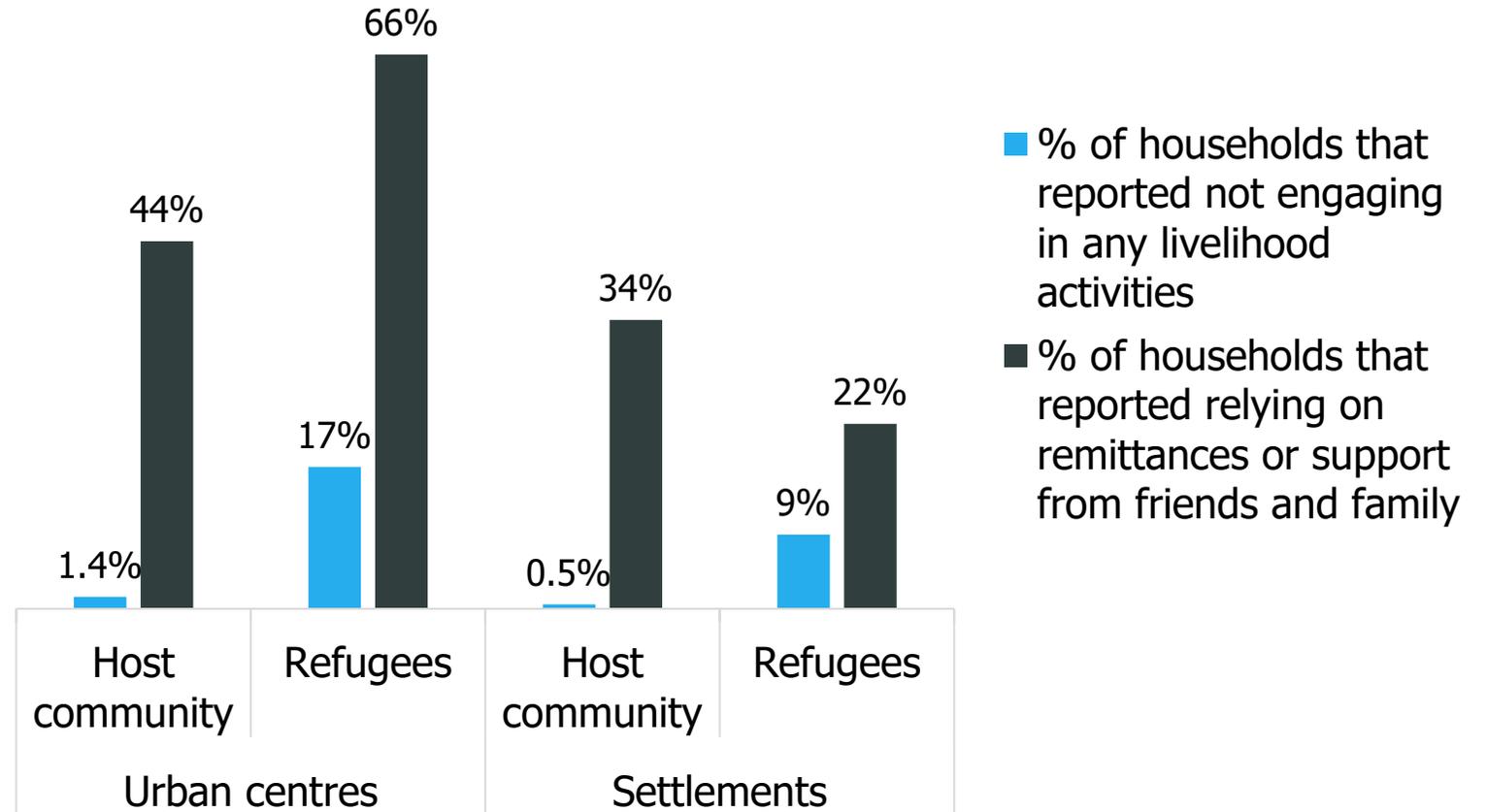
However, refugees were generally less likely to report relying on crop production for their main livelihood activity, compared to the host community.

In urban centres, there is no 'majority' main livelihood activity, reflecting the diversity of livelihood activities in these locations.

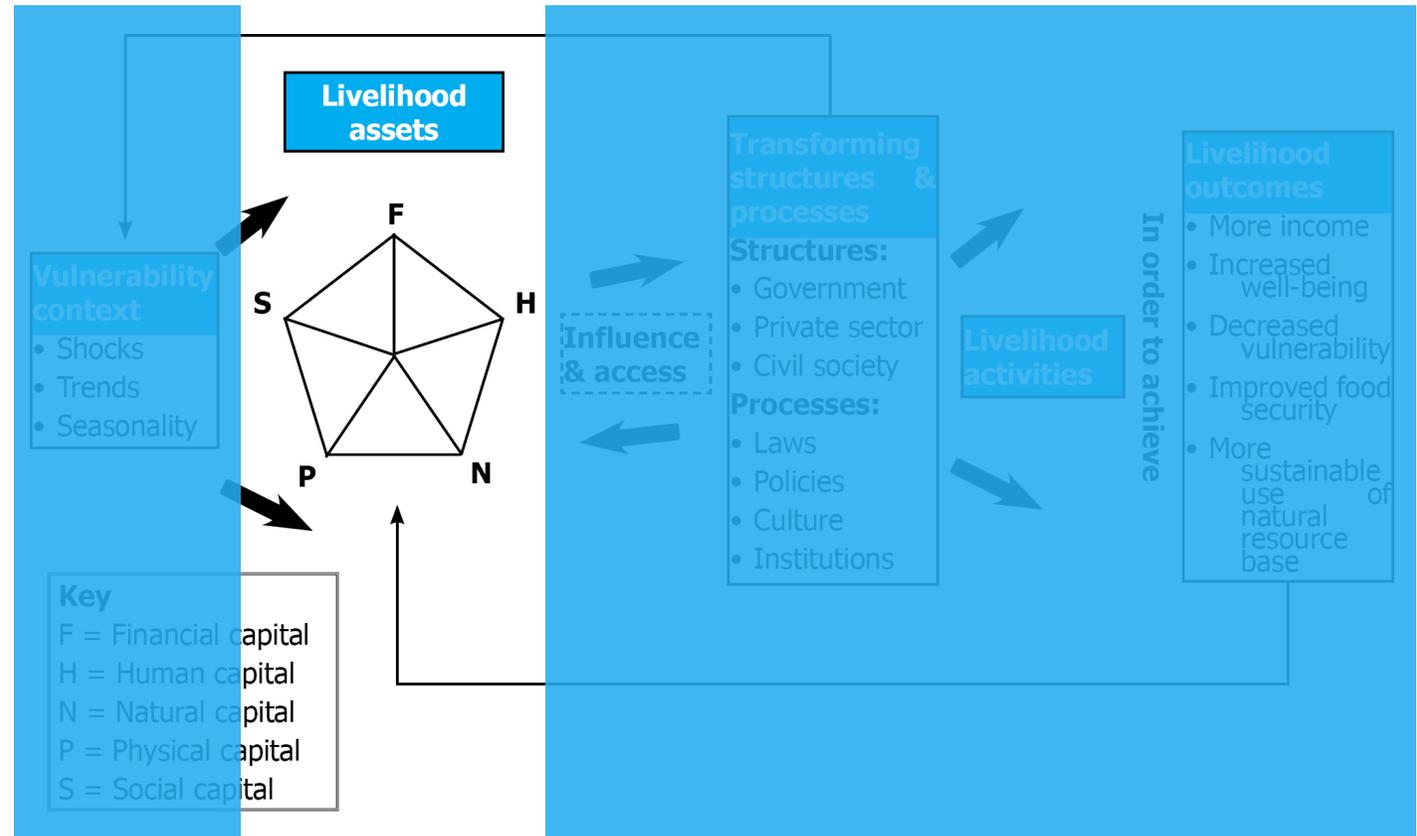
Urban refugee households were most likely to report not engaging in any livelihood activities (**17%**) & relying (heavily) on remittances and family support for income (**66%**).

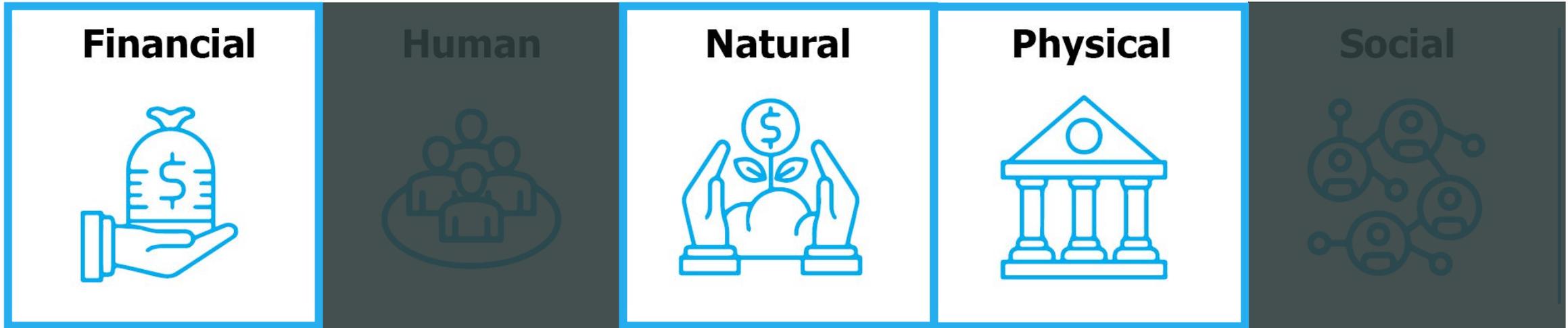
For the 66% of urban refugees that reported receiving remittances and/or support from friends and family, **the median contribution of these forms of income to their total income was 55%.**

Lack of livelihood activities and reliance on remittances and support from friends and family, per location type and population group



Livelihood assets and barriers





Three main barriers to sustainable livelihoods were identified, which fall under **financial**, **natural**, and **physical** capital.

Poor access to **formal financial services** able to provide business capital

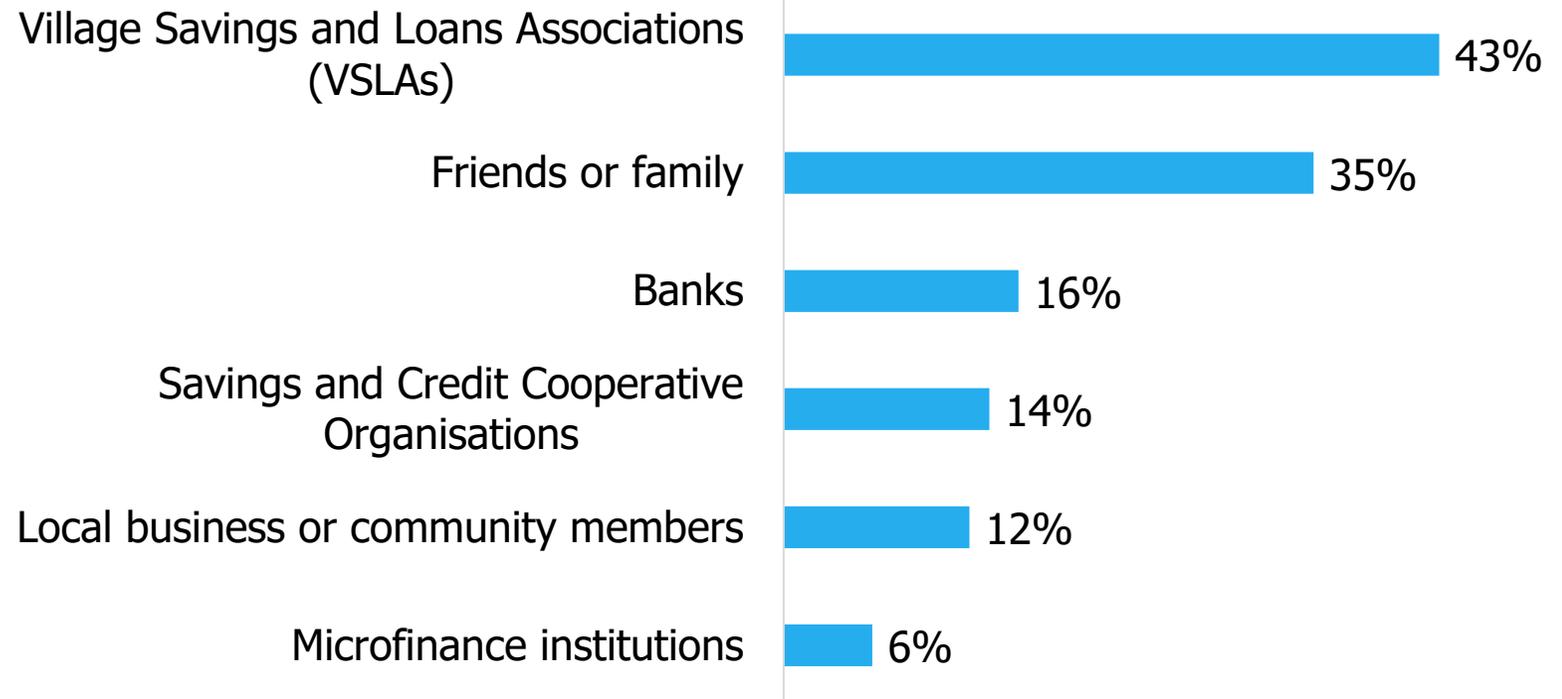
Poor access to **land**, both in terms of plot size and secure access arrangements

Poor access to **markets** due to physical barriers and issues related to discrimination and documentation

Financial



Among households that reported having access to credit (69%), sources of credit to which households reported having access



Although **access to credit** is generally good, the informal mechanisms through which households have access are often not able to meet the **business capital needs** of households. Access to formal financial service providers, particularly for refugees, is hindered by lack of availability, documentation issues, discrimination, and unattainable collateral and interest rate conditions.

Natural



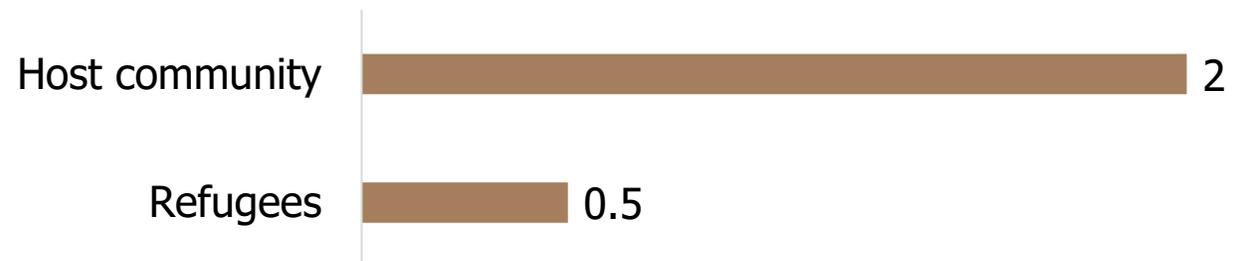
Access to land is key for the livelihoods of refugees and host communities in and around the settlements. Host communities tend to have access to larger plots. The plots assigned to refugees are typically too small to allow households to produce surpluses.

Acquiring additional land for refugees is complicated by ownership restrictions, expensive rent, and insecure renting and borrowing arrangements with the host community.

Percentage of households **in the settlements** that reported having access to land, per population group



Among households **in the settlements** that reported having access to land (84%), median reported acreage of land to which households have access

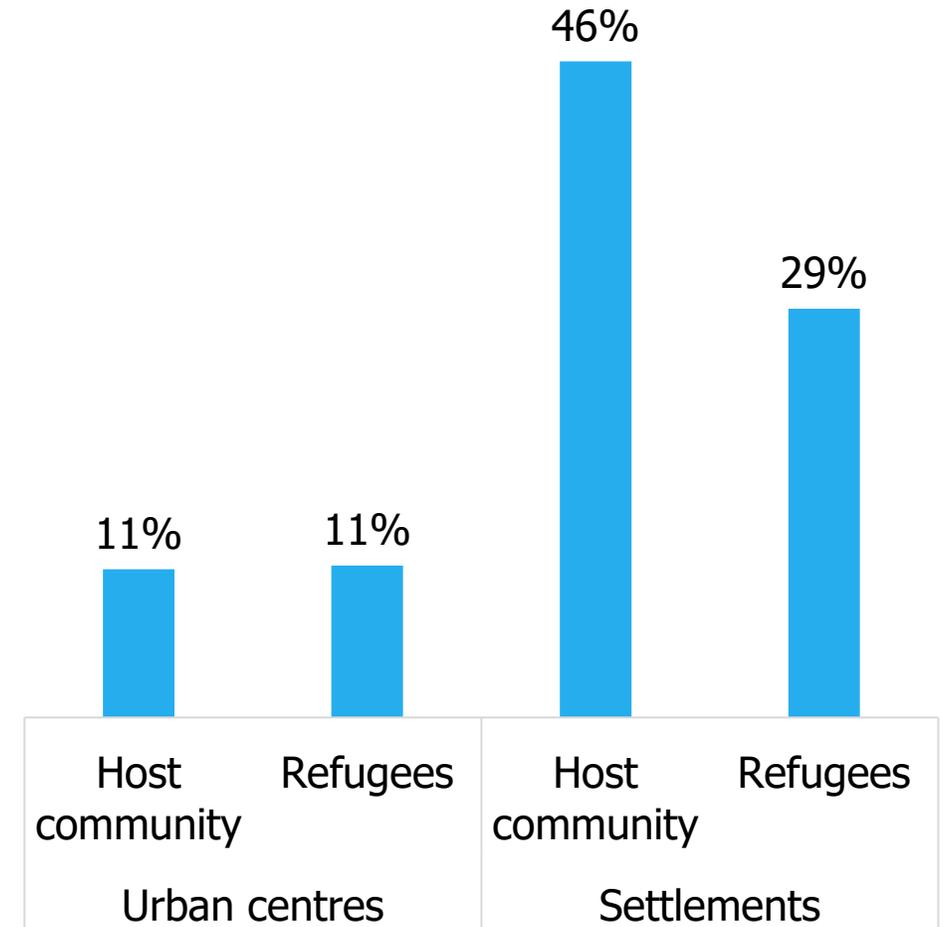


Physical



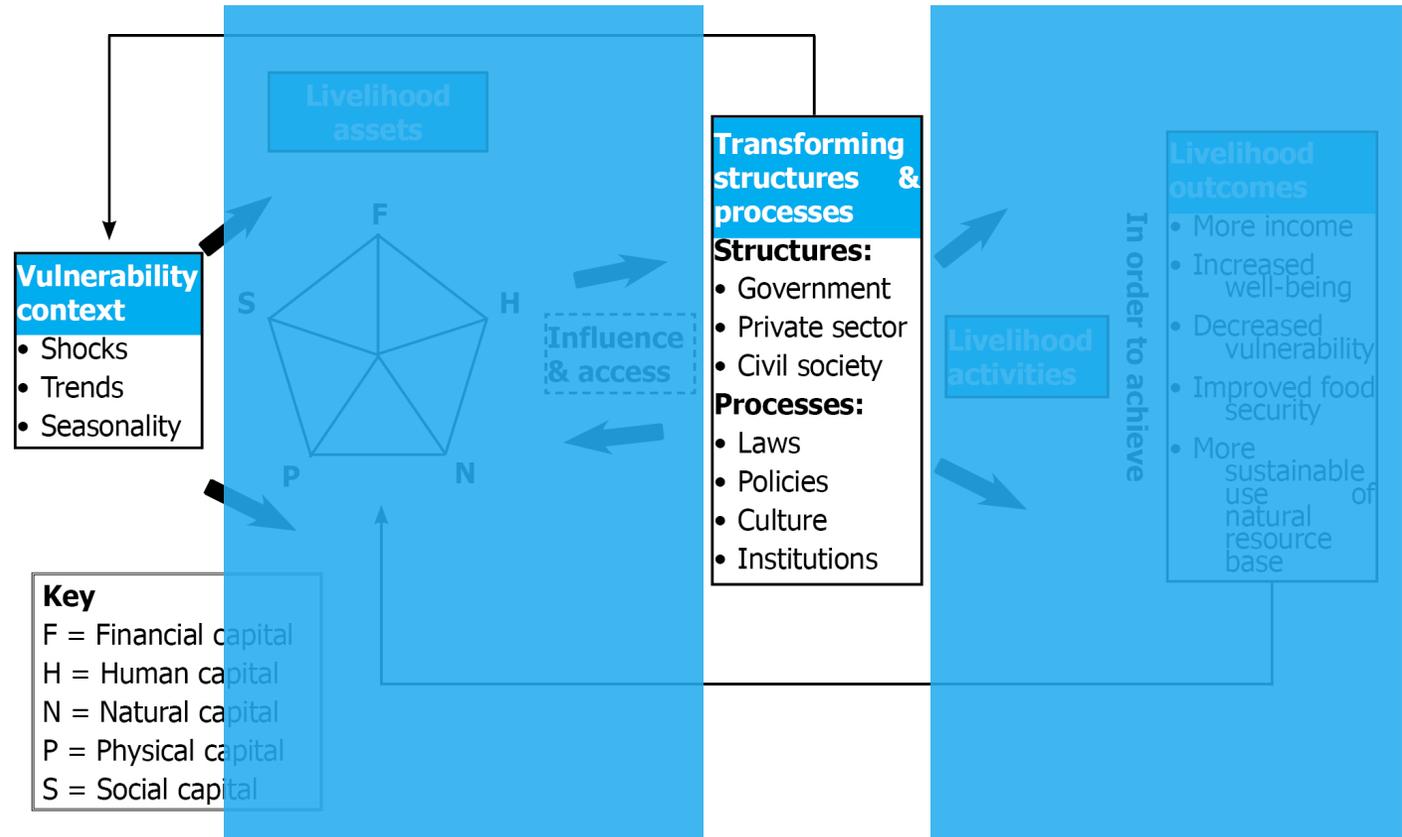
Access to markets is a key issue for refugees and host communities, both as consumers and vendors. In and around the settlements, refugee and host community households face primarily **physical barriers** to accessing markets, including long distances and poor infrastructure. In urban centres, refugees in particular face **social barriers** to accessing markets, which include discrimination and documentation issues.

Percentage of households that reported having to travel over 30 minutes to their preferred market, per location type and population group



Cross-cutting issues:

Context, structures, and processes



Although many structural and contextual factors influence the livelihoods of refugees and host communities, **4 key cross-cutting issues** were identified during data collection

1. Reliance on social networks

- Refugees commonly reported having to rely on social networks to facilitate access to services, markets, employment, and land.
- Both the relationships within refugee communities and the relationships between refugees and host communities are key.

2. Documentation issues

- Documentation can be an issue for accessing various kinds of services, as well as the labour market.
- Though many kinds of documentation are typically available for refugees, processes can be opaque and exact entitlements can be unclear.

3. Prolonged pressure on natural resources

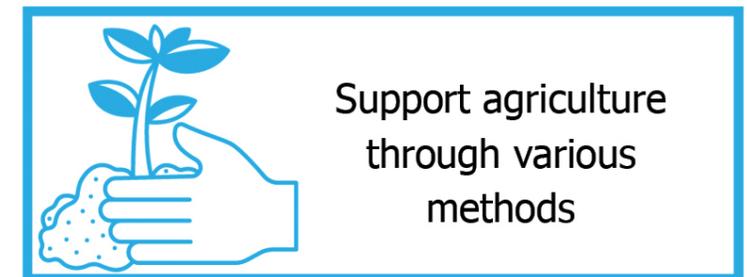
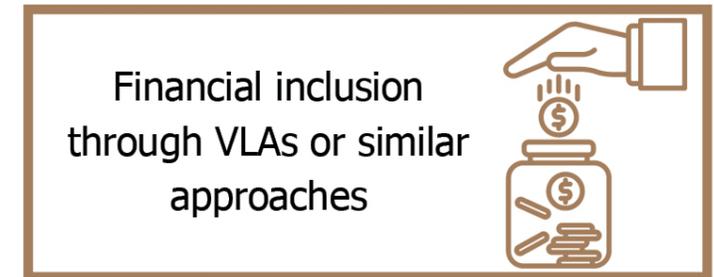
- The land allocation model of the refugee response puts pressure on the availability and use of land, as well as natural resources such as water and firewood.
- In case of continued refugee influxes, the land allocation model may not be sustainable in the long term.

4. Underdeveloped private sector

- The private sector, especially in settlement areas, is dominated by sole-proprietor businesses
- As a result, salaried employment is scarcely available, especially for refugees.

Livelihood programme mapping

- Mapping of livelihood programmes was done through an analysis of ActivityInfo and supplemented with key informant interviews.
- **The most commonly identified programmatic approaches were found to be skilling, VSLAs or other forms of informal finance, and support to agricultural value chains.**
- These programmes do seem to be entirely aligned with the issues identified during the assessment.
- In particular, issues related to accessing formal financial services, land, or markets do not appear to be addressed through these common approaches.



Conclusion

Key findings

- Refugees in the settlements appear to be worst off.
- Crop production dominates in many locations, though refugees are were generally less likely to report crop production as their main livelihood activity.
- Refugees in urban centres appear to rely heavily on remittances to provide for their households' needs.
- Key barriers to sustainable livelihoods:
 - Limited access to formal financial services and lines of credit
 - Limited access to land, particularly for refugees in settlement contexts
 - Limited access to markets, both as consumers and vendors.
- There are additional structural and cross-cutting factors that impact livelihood opportunities, including an underdeveloped private sector.

In the report

- Additional data and analysis regarding:
 - Livelihood outcomes, including data on income and expenditure.
 - Livelihood activities, especially related to the activities of urban refugees.
 - The key barriers that were identified
 - The role of human and social capital in livelihood outcomes.
 - Identified livelihood programmes
- **A set of recommendations** that were generated during the stakeholder workshop on the 30th of March, based on the assessment findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the 30th of March 2023, a workshop was organised in Kampala to generate recommendations based on the assessment. Various stakeholders attended the workshop, including representatives from the Government of Uganda, humanitarian donors, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations, and refugees. The workshop consisted of a presentation of assessment findings, as well as presentations related to the policy framework and existing interventions. After the presentations and a discussion panel, workshop participants were organised into six groups to discuss specific findings from the assessment and generate recommendations. The themes for discussion were based on key findings from the assessment. Each group focussed on one of the following themes: 1) access to financial services, 2) access to markets, 3) access to land, and 4) jobs and employment. The groups were asked to consider the different barriers that households may face in urban or settlement contexts. **For each theme, a set of recommendations has been formulated.**

Access to financial services

- Formalisation of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) to facilitate access to formal financial service providers by establishing credit history and collateral.
- Standardisation, digitalisation, and interoperability of refugee records and databases to ease Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements of formal financial service providers.
- Provision of financial support to formal financial service providers to assess viability of extension of services to the refugee settlements.
- Increase awareness of current availability of financial services in the settlements.
- Facilitation of formal registration of refugee-run businesses, particularly in urban centres.

Access to markets

- Expansion of physical markets in the settlements.
- Improvement in, and expansion of, aggregation modalities for agricultural produce.
- Investment in market research in urban centres, particularly related to the market activities and opportunities for urban refugees.
- Provision, and awareness raising on the availability, of market-related information to refugees and host communities.

Access to land

- Formalisation of land access agreements between host communities and refugees to improve security of tenure.
- Sensitisation on land tenure arrangements and options.
- Promotion of peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities.
- Engagement with the private sector to promote large-scale and commercial production.

Jobs and employment

- Engagement and sensitisation with the private sector to facilitate apprenticeships or job placements for refugees.
- Alignment of refugee-related policies with wider labour market policies to address documentation barriers to employment.
- Simplification of certification and work permit processes for refugees.
- Implementation of market-driven approaches to skilling to match labour demand and promote diversity of work opportunities.

Thank you
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The [final assessment report](#) is available now.