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EVALUATION



REPORT 1

UNICEF Impact Feasibility Assessment of PROSPECTS

Rapid review on what works

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Background and Objectives

The global landscape of forced displacement and migration is complex and dynamic, shaped by geopolitical conflicts, socioeconomic disparities, environmental changes, and shifting patterns of mobility. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide crossed a staggering 122.6 million by mid-2024, including 68.3 million internally displaced persons in the end of 2023.



122.6 million

forcibly **displaced**
persons worldwide

68.3 million

internally displaced
persons

More importantly, the nature of conflict and displacement has evolved profoundly in recent years. Crises are increasingly protracted, with many displaced populations living in exile for decades, while displacement patterns have shifted to include prolonged stays in urban areas and host countries struggling with their own socioeconomic challenges. To respond to rising needs and the high opportunity cost of additional investments, international support needs to be built on a foundation of robust and effective partnerships to maximise synergies and leverage comparative advantages while simultaneously tackling the protection, humanitarian, and development needs of the affected populations.

The PROSPECTS partnership brings together the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank to operationalise such new partnership to enable durable improvements by putting decent work at the nexus between humanitarian action and development cooperation. In addition to delivering results-based and country-led approaches, PROSPECTS aims to develop and implement evidence-based solutions tailored to each local context while also testing and learning from innovative, operational solutions to the problems faced by host communities and forcibly displaced people. The first phase of PROSPECTS spanned from 2019 to 2023, focusing on enhancing the economic and social inclusion of displaced individuals and host communities. Building upon the achievements of phase one, PROSPECTS 2.0 commenced in 2024 and is set

Figure 1. Phases of the IFA

to continue until 2027, aiming to further strengthen these efforts and adapt to evolving challenges in displacement contexts. Equally importantly, it stands as an innovative model that embodies the New Ways of Working, with the potential to provide lessons and good practices for future partnerships.

In this context, the Impact Feasibility Assessment (IFA) and Evaluative Baseline exercise commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Migration and Displacement Hub (MDH) to assess its component of the PROSPECTS partnership for 2024-2027 has an important significance. By assessing the feasibility of an impact assessment of PROSPECTS 2.0 programming approaches, partnership structures, and implementation modalities, this exercise seeks to provide a foundation for the future evaluation process. This exercise aims to lay the groundwork for generating impact-level evidence under PROSPECTS 2.0 at the end of the phase in 2027, using rigorous evaluation

methods to determine whether interventions were effective, for whom they worked, why they succeeded, and their associated costs.

The first part of this exercise, the IFA, consists of three main phases as per the Terms of Reference (ToR), and are displayed in Figure 1.

Therefore, this rapid review serves as an initial step towards achieving this objective by compiling the most recent publicly available evaluation evidence to identify and prioritise potential PROSPECTS interventions that could offer the highest knowledge gains directly aligned with PROSPECTS goals. It aims to enhance, update, and consolidate current knowledge regarding effective strategies and key research gaps rather than acting as a standalone comprehensive review. Therefore, the focus is on both academic literature and PROSPECTS partners past evaluations, and PROSPECTS partnership programme and strategy documents from the past 5 years.¹

¹ The team started with a search for evaluative evidence from the past 10 years, but it was found that either evidence was repetitive, or no evaluations from before 2019 fit our selection criteria in terms of methodology and outcome areas. Therefore, in order to maximize efficiency, the team focused on analysing the evaluation evidence from the past 5 years. More on this in the next section.

Country Level Evidence Mapping

Selection Criteria

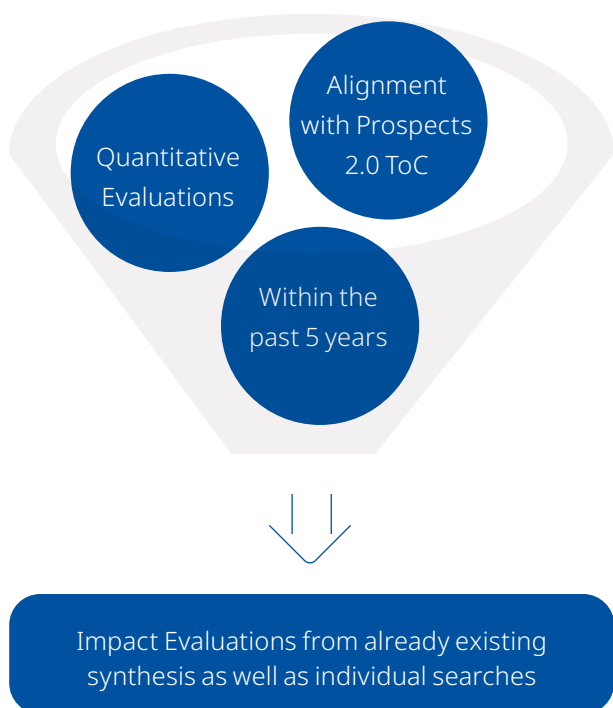
The focus of this rapid review is on impact and outcome level evidence for the eight PROSPECTS countries, namely **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan** and **Uganda**. The evaluations covered in this rapid review are not focused on the PROSPECTS interventions but rather evaluations that are linked to the partnership objectives and outcomes.

The selection of evaluations for this rapid review follows three simple criteria:

1. Alignment of the impact evaluations with the 4 pillars (intermediate outcomes) of the PROSPECTS 2.0 Theory of Change (ToC), namely Pillar 1. Education & learning; Pillar 2. Economic Inclusion; Pillar 3. Protection and Social Protection; and Pillar 4. Critical Infrastructure.
2. Evaluations conducted using rigorous quantitative designs - quasi-experimental or experimental designs
3. Evaluations that satisfy the time span between 2019 and 2024.

Initially, the team expanded the document search to include evaluations from the last 10 years, going back as far as 2015. However, this broader search revealed that extending the timeframe didn't provide many additional relevant evaluations. Most of the findings from earlier than the past five years did not meet our selection criteria well. This suggests that including evaluations from the last 10 years will not significantly enhance the value of our review. A decision was therefore made to focus on the years between 2019 and 2024. This is primarily because the older studies are likely to be outdated due to several factors, such as:

1. First, the global landscape has changed considerably over the past decade, with the COVID-19 pandemic having a profound impact on economic, social, and health outcomes worldwide. For instance, the pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities, altered economic opportunities, and



shifted priorities in many regions, rendering pre-COVID data less relevant.

2. Second, political situations in many PROSPECTS countries have undergone significant changes. For example, Lebanon has experienced considerable political and economic upheaval, including a severe financial crisis and mass protests. Similarly, Ethiopia has faced conflict in the Tigray region, and the situation in Sudan remains unstable. Evaluations from before these changes may not accurately capture the current context or the effectiveness of interventions in these altered environments.
3. Third, there is a potential for redundancy. Previous reviews have shown that the body of evidence tends to remain consistent year over year, except in cases of substantial shifts or innovations in intervention strategies. Recognizing the value of identifying recurring themes to assess areas of higher knowledge gains, the team confirmed that the well-researched topics from the past decade largely overlap with those from the past five years. This indicates that extending the analysis beyond five years is unnecessary. Therefore, concentrating on the most recent five years enables us to capture any new developments or significant changes in intervention effectiveness while avoiding redundant analysis of established areas.

Additionally, focusing on the most recent studies allows for a more efficient use of time. Since this is a rapid review, reviewing older studies that may no longer be relevant could divert attention and resources away from analysing interventions that directly impact current refugee conditions.

Finally, a key methodological decision to select studies for this Rapid Review was to focus the review specifically on evaluations within the PROSPECTS countries, with an emphasis on programs targeting refugees, IDPs, and host communities. This targeted approach is essential because the experiences and vulnerabilities of refugees and IDPs differ significantly from

those of host populations. These groups face unique challenges, including but not limited to legal and social exclusion, limited access to basic services, and heightened exposure to economic and environmental vulnerabilities.^{2,3}

The distinct realities of refugees, IDPs, and host communities necessitate that the evidence base be directly applicable to their specific needs. Research has shown that interventions tailored to these groups are more likely to yield positive outcomes when they account for the nuanced socio-economic, legal, and cultural dynamics that shape their lives.⁴ For instance, refugees often have specific barriers to accessing formal education or economic opportunities due to their legal status or limited mobility, which differs from the challenges faced by local populations.⁵ Thus, it was crucial to examine evidence that directly speaks to their needs, as interventions designed for general populations may not be effective or appropriate in these settings.

However, this focused approach also inevitably narrowed the evidence base, as it excluded studies conducted in broader national or international settings. By not drawing on global evidence, the review provides fewer opportunities for cross-contextual comparison of results, which could potentially offer additional insights. The team acknowledges that while this focus on PROSPECTS countries enhances the relevance of the insights for policy and programming in these specific contexts, it limits the breadth of available evidence. This trade-off is a conscious methodological choice: the rapid review prioritizes contextual relevance over the quantity of studies, knowing that the findings might be less generalizable across different regions or populations.

2 UNHCR. (2020). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

3 Betts, A., Bloom, L., Kaplan, J., & Omata, N. (2019). *Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions*. Oxford University Press.

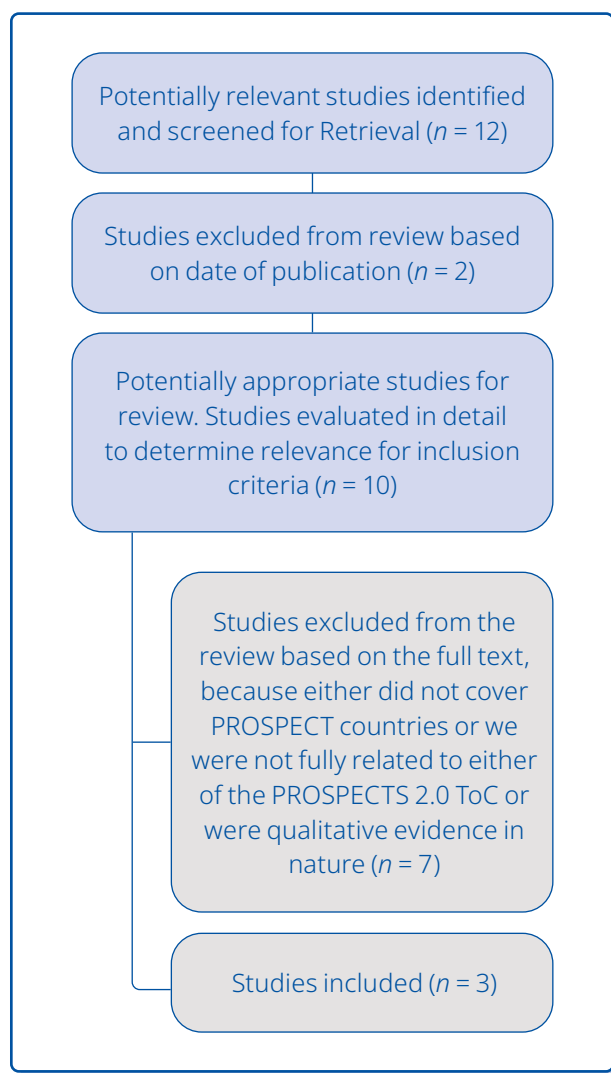
4 Khaltu, D., Ferguson, M., & Harris, S. (2020). *Understanding the Social and Economic Impacts of Displacement on Refugee and Host Communities: Lessons from Recent Evidence*. Journal of Refugee Studies.

5 Crisp, J. (2003). *The Role of Education in Refugee Protection*. Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University.

Steps of the Review

This rapid review employed a structured, three-step process to select evaluation studies and assess evidence on interventions aimed at improving refugee conditions under the four pillars of the PROSPECTS 2.0 Theory of Change (ToC). To maximise the number of evaluations included within the constraints of a rapid review, EPRI began with a “review of reviews” approach. This involved identifying and analysing existing reviews, such as systematic, scoping, and critical reviews, that included evaluation studies of interventions targeting FDPs and HCs outcomes. By examining these reviews, EPRI was able to extract relevant evaluations that met the study’s criteria. This targeted approach ensured a broad yet focused synthesis of evidence on interventions addressing learning and education, economic inclusion, protection and social protection, and critical infrastructure for refugees. To identify pertinent reviews, EPRI utilised a targeted keyword strategy focusing on terms like “scoping reviews,” “systematic reviews,” and “critical reviews”.⁶

Figure 2. Decision Tree



In the initial phase of this review, the focus was not confined to any specific country. This approach was adopted to better understand the global landscape of impact evaluations that align with the PROSPECTS 2.0 ToC. Once this global overview was established and relevant reviews were identified, EPRI moved to select specific evaluations pertinent to the PROSPECTS countries. Below, Figure 2 illustrates the quorum flowchart used in the first step of the study selection process, detailing the decision-making process for including studies in the review.



8 PROSPECTS countries

⁶ EPRI screened the first 10 pages of hits in google scholar limiting results to the last five years (2019 – 2024), for example: “Review” AND “what works to improve” (“education and learning” OR “economic inclusion” OR “social protection”) AND “refugees”.

EPRI selected three relevant “reviews of reviews” in the first step that served as a base to represent the evidence frontier of what works to improve FDPs’ and HCs’ lives in PROSPECTS partnership countries (Schuettler and Caron 2020; Palik and Østby 2023; Stevens, Siraj, and Kong 2023). Considering that a formal analysis of the inclusion criteria and overlapping content of articles across reviews is beyond the scope of this review, it is crucial to address a few key points. The reviews pertinent to Pillar 1 of the Theory of Change (ToC), focusing on learning and education, were published in 2023, while the review related to Pillar 2, economic inclusion, was published in 2020.⁷ Hence, it is essential to ensure that studies relevant to PROSPECTS countries and all ToC Pillars from 2019 to 2023 have not been overlooked. Additionally, it is important to include studies published after these reviews.

The second step of the selection process focuses on defining key search terms to identify what works to improve the learning and education, economic inclusion, protection and social protection, and critical infrastructure outcomes of FDPs and IDPs, specifically for the PROSPECTS countries, and on identifying studies not covered in the reviews.⁸

The third step involved conducting keyword and filtered searches on UNICEF and partner organization websites to identify additional evaluations relevant to the four PROSPECTS 2.0 pillars and target countries. This included a review of global and regional evaluations from UNICEF’s evaluation database, as well as publications from ILO, UNHCR, the World Bank, and IFC. While this step did not focus on experimental or quasi-experimental studies, it aimed to enhance the understanding of existing evidence and inform subsequent stages of the Impact Feasibility Assessment (IFA).

First Step Selection Process

The review done by Schuettler and Caron (2020) brings together evidence on how forced displacement impacts the economic lives of those forcibly displaced with the existing knowledge on job interventions for refugees and IDPs. The authors have reviewed 115 studies, many of which come from high-income countries (44 studies). Nonetheless, Sub-Saharan Africa and Middle East, and North Africa are well represented with 27 and 25 studies, respectively. Narrowing down to PROSPECTS countries, 34 studies were identified, which then drops to 20 studies when looking at those that implemented quasi-experimental or experimental designs, and to 4 when only considering studies that were conducted between 2019 and 2024, which cover Ethiopia (1 study – Pillar 2), Jordan (1 study – Pillars 2 and 3), Kenya (1 study – Pillars 2 and 3) and Lebanon (1 study – Pillars 1 and 3).

The review conducted by Palik and Østby (2023), which seeks to understand the effect of specific interventions aimed to improve access to education and/or quality learning for refugee children, has searched the literature for the time period between 1990 and 2021, which resulted in 1,873 articles. However, only 8 of these studies fit the authors’ selection criteria. The authors argue that the paucity of evidence indicates that there is a general lack of robust evidence as to what works to improve quality learning for refugee children. When narrowing down to the criteria of this rapid review, only 2 studies cover at least one of the eight PROSPECTS countries, implement quasi-experimental or experimental designs and were conducted after 2019, which cover Ethiopia (1 study – Pillars 1 and 3) and Lebanon (1 study – Pillars 1 and 3).

⁷ No “scoping reviews”, “systematic reviews”, nor “critical reviews” on what works to improve the refugees’ lives specifically linked to Pillars 3 and 4 and that cover PROSPECTS countries were found. It is important to note, however, that there is an interlinkage between PROSPECTS 2.0 ToC Pillars, meaning that some studies reviewed in the identified reviews cover Pillar 3 (see section 2.1.1).

⁸ EPRI screened the first 10 pages of hits in google scholar limiting results to the last five years (2019 – 2024), for example: “Interventions” AND (“education and learning” OR “economic inclusion” OR “protection” OR “social protection”) AND “refugees” AND “Country X”, where Country X are the eight PROSPECTS countries.

Finally, we included the review conducted by Stevens, Siraj, and Kong (2023) to evaluate what is known about the benefits and quality of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programmes for refugee children in low—and middle-income countries (LMICs). The evaluation team has identified 15 studies, of which 7 cover PROSPECTS countries and relate to pillar 1 of the PROSPECTS 2.0 ToC. Once the evaluation team applies the other two selection criteria, no studies are identified as relevant for this rapid review.

Second Step Selection Process

The second step in the selection process aimed at covering the gaps of the first step. That is, while a formal analysis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in the reviews is beyond the scope of this Rapid Review, it is important to search for studies beyond the time frame of each review and search for specific studies for the PROSPECTS countries. To this end, EPRI has identified studies using the search path and selection criteria discussed above.

It is important to note that the four pillars of the PROSPECTS ToC are interconnected, and, thus, through the search on this step, EPRI was able to identify 23 unique, relevant studies that sometimes cover more than one of the ToC pillars. Looking at the specific pillars and starting with Pillar 1, education & learning, EPRI identified 11 studies, covering Ethiopia (2 study), Jordan (1 study), Kenya (1 study), Lebanon (3 studies) and Uganda (4 studies). When looking at Pillar 2, economic inclusion, 12 studies were identified, covering Egypt (1 study), Ethiopia (2 studies), Jordan (2 studies), Kenya (1 study), Lebanon (1 study) and Uganda (5 study). The search for Pillar 3, protection and social protection, yielded 13 studies covering Ethiopia (2 study), Iraq (1 study), Jordan (1 study), Kenya (1 study), Lebanon (3 studies), and Uganda (5 studies).

Evaluations that focused exclusively on themes outside the scope of the PROSPECTS ToC, such as psychosocial or mental development, were excluded since the aim is to explore areas of high and low knowledge gains for PROSPECTS 2.0 impact evaluation. For example, the study on the Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on Symptoms of Depression among Syrian Child Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq was not included. However, evaluations like the Educational, Psychosocial, and Protection Outcomes of Child- and Youth-Focused Programming with Somali Refugees in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia, were included because they also addressed pillars of the PROSPECTS ToC. Moreover, any theses and dissertations were also excluded from the rapid review since that would involve additional quality assurance.

This rapid review could not identify any study that met all the above-mentioned criteria under Pillar 4, nor were studies identified covering Egypt during the specific time frame. This points to important gaps in the literature that will be further discussed in the next section and will be vital to developing the Impact Feasibility Assessment (IFA).

Finally, the cross-cutting themes and systemic change aspects of the PROSPECTS Theory of Change were also taken into account. Although it was not possible to categorise the selected interventions under these themes directly, the subsequent sections on evidence and implications integrate these elements into the analysis.

Table 1. Number of Evaluations per country

Countries	Pillar 1. Education & learning	Pillar 2. Economic Inclusion	Pillar 3. Protection and Social Protection	Pillar 4. Critical Infrastructure
Lebanon	5 studies	1 study	5 studies	0 studies
Iraq	0 studies	0 studies	1 study	0 studies
Jordan	1 study	3 studies	2 studies	0 studies
Sudan	0 studies	0 studies	0 studies	0 studies
Ethiopia	3 studies	3 studies	3 studies	0 studies
Kenya	1 study	2 study	2 studies	0 studies
Uganda	4 studies	5 studies	5 studies	0 studies
Egypt	0 studies	1 study	0 studies	0 studies

Third Step Selection Process

To delve deeper into the available evidence, the team conducted keyword and filtered searches on UNICEF and partner websites to identify evaluations that are relevant to the four PROSPECTS 2.0 pillars, and the eight countries. Relevant global and regional evaluations were also reviewed. We selected evaluation studies from UNICEF's evaluation database that were related to "refugees", "forcefully displaced persons", "immigration", "humanitarian", and "on the move" from the past five years (2019-2024). We extended the search to publications from ILO, UNHCR, World Bank and IFC as well.⁹ While none of these relevant evaluations met the criteria of having an experimental or quasi-experimental design, we reviewed them as a third step of the IFA Rapid Review to enhance our understanding of knowledge gains and to inform subsequent stages of the Impact Feasibility Assessment (IFA). In this step, a total of 19 evaluations were reviewed, including 12 conducted by UNICEF and 7 by ILO. Over the past five years, neither UNHCR nor the World Bank has produced evaluations relevant to the four pillars in the PROSPECTS target countries that are publicly available. A list of reviewed evaluations has been provided in Annex A.

⁹ UNICEF Evaluation Database
 ILO i-eval: <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#aqh1t4f>
 UNHCR: [https://www.unhcr.org/search?sm_tags\[\]=evaluation%20report&sm_tags\[\]=decentralized&tags_op=OR&sm_site_name\[\]=Global%20site](https://www.unhcr.org/search?sm_tags[]=evaluation%20report&sm_tags[]=decentralized&tags_op=OR&sm_site_name[]=Global%20site)

03

PROSPECTS Countries: Evidence and Gaps from Publicly Available Evaluations

The table below presents a summary of evaluative evidence mapped by country. For each country, the interventions evaluated have been organised by broad categories of effectiveness: “successful” “mixed” “unsuccessful” following categories used in Chae & Ngo, 2017.¹⁰



3 categories

of effectiveness:

successful, mixed, unsuccessful

We also relate intervention components evaluated to the four PROSPECTS ToC pillars addressing:

Pillar 1: Education and Learning

Providing increased access to quality education for forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) and host communities (HCs) through, for example, bridging learning gaps, retention, skills training etc.

Pillar 2: Economic Inclusion

Proving better livelihood and expanded economic opportunities for FDPs and HCs through for example, access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Pillar 3: Protection and Social Protection

For example, protection services against violence and abuse, access to social protection including cash transfers and complementary services.

Pillar 4: Critical Infrastructure

Providing improved facilities and services, including WASH and information systems.

¹⁰ Successful: All components improved conditions of the refugees among the study population. If a single intervention with multiple components improved the condition, then it was also categorized as successful. Mixed success: One or more (but not all) components of an intervention improved condition OR the conditions of one or more (but not all) subgroups (e.g., rural and urban, or different origins). For example, the provision of safe spaces through child and youth learning centres (CYLCs) in Ethiopia only reduced protection risks for younger children, but not for older children. Some older children and their caregivers expressed heightened concerns Unsuccessful: The intervention failed to show any success in improving the situation of refugees.

Table 2. Evidence from Rigorous Evaluations



* Protection and Social Protection belong to the same pillar of the ToC

Table 2. Evidence from Rigorous Evaluations (continued)

		Economic Inclusion	Education and Learning	Protection*	Social Protection*	Critical Infrastructure
Kenya						
Successful	Bamba Chakula: Empowering refugees through cash and agriculture <small>MacPherson, 2021</small>	●	○	○	○	○
Mixed	Cash transfer and micro-enterprise performance to refugees in Kenya <small>Delius & Sterck 2024</small>	●	○	○	○	○
Unsuccessful	Booster classes in protracted crisis settings <small>Brude-vold-Newman, 2023</small>	○	●	○	○	○
Ethiopia						
Mixed	Child and Youth Care Centers for Somali refugees in Dollo Ado <small>Metzler, 2021</small>	○	○	●	○	○
	Transformative Resilience: Harnessing ICT for Trauma Recovery and Community Empowerment among Eritrean Refugees <small>Selam, 2024</small>	○	○	●	○	○
	Building Refugee Economies: IKEA Foundation's programme in Dollo Ado - Ethiopia <small>Betts, 2019</small>	●	○	○	○	○
	SHARPPE Program <small>de Brauw, 2023</small>	●	○	○	○	○
	Improving employment and social cohesion among refugee and host communities through TVET <small>Abis et al, 2023</small>	●	○	●	○	○
Uganda						
Successful	Care groups in an integrated nutrition education intervention improved infant growth among South Sudanese refugees <small>Komakech, 2024</small>	○	○	●	○	○
	Cash transfers amid shocks: A large, one-time, unconditional cash transfer to refugees in Uganda <small>Gupta, 2024</small>	●	○	○	○	○
	Development Response To Displacement Impacts Project <small>Wokadala, 2020</small>	●	○	○	○	○
	Cash and Small Business Groups for Ugandans and Refugees <small>Baseler, Ginn et al. 2025</small>	●	○	○	○	○
Mixed	Experimental Evidence from Microentrepreneurs in Urban Uganda <small>Baseler, 2021</small>	●	○	○	○	○
	Child friendly space interventions in Rwamwanja refugee settlement <small>Metzler, 2019</small>	○	○	●	○	○
	TeamUp - movement-based mental health promotion intervention for refugee children in Uganda <small>Bleile, 2024</small>	○	○	●	○	○
	Trauma Counseling Support and Social Protection for Enhancing Social Economic Resilience in Vulnerable Communities <small>Van, 2022</small>	●	○	○	○	○

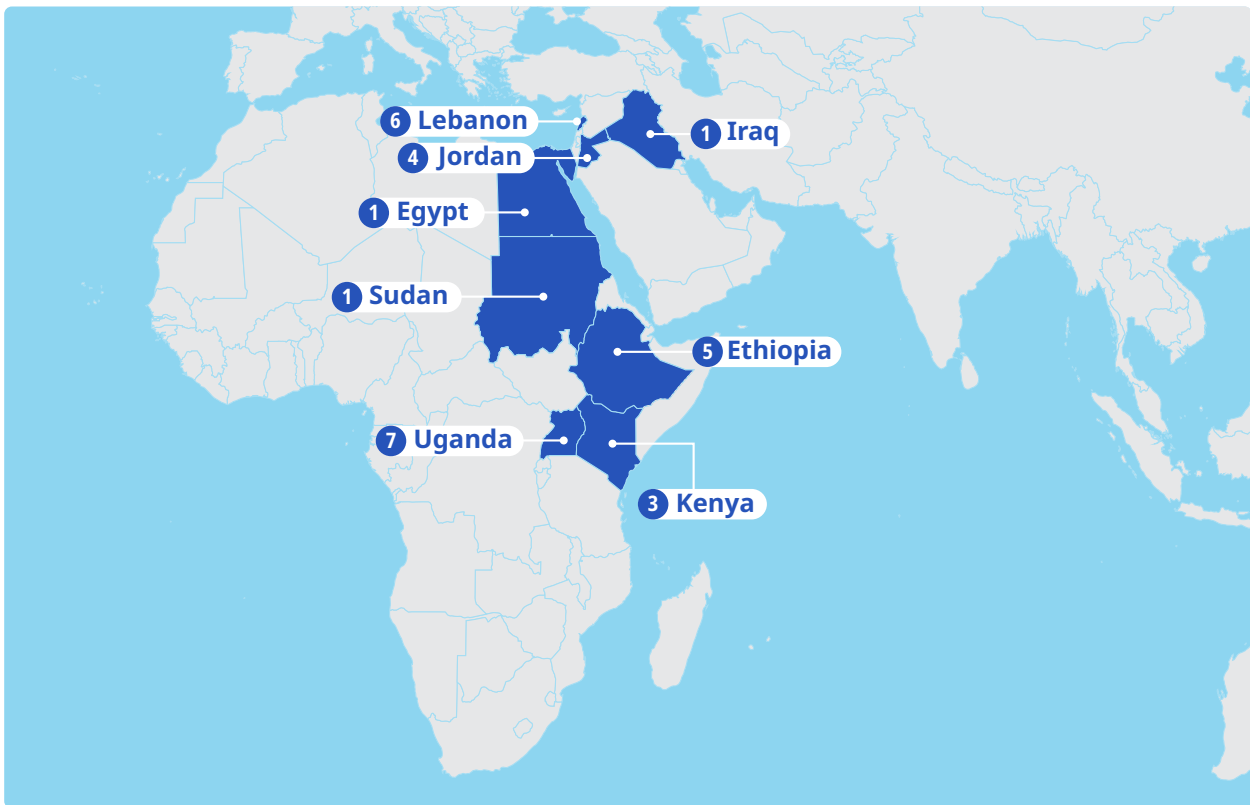
* Protection and Social Protection belong to the same pillar of the ToC

Furthermore, the evaluations from UNICEF, ILO, UNHCR, World Bank and IFC were also reviewed. The table below presents the summary of additional successful, mixed and unsuccessful interventions and approaches in improving outcomes for FDPs and HCs globally, and at the PROSPECTS country level.

Table 3. Evidence from UNICEF and partner evaluations

		Critical Infrastructure	Social Protection*	Protection*	Education and Learning	Economic Inclusion
Global/Regional						
Successful	UNICEF ECD Kits - Integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) Kits in Emergencies	○	●	○	○	○
	Cash-Based Programming along with Enabling Environment for Cash and Shock-Responsive Social Protection	○	○	○	○	○
	Education and Child Protection for Refugee Children – UNICEF/UNHCR Blueprint for Joint Action	○	●	●	○	○
Mixed	Psychosocial Support (PSS) for Migrant Children – UNICEF Summative Evaluation of Best Practices for Children in Migration	○	○	●	○	○
	Extending Access to Social Protection and Portability of Benefits to Migrant Workers and Their Families in Selected RECs in Africa	●	○	○	○	○
Lebanon						
Successful	Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programmes	○	○	○	○	●
Mixed	Cash for Work Program - Lebanon-Jordan EIIPs Cluster Evaluation	○	○	○	○	○
Jordan						
Successful	Green Works in Agriculture and Forestry	○	○	○	○	○
	Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programmes	○	○	○	○	●
	Hajati cash + messaging to Syrian children <small>de Hoop, Natali et al. 2020</small>	○	●	●	○	○
	Women's Entrepreneurship Program	○	○	○	○	○
Mixed	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Interventions in Refugee Camps	○	○	○	○	●
	Towards an inclusive national social protection system and accelerating decent job opportunities for Syrians and vulnerable Jordanians	○	○	○	○	○
Egypt						
Successful	Life Skills Programs for Youth - UNICEF Humanitarian Response (Egypt 2018-2022)	○	●	○	○	○
	Meshwary Project Phase II – Youth Skill Development in Egypt	○	○	○	○	○
Unsuccessful	Emergency Cash Assistance Targeting - UNICEF Humanitarian Response (Egypt 2018-2022)	○	○	○	○	○

* Protection and Social Protection belong to the same pillar of the ToC



Lebanon

For Lebanon, we mapped seven evaluations, presenting Lebanon's diverse interventions primarily focused on supporting Syrian refugees through cash assistance programs aimed at education and basic needs. Monthly cash transfers for school-related expenses have successfully increased school enrolment and reduced child labour, illustrating the direct benefits of linking financial aid with educational goals. However, other programs like the Multipurpose Cash Assistance and nonformal remedial support have yielded mixed results, with some failing to achieve long-term economic independence or significant improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Iraq

We mapped one intervention in Iraq—the Public Distribution System (PDS). The evaluation shows that although the PDS helped mitigate displacement to a degree, it may not be the most effective protection program for such shocks because the displaced beneficiaries remained significantly worse off and more vulnerable to poverty than non-displaced households. Given the considerable resources the universal program consumes, it is vital to think of alternative approaches, such as targeted cash transfers, that might be more effective in protection and cost.

Jordan

We mapped four evaluations in Jordan that captured the country's focus on supporting Syrian refugees, involving diverse interventions focusing on economic inclusion, health, and social protection, with work permits for refugees enhancing financial self-reliance and food security. However, the Cash for Work and Multi-purpose Cash Transfers have shown limited success in creating sustainable economic independence, highlighting the challenges of transitioning from immediate financial support to long-term economic stability.

Sudan

In Sudan, we mapped no evidence across the ToC Pillars, indicating critical knowledge gaps.

Ethiopia

In total, we map 5 evaluations in Ethiopia, addressing multiple components related to economic inclusion, education and learning, and protection. Within the context of Ethiopia, most studies evaluate multi-component programmes, reflecting a broad approach to improving refugee and host community outcomes. The interventions in the country have primarily focused on improving educational outcomes and economic resilience among refugees and host communities. The literacy and numeracy classes have notably enhanced children's educational achievements, demonstrating the impact of structured educational support in crisis settings. The Transformative Resilience Program, which provides long-term psychosocial support, stands out for its success in reducing traumatic stress and enhancing social and economic resilience, showcasing the benefits of integrating mental health support with resilience-building strategies. However, initiatives like microfinance and digital financial services, while successful in promoting financial inclusion, have shown mixed results regarding long-term stability and inclusivity, indicating a need for more targeted financial interventions that address the unique barriers faced by women and refugees.

Kenya

In Kenya, we map 3 evaluations, focusing on economic inclusion, education, and social protection interventions. Most studies evaluate multi-component programmes, reflecting the complexity of the challenges faced by refugees. Kenya has seen significant interventions, particularly in the Kakuma refugee camp, with programs like the Bamba Chakula enhancing food security through targeted food assistance. However, interventions aimed at economic empowerment, such as the restricted cash transfer program, have faced challenges like market saturation and price inflation, leading to mixed outcomes. This underscores the complexity of implementing economic programs in refugee settings, where market dynamics can differ significantly from those in non-refugee settings.

Uganda

In total, we map 8 evaluations in Uganda, focusing on nutrition, economic self-reliance, and mental health interventions. Most studies evaluate multi-component programmes addressing several strategies in the Theory of Change. Programs like peer-led Care Groups have successfully improved infant nutrition, reflecting the effectiveness of community-based health education. The large one-time cash transfers have also positively impacted economic self-reliance and psychological well-being, highlighting the potential of cash interventions to provide immediate financial relief and boost long-term economic activities. However, mixed results were observed in initiatives like the Life Skills and Sports Program and the grant and mentorship programs, which, while promising, did not uniformly improve economic conditions across all participant groups. This suggests the necessity of more nuanced program designs that can adapt to the diverse needs of refugee populations.

Egypt

For Egypt, no relevant evidence was found that fits the set criteria. For Egypt, we looked at evaluation evidence from the past 10 years and found one mixed methods evaluation that aligns with the ToC. It reveals that the UNHCR Egypt Graduation Programme increased the incomes, job placements and self-employment of the beneficiaries, but the impact lasted less than 6 months. Other than this, over the last 10 years, no rigorous quantitative evaluations of education and learning, economic inclusion, protection and social protection interventions for refugees have been conducted in the country.¹¹ In addition, the following considerations limit the validity of evaluations conducted longer than 5-10 years ago in Egypt.

1. Migration Dynamics: The dynamics of refugee and migrant populations in Egypt have evolved, influenced by regional instability and conflicts, particularly in neighboring countries like Libya and Sudan. The needs, demographics, and numbers of refugees have changed, making older interventions potentially irrelevant.

¹¹ Evaluations conducted using rigorous quantitative designs - quasi-experimental or experimental designs

2. Policy Reforms: Egypt has implemented various policy reforms affecting refugees and asylum seekers over the past few years, including changes in work permit regulations and access to public education and healthcare services. Older studies do not account for these changes, which could significantly impact the success and applicability of certain interventions.

In order to gather some evidence from Egypt, the evaluation of the Meshwary Project Phase II (2017) and UNICEF HHR Response in Egypt were reviewed, which were the only relevant UNICEF evaluations in the country.

Insights from UNICEF and Partner Evaluations

The review of evaluations from UNICEF and ILO provided valuable insights, the majority of which confirmed the findings from the first two stages of the review. For instance, the ILO evaluations consistently emphasised the importance of integrating economic inclusion interventions with market linkages and skills training. This aligns with previous evidence from Ethiopia and Kenya, where multi-component programs showed greater success in improving FDPs and HCs outcomes. The UN evaluations also highlighted gaps in the scalability of cash-for-work programs, which were consistent with findings from the first and second steps of the rapid review. For example, an evaluation of Oxfam’s Cash-for-Work activities in Jordan’s Za’atari camp showed mixed results for forcibly displaced persons (FDPs). One major concern was the lack of sustainability in the outcomes achieved by these interventions.

Additionally, the evaluations qualified the effectiveness of gender-focused initiatives. While UNICEF-led programs demonstrated the potential of tailored interventions for women and youth, ILO-led evaluations stressed the importance of addressing systemic barriers like policy restrictions and lack of childcare support. Although external evaluations indicate that micro-entrepreneurship interventions often have no or mixed success—for instance, the Microentrepreneurs in Urban Uganda project—UN evaluations showcased the success of women’s entrepreneurship programs in improving outcomes for FDPs.

Finally, the UN evaluations underscored the need for robust monitoring frameworks. Both UNICEF and ILO evaluations highlighted the lack of longitudinal studies and comprehensive data to assess the sustained impacts of interventions, reaffirming gaps identified in the first and second steps of this rapid review.

Conclusions

This rapid review synthesises external and PROSPECTS partners’ evaluations of interventions targeting FDPs and host communities HCs, focusing on diverse implementation modalities across the eight PROSPECTS countries relevant to the four pillars of PROSPECTS 2.0. The analysis highlights what works and, in which context, identifies the evidence gaps and provides lessons for future programming and evaluations.

One of the key findings from this rapid review is that the success of interventions varied significantly across contexts. For instance, in the Horn of Africa, multi-component approaches integrating livelihoods, education, and protection proved most effective. Uganda’s Care Groups improved nutritional outcomes through community-led models, while Ethiopia’s value-chain interventions fostered sustainable livelihoods in agriculture and small enterprises. However, despite their promise, digital learning platforms faced challenges due to infrastructure gaps.

In contrast, in the Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq), majority of the interventions achieved mixed success because they mostly focus on immediate needs. While the work permit program in Jordan provided financial self-reliance for refugees, scalability was limited by restrictive legal frameworks and employer resistance. Lebanon’s education-focused cash transfers increased school enrollments but struggled to address systemic barriers like dropout rates and resource disparities.

Overall, the rapid review identified significant gaps in program evaluations in Egypt and Sudan. However, the UN evaluations in Egypt demonstrated that the youth skilling interventions have been successful in the country, while emergency cash transfers have not been successful in improving outcomes for FDPs and HCs.

Across the PROSPECTS pillars, Education and Learning interventions underscored the need for integrated and context-sensitive approaches. Digital and blended learning platforms in Ethiopia and Uganda showed potential for improving access to education but were hampered by infrastructural limitations. Programs that integrated formal education with psychosocial support and life skills training, such as those in Lebanon, achieved higher retention and learning outcomes. However, a lack of gender-sensitive approaches, including enabling infrastructure such as WASH facilities, particularly for girls, limited the broader impact of many education initiatives.

Furthermore, economic inclusion interventions demonstrated that success depended on combining multiple elements, such as vocational training, access to credit, and market linkages. Ethiopia's value-chain development initiatives and Jordan's employment-intensive infrastructure programs exemplify how tailored approaches can yield significant impacts. However, cash-for-work (CfW) programs, while effective in providing short-term economic relief, often lacked mechanisms to transition participants into sustainable employment. This was evident in Lebanon and Kenya, where beneficiaries reverted to precarious living conditions after the programs ended.

Protection and Social Protection interventions were more successful when they integrated multiple services. For instance, cash transfers linked with education and health services in Lebanon successfully increased school enrollment, while similar programs in Jordan improved access to basic services for refugees. However, standalone emergency relief efforts, such as temporary food aid, failed to achieve long-term impacts or address structural vulnerabilities. Gender-sensitive interventions were impactful but struggled against systemic cultural and logistical barriers, such as access to childcare and restrictive norms.

In the Critical Infrastructure pillar, employment-intensive infrastructure programs (EIIPs) in Jordan and Lebanon demonstrated dual benefits, creating jobs while improving local infrastructure. For example, Jordan's Green Works project combined environmental sustainability with job creation, fostering both climate resilience and economic inclusion. However,

scalability and weak community ownership often hindered broader systemic impacts, particularly in contexts where local governance structures were not sufficiently engaged.

Overall, the findings from this review emphasise that integrated, context-sensitive, and scalable interventions are the most successful in addressing the complex needs of FDPs and HCs. Programs that combined multiple components—such as education, livelihoods, and psychosocial support—consistently outperformed standalone initiatives, particularly in improving outcomes for women and youth. Tailored approaches that leveraged local governance structures, as seen in Uganda's Care Groups and Kenya's food assistance programs, demonstrated the importance of grounding interventions in the unique dynamics and needs of specific communities. However, systemic barriers, including restrictive policies, cultural norms, and infrastructural deficits, remain significant challenges to achieving long-term impacts, as illustrated by work permit programs in Jordan and economic inclusion interventions in Egypt.

Gaps

Egypt stands out due to the complete absence of external evaluations that meet our criteria. This gap is significant as it highlights a lack of quantitative evidence on interventions across all four pillars—Education and Learning, Economic Inclusion, Protection, and Critical Infrastructure.

Furthermore, while some evaluations exist on interventions in Education and Learning, Economic Inclusion, and Protection, the existing studies often lack the methodological rigour, specifically needed to draw strong causal inferences. A shortage of evaluations employing experimental or quasi-experimental designs limits the ability to fully assess the impact of these interventions with confidence. For instance, although some protection interventions in Lebanon have demonstrated promising outcomes in providing legal aid and psychosocial support, the absence of robust methodologies leaves room for uncertainty about the replicability of these successes in other contexts.

Many of the studies reviewed tend to focus on multi-component interventions without adequately dissecting the impacts of individual components. This is particularly evident in programs such as Ethiopia's economic inclusion initiatives, which combine skills training, market linkages, and financial access but lack a clear breakdown of which elements drive specific outcomes. This lack of detailed analysis makes it difficult to determine which aspects of the interventions are most effective and how they interact with each other to contribute to the overall success. Isolating the impact of individual components is inherently challenging, and while experimental evaluation designs can be used to independently test each component, they are both resource-intensive and logistically complex.

Additionally, there is a temporal gap in recent studies, particularly from 2021 onwards, which may reflect delays or disruptions caused by global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This gap in recent data underscores the need for up-to-date research that can respond to the evolving needs and circumstances of displaced populations.

Furthermore, across all PROSPECTS countries, social protection interventions have predominantly centred on cash transfers, food distribution, and other forms of immediate financial relief. While these measures have been effective in addressing urgent needs, such as increasing school enrolment and improving food security, there is a significant gap in evidence regarding the inclusion of refugees and host communities in comprehensive social protection systems. Specifically, there is a lack of evaluations focusing on the integration of these populations into national social protection frameworks, the facilitation of access to social insurance, and ensuring equitable access to social services and benefits. This gap highlights the need for future research and interventions to align more closely with the broader objectives of the PROSPECTS Theory of Change, which emphasises the importance of sustainable social protection systems for promoting long-term resilience and social inclusion.

04

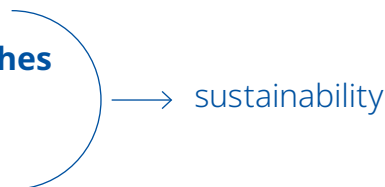
Takeaways and Implications for Prospects IFA

The state of global evidence and studies, specifically in PROSPECTS focal countries, provides several lessons and implications for the Impact Feasibility Assessment (IFA). Key insights include the value of integrated, scalable approaches and the need to address systemic barriers to ensure program sustainability. These lessons and implications come with caveats, however, that the comparability of research scope and quality across regions and countries is not uniform.

In countries with significant numbers of refugees, impact evaluations should focus on holistic programming or broad-based strategies to improve education, economic inclusion, protection, and social infrastructure as priorities. With this in mind, in terms of country focus, there are several considerations. First, there is a clear need to contribute to regional evidence gaps in countries with substantial refugee populations but limited research, such as Egypt. Not only for PROSPECTS focal countries, but for the broader region as well, understanding what works, and why and how it works, in these settings is critical. For example, while there is evidence from Uganda, Ethiopia, and Jordan, these studies often lack uniformity in scope and methodological rigour, making comparisons challenging. For instance, studies in Uganda have shown success in nutrition programs like Care Groups and cash transfers. Still, the methodologies used vary significantly, from randomised controlled trials to quasi-experimental designs, leading to differences in the robustness of the findings. Furthermore, Lebanon has been the focus of various evaluations, particularly under the pillars of Education & Learning, Protection and Social Protection. However, gaps remain, particularly in Economic Inclusion, which is essential for understanding long-term sustainability and broader impacts. The mixed success of protection-focused interventions highlights the need for integrated approaches.



integrated approaches
scalability
systemic barriers



Given the challenges in conducting research in humanitarian settings, a recommendation would be to prioritise countries with relatively stable environments prone to refugee influxes but which otherwise have stable political environments. For example, countries like Uganda and Kenya have shown promising results in various interventions but require more robust and comprehensive evaluations. Not only is rigorous evaluation rare in humanitarian settings but a greater body of evidence is needed, as appropriate and effective interventions may vary across different phases of displacement or integration. In Uganda, for example, the DRDIP showed positive impacts on household incomes. Still, long-term sustainability and broader systemic impacts remain unclear due to the limited scope and duration of the study.

Second, to address the overall burden of refugee displacement, continued investment in settings like Jordan, Lebanon, and Ethiopia is needed, particularly with systems-level and scalable interventions. For example, interventions such as the work permits for refugees in Jordan or the transformative resilience programs in Ethiopia highlight the potential for systemic change, but these need to be evaluated over longer periods to assess sustainability and broader impacts. In Jordan, work permits significantly improved financial self-reliance, yet the evaluations did not consistently use rigorous designs, making it difficult to generalise the findings.

Third, even within countries, there may be geographic and population group “hot spots” of higher needs and multidimensional poverty.¹² For example, while the overall conditions for refugees in a country like Jordan might be improving, specific groups or regions may still face severe challenges. Furthermore, refugees amongst less represented nationalities like the Burundian and Congolese refugees in Addis Ababa, may be particularly vulnerable but may be excluded from research studies because they are not from the main Eritrean and Somali refugee groups.¹³ Thus, there are high potential gains from strategically targeting interventions to these groups to reach the most at-risk populations. This targeted approach

was evident in successful programs such as the monthly cash transfers for school-related expenses in Lebanon, which specifically improved outcomes for children.

Finally, overall data, research, and evaluation infrastructure considerations are important—particularly with respect to strong secondary data availability to explore options for natural experiments or lean evaluations using administrative data. Countries with strong evidence infrastructure, such as Ethiopia and Jordan, can contribute to the successful completion of both high-quality impact evaluations and secondary data analysis. For example, Ethiopia’s EMIS captures data on student enrollment, attendance, and performance, and the HMIS collects health service data. In Kenya, the DHIS2 platform serves as the country’s HMIS, facilitating data collection on health indicators across the country.

With these considerations and in line with the Prospects Theory of Change (ToC), we draw out implications for identifying priority strategies for future rigorous evaluation. These recommendations aim to guide deeper dives into possible country-level programming where there are significant knowledge and practical gains to be considered within the next phase of Prospects. Within each strategy, we suggest types of interventions that have relatively “higher gains” in understanding (e.g., promising strategies without sufficient evidence or strategies yet untested) and those that have relatively “lower gains” in understanding. Studies offering higher knowledge gains tackle under-researched areas, address systemic and long-term challenges, or provide insights into innovative or scalable solutions. Lower-priority strategies are primarily those which have already demonstrated effectiveness, address only immediate or narrow needs, or lack the potential for scalability and systemic impact.

For instance, interventions to increase economic inclusion or protection measures, such as work permits and multi-purpose cash assistance, have been shown to be effective across many settings. Therefore, it is more useful to focus on understanding other aspects

¹² <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/deputy-secretary-general/statement/2020-10-20/deputy-secretary-generals-video-message-the-occasion-of-the-event-%E2%80%9Cdriving-systemic-change-through-governments-better-reach-those-living-extreme>

¹³ Omata (2021) ‘Over-researched’ and ‘Under-researched’ refugee groups: Exploring the phenomena, causes and consequences

of these areas, such as interventions to improve long-term economic stability and comprehensive protection services. While some intervention types have been proven ineffective, most strategies aligning with the ToC are not inherently ineffective but require careful implementation and evaluation.

Higher gains are likely from understanding the effects of targeted interventions specifically designed to be transformative and investing in studies set up to measure diverse outcomes credibly. Although Table 3 is organised by strategy, the resulting recommendations do not imply that “higher gain” strategies should be evaluated in isolation. Multi-component and cross-sectoral evaluations would yield high knowledge gains.

This prioritisation of studies and intervention types is meant to be an ongoing and evolving set of factors to consider jointly with the key stakeholders. For example, some key evaluation work may already be ongoing or planned within countries or other regions, which could fill some of these gaps. In addition, there are funding considerations to weigh, such as if some countries have larger evaluation budgets or existing commitments to fund evaluations. These priorities will be considered alongside key methodological considerations around study design, measurement, and ethics as the impact feasibility assessment moves forward.

Table 3. Prioritisation of Key Strategies for Evaluation

Strategies	Higher Gains	Lower Gains
Education and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Evaluations investigating the long-term impact of digital learning platforms and blended learning approaches. ▶ Limited evidence of their effectiveness in PROSPECTS countries, particularly in low-resource and fragile settings where digital divides exist. ▶ Evaluations that assess the effectiveness of integrated education programs combining formal education with life skills and psychosocial support. ▶ Addresses complex barriers to education and generates insights on holistic approaches. 	<p>Basic enrollment and continuation studies at the primary level without addressing broader educational barriers</p> <p>Impact of enrollment-focused interventions is well-documented globally</p>
Economic Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Examining the impact of comprehensive livelihood programs combining vocational training, access to microfinance, and business mentoring ▶ Combining multiple components (e.g., training, credit, mentoring) can provide critical insights into strategies for long-term economic resilience. ▶ Focus on integrated market-based interventions tailored to local contexts, such as value-chain development and entrepreneurship support. ▶ Actionable knowledge on building sustainable local markets 	<p>Focusing solely on short-term employment or cash-for-work programs without follow-up.</p> <p>Evaluating isolated microfinance initiatives without addressing barriers like market access or entrepreneurship skills, they contribute limited insights to comprehensive solutions.</p>

Protection and Social Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Evaluating comprehensive protection programs that include legal aid, psychosocial support, and community-based protection mechanisms – to account for complex vulnerabilities ▶ Long-term strategies that integrate cash transfers with health, education, and employment support, especially those with norm-changing components. 	<p>Isolated protection services without sustainable community engagement</p> <p>Programs lacking integration with community systems generate minimal knowledge for long-term resilience building.</p> <p>Standalone emergency relief efforts like temporary food aid or financial assistance without additional support systems.</p> <p>Standalone cash transfers</p>
Critical Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Infrastructure support linked to urban integration ▶ Emerging evidence and innovative approaches 	<p>Small-scale infrastructure interventions for short term gains</p>
Cross Cutting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Interventions focusing on learning, achievement, and perceived post-school options for girls and young women, including labour market interventions ▶ Multi-component interventions: Addressing education, livelihoods, and gender equity provides holistic insights into improving outcomes for FDPs and HCs, including the most vulnerable ones ▶ Community-based health and welfare services: These generate evidence on scalable and sustainable support systems, especially for vulnerable groups like women and youth. 	<p>Studies focusing on stand-alone health or protection services without linkages to broader systems</p> <p>Interventions that do not target or include marginalised groups – women, youth, persons with disabilities</p>

This table summarises the prioritisation of key strategies for future evaluations under PROSPECTS. Higher gain strategies have the potential for significant improvements in understanding and practical applications, particularly in areas that have not been extensively studied or where existing evidence is limited.

Lower gain strategies have already demonstrated effectiveness or have limited potential for scalability.

Annexures

Annex A

	List of UNICEF and Partner Evaluations	Country	Year
1	Evaluation of 'Sanitation Technology Demonstration in Emergency Setting in Lebanon' project	Lebanon	2023
2	Evaluation of UNICEF Humanitarian Response	Egypt	2020
3	The Evaluation of Meshwary Project Phase II	Egypt	2017
4	Summative Evaluation of the EU Global Promotion of Best Practices for Children in Migration (2020 - 2023) project (CoTM)	Global	2023
5	Summative Impact Evaluation of Makani Program	Jordan	2022
6	Evaluation of the WASH Humanitarian Response in Jordan (between 2018 -2021)	Jordan	2022
7	Evaluation of WASH services in camps and host communities	Jordan	2019
8	Early Childhood Development Kit Humanitarian Evaluation	Global	2018
9	Programme Evaluation of UNICEF's Work on "Ending Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation of Children: Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Prevention and Response to Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation of Children on the Move"	Global	2021
10	Evaluation of approaches to social protection programming in humanitarian situations, focusing on cash-based programming	Global	2021
11	Final Evaluation of the Programme 'Protecting Children Affected by Migration in Southeast, South and Central Asia'	Global	2023

12	Evaluation of the UNHCR/UNICEF blueprint for joint action for refugee children	Global	2023
13	Cluster Evaluation of Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programmes (EIIPs)	Jordan and Lebanon	2020
14	Final Evaluation of the Project: Extending Access to Social Protection and Portability of Benefits to Migrant Workers and Their Families in Selected RECs in Africa	Africa	2020
15	Hajati cash + messaging to Syrian children	Jordan	2019
16	Employment-Intensive Green Works Project	Jordan	2019
17	Employment and Inclusive Growth Project	Jordan	2023
18	Inclusive and Sustainable Growth Project Final Evaluation	Jordan	2023
19	Enhancing Job Resilience in Northern Lebanon Final Evaluation	Lebanon	2018

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