

Participatory Research | Beyond Tokenism, Incorporating Lived Experiences (38)

Vanessa Hoffman and Glynnis Melnicove

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES TO INFORM AND ADAPT PROGRAMMING IN UGANDA

1. Overview of USAID/BHA Uganda Graduating to Resilience

13,200 households in Kamwenge District

- 50% refugee
- 50% host community

Two Cohorts

- Cohort 1: 2019–2021
- Cohort 2: 2022–2024

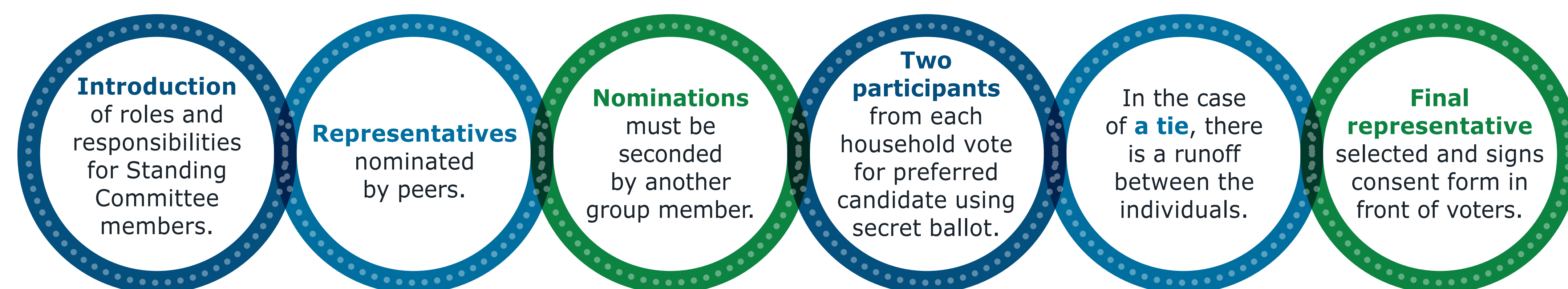
The USAID Graduating to Resilience Activity is a 7-year activity implemented by the AVSI Foundation (AVSI) in partnership with Trickle Up and the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The **goal** is to help ultra-poor refugee and Ugandan host community households in the

Kamwenge District graduate from food insecurity and fragile livelihoods to self-reliance and resilience. The Activity engages **13,200 economically active households** that are unable to meet their basic needs.

The Activity uses a **woman-plus-household approach**, focusing on women as the entry point for engagement in a multifaceted approach combining livelihood promotion, financial inclusion, social empowerment, and social protection components called the **Graduation Approach**.

<p>CONSUMPTION SUPPORT Cash transfer via monthly stipends for 12 months to enable participants to meet the immediate food needs of their household.</p>	<p>ASSET TRANSFER One-time asset transfer of approximately US\$300 to enable households to engage in economic activities.</p>
<p>LIVELIHOOD SKILLS TRAINING AND SUPPORT Training and business coaching, including financial literacy training and agro-business training and mentorship.</p>	<p>COACHING Individual and group coaching to support households to improve their food security, nutrition, and economic status.</p>
<p>SAVINGS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION Training to village savings and loan association groups on how to better operate using a three-phased curriculum.</p>	<p>LINKAGE AND REFERRALS Linkages and referrals to market services, financial institutions, government services, and services provided by NGOs.</p>

2. Standing Committee Purpose, Formation, and Processes



The Activity convenes **Standing Committees** comprised of **elected representatives** of participants. In Cohort 1, the Activity convened **six Standing Committees** with **72 representatives** from **randomly selected villages**. Standing Committees were divided up based on key demographics including **age, gender, and refugee or host community status**. These demographics represent different perspectives and allow the Activity to identify if different groups are experiencing specific challenges affecting their participation. Representatives were **elected by their peers** through a participatory process.

Standing Committee Purpose

- Create connections and allow for discussion between participants and staff.
- Share participants' feedback and complaints.
- Ensure Activity is culturally responsive and appropriate.
- Advise on addressing specific challenges.
- Give perspectives on revising interventions.

Cohort 1 Standing Committee Representatives		
	Host	Refugee
Youth	12	12
Women	12	12
Men	12	12
TOTAL	36	36

3. Applying Standing Committee Findings

Examples of findings and actions:

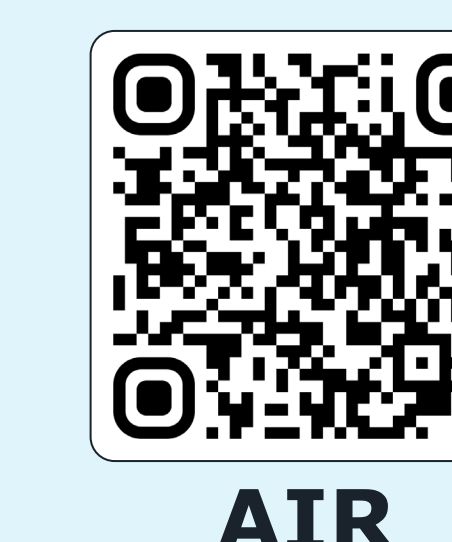
FINDING	ACTION
Worries and fears related to COVID-19	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that because churches were closed, newborn infants were unable to be baptized, posing a religious stressor to new mothers who were already fearful of the virus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff decided more discussion and planning were needed with religious leaders on how to address concerns about baptism.
Handwashing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants reported that although they had access to water for handwashing, soap was prohibitively expensive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff reviewed market data and found the price of soap had increased per bar from 3,500 UGX in April 2020 to 3,643 UGX in June 2020. Project staff continued tracking the price and reviewed for additional action.
Improving spouse participation in coaching activity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee men noted that some spouses participate in coaching, while refugee women and youth said that most spouses do not participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Cohort 2, the participant form is signed by both male and female household members and additional sensitization sessions are conducted at the beginning to encourage spouse participation in coaching.
Coaching on mental health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing committees supported including mental health in coaching, particularly given that many participants struggle with depression, trauma, and stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Cohort 2, the Activity is using group interpersonal therapy as part of the coaching activity.

4. Lessons Learned and Adjustments for Cohort 2

LESSON LEARNED	ADJUSTMENT
Frequency and meeting location were noted as challenges for some participants, particularly women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized groups that are closer in proximity. • Adjusted meeting time to once a quarter.
Perspectives from across the district were not well represented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of committees from 6 to 12. • Reviewed geographic spread of sample to ensure diverse representation.
Standing Committee members often performed duties outside of their scope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed detailed orientation to set expectations for members and communities.
Participant dropout was a challenge for continuity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included a participation declaration form that participants sign during orientation.



AIR project webpage and AVSI website



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