

2022–2025

Global Development Strategy: Livelihoods and Food Security



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Thank you to everyone who contributed to this document.

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Done deal! Transaction at a market in Fizi, DR Congo.

Livelihoods and Food Security

The Livelihoods and Food Security (LFS) sector consists of many actors. For the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to be relevant and attractive among these actors, we need to develop our ways of working – both as a first-line responder, and in the nexus between humanitarian, development and peace efforts. Our work with returnees (both refugees and internally displaced people) to rehabilitate and rebuild their livelihoods has shown good potential for scaling up. LFS provides a holistic approach for people affected by displacement. We do this through collaboration inside and outside of NRC to respond to the needs identified by the people we serve, and by providing or facilitating support to immediate food needs in an emergency situation as well as support for people to secure income and longer-term food security through wage employment, self-employment and industries such as farming, fishing, pastoralism and forestry. During the first responses, i.e. cash distribution, it is important that we listen to the displaced people and are ready to support them to become self-reliant and find lasting solutions.

By end of 2025, NRC LFS, in collaboration with the NRC emergency response team, will have developed our identity around first-line response, including in hard-to-reach areas.

By end of 2025, NRC LFS will have contributed to the development of pathways to self-reliance and durable solutions for people affected by displacement.

To get to this point, the global Livelihoods and Food Security development strategy will focus on the below. Click on each heading to go to the respective chapter.

1 Improve NRC's ability to anticipate food crisis and provide first-line response

2 Promote nutrition-sensitive programming

3 Strengthen local food and agriculture systems in fragile contexts

4 Promote inclusive market systems

5 Improve collaboration and exchange of expertise with local actors

6 Promote inclusive business entrepreneurship and employment opportunities

7 Explore financial inclusion in NRC

8 Use holistic, people-centred approaches

9 Improve adherence to Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP)

10 Promote environmentally sustainable programming

11 Explore the use of appropriate technologies and digital tools

12 Operationalise housing, land and property (HLP) rights in LFS

Introduction

What is the purpose of the development strategy? It shows where NRC will focus global programme development and innovation efforts, and towards what areas we will channel internal resources and global fundraising efforts in relation to the core competency (CC). The strategy covers NRC's global portfolio, therefore countries and regions will find workstreams that are more or less relevant for their particular context.

Who is the audience? The strategy is primarily intended for the core competency technical line and other relevant staff at country, regional and global level, but can also be shared externally.

Who will implement it? The global core competency leads are responsible for leading the implementation of the strategy. They will engage with regional and country colleagues, primarily through the technical line, to get input, exchange experiences, share work, conduct pilots, develop trainings and guidance, fundraise etc. This will be done both remotely and through face-to-face workshops and seminars at country, regional or global level. Global technical guidance and tools will be developed to support the implementation. The strategy is ambitious and will require successful fundraising if we are to achieve our goals.

What is expected from countries and regions? Except for prioritised workstreams (see below), country and regional offices can select the workstreams that are most relevant for them. The response policy provides a framework for the activities and themes falling within the scope of each core competency, and countries can implement any activities within that scope that are relevant in their context. Contributions to the core competency development strategies should be factored into the annual workplans and balanced scorecards of the core competency team. As guidance becomes available for new areas of work, countries and regions are expected to follow this. Please reach out to the global lead if your country/region is planning to do, or already doing, work or pilots in line with a workstream.

What does it mean if a workstream is prioritised? All country and regional offices implementing the core competency are expected to contribute to or implement elements of this workstream within the current strategy period 2022–2025. Prioritised workstreams are marked with orange in the overview on page 3 and with a grey flag (▶) after the heading.

How did we arrive at these workstreams? The strategy was developed through a participatory process across the organisation. The process identified areas of work needed to: 1) address quality issues discovered through monitoring, evaluations and risk monitoring to ensure we comply with the NRC Response Policy and the quality standards we adhere to; 2) stay relevant by responding to global trends in the sector and beyond; and 3) deliver on the NRC global strategy.

What does the strategy not do? It does not: 1) set boundaries for what NRC does and does not do within a core competency (see NRC Response Policy); 2) provide technical guidance on how NRC will implement certain activities (see framing papers, handbooks, guidance notes); 3) promote NRC’s activities and approaches (see capacity statements, value propositions and programme presentations).

What is the duration of the strategy? The strategy reflects the duration of the NRC Global Strategy 2022–2025, and includes a mid-term review.

Please note: NRC has clear ambitions to make all our programmes more people-centric and improve how we design and implement responses as one – both across core competencies, and between programmes and advocacy. How we will go about this is still not decided. These two elements will therefore be strengthened across the core competency development strategies as part of the mid-term review.



Paprika production by Syrian refugees in Dohuk, Iraq. Photo: Knut Andersen/NRC

1 Improve NRC's ability to anticipate food crisis and provide first-line response ▶

Strategic outcome:

People affected by displacement have early, immediate and increased access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

The number of people who are affected by food crises and who require support to meet their food needs due to displacement continues to grow. Conflict, climate change, global pandemics, poor governance, increased food prices, environmental degradation, and competition for resources are the main drivers of food crises and displacement. In addition, demographic changes drive conflicts and further displacement, resulting in acute food insecurity and hunger.

By end of 2025, we will have strengthened our use of early warning and risk information to anticipate food crises and how we respond in a timely fashion to the food needs deriving from displacements in the contexts where we operate.

By using early warning and risk information related to food crises and displacement more actively in project planning and design, we will be able to improve our LFS first-line response. Global initiatives will include promoting market-based methods and modalities that can improve ways of keeping people above the survival threshold through household-level food assistance (with a special focus on women and children), cash and voucher assistance (CVA) or in-kind assistance, and school feeding. LFS will enhance, through collaboration and its own ability, methodologies and modalities to:

- advocate for anticipatory action and the inclusion of displacement-affected people in national social protection programmes.
- improve our ability to predict, advocate and act early to respond to food crises, providing front-line LFS responses in conflict settings and to new displacements, in collaboration with NRC's emergency response section
- promote the use of cash as a modality where appropriate, in collaboration with CVA colleagues
- provide access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and easy to use food, based on local preferences, availability and market functionality for the displacement affected people
- build capacity at regional office, country office and area office levels to include hard-to-reach populations, applying contextually adapted approaches to meet food needs for displacement-affected people, in collaboration with NRC access and hard-to-reach colleagues

2 Promote nutrition-sensitive programming

Strategic outcome:

LFS strategies and responses are designed to address the underlying causes of undernutrition¹ and actively collaborate with other core competencies and external actors to promote good nutrition practices among displacement-affected people.

One out of every nine people globally is hungry and almost a quarter of all children under five years of age are stunted². In most of the countries where NRC is operating, people are facing single or multiple burdens of stunting among children and/or anaemia among women of reproductive age. This is a major global problem with far-reaching consequences, that can negatively affect the efforts of any other sector if not addressed. Undernutrition, specifically acute malnutrition, is the main problem humanitarian programmes try to address.

By end of 2025, our country offices will have included nutrition-sensitive programming in all relevant LFS projects, aiming for an improved food consumption score among the people we serve.

A healthy, balanced diet is fundamental to achieving good nutrition. Our responses aim to ensure displacement-affected people have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Special focus will be given to women and children under this workstream. To ensure nutrition-sensitive programming across NRC's country programmes, global initiatives will include:

- capacity building for NRC and partner staff on nutrition-sensitive programming and outcome monitoring
- strengthened collaboration with WASH at global, regional and country office levels to ensure that messages on food hygiene, safe water, food handling and handwashing are appropriately communicated to all project participants
- working with relevant actors to promote balanced, micronutrient-rich (including fortified) foods in food assistance, school feeding and commodity voucher projects
- promoting local nutritious food and providing nutrition education together with LFS activities and cash and voucher transfers

¹ Undernutrition includes both chronic malnutrition (stunting) and acute malnutrition (wasting) as well as micronutrient deficiencies. See the Nutrition Sensitive Livelihoods and Food Security Programming Guidance Note of June 2021 for more details ([Sharepoint link](#)).

² Global Nutrition Report, 2020: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/reports/2020-global-nutrition-report/>

- ensuring NRC field staff are aware of the referral pathways to professional nutrition agencies for acutely malnourished children and women in the communities we serve



Organic tomato production in greenhouses, Honduras. Photo: Lorena Viladomat/NRC

3 Strengthen local food and agriculture systems in fragile contexts

Strategic outcome:

People affected by displacement are actively involved in sustainable practices, building more resilient food and agriculture systems, and improving food security, nutritional status, livelihood opportunities, income and wellbeing.

Food, agricultural and associated market systems are put under repetitive and escalating stress due to conflicts, climate change and displacement. The accompanying volatility and disruption are impacting critical production, processing, distribution, access, income and consumption of the produce that people rely on in food and agriculture systems.

By end of 2025, we will have identified where NRC's added value is in food and agriculture systems, and how we will develop this role.

In collaboration with local actors like local authorities, the private sector, civil society, and academia, NRC will support and facilitate the re-establishment and/or strengthening of parts (or the whole) of local food, agriculture and market systems where these have been affected by conflict or disasters. Taking a system approach offers a holistic and inclusive way of enabling long-term food security and stability.

Global initiatives to create more inclusive and robust food and agricultural systems will be:

- defining LFS's role and added value in the nexus between humanitarian, development and peace efforts, entering into partnerships based on complementarity and added values to deliver system transformation
- through advocacy, addressing systemic barriers towards decision makers to create system change, including supporting reforms to give women equal rights to resources
- strengthening contextual adapted food and agricultural systems for hard-to-reach areas
- promoting climate-smart agriculture for sustainable increased production
- promoting innovative methods that enable people to access food using limited land and water resources (e.g. hydroponics, or vertical gardening)
- improving our work on reducing food loss and waste
- collaboration with WASH around irrigation, organic waste management and food safety and hygiene

The different components of a sustainable food system



Source: Local Food Peterborough

4 Promote inclusive market systems

Strategic outcome:

LFS, in collaborations across NRC, incorporates and designs appropriate responses based on gender and age-sensitive market system analysis to meet the immediate and medium-term needs of people we serve, while at the same time creating an enabling environment for the recovery and strengthening of market systems.

During crisis and economic disruption, the local economy and market systems become fragile and malfunctioning, causing an alteration and/or disruption in the availability of goods, services, labour and income. People who are affected by displacement face hard impacts as they lose access to markets, inputs, resources for profitable production, and employment opportunities to practice self-sufficiency and self-reliance. In addition, young people, women, and vulnerable or excluded groups including people with disabilities, face their own set of unique challenges to fully participate and engage in market systems.

By end of 2025, we will have increased the capacity to support displacement-affected people to be active in local market systems.

Working with and through market actors is a pragmatic way to enable people to access goods, services and economic opportunities. It will reduce NRC's role as a direct service provider and position the organisation as an empowering, facilitating agent, capitalising on the capacity of the people we serve, while supporting and strengthening their relationships with key market actors and governance bodies.

Global initiatives will include:

- collaborating with NRC Markets and Logistics to build the capacity of LFS staff on the market system approach, including market assessments and analyses
- collaborating with the Shelter and Settlements team on infrastructure interventions which have a wider impact, and are prioritised by the community
- focusing on and involving women and youth when designing and planning market system labour and business support, ensuring gender and age-sensitive approaches to barriers and access
- rehabilitating and strengthening market systems as part of food and agricultural systems functionality in fragile and hard-to-reach areas



A honey fair in the Luhansk region of Ukraine. Photo: Anastasiia Karpilianska/NRC

5 Improve collaboration and exchange of expertise with local actors ▶

Strategic outcome:

Where possible, NRC works as a facilitator and enabler to establish strong partnerships that deliver high quality services and systems transformation for the people we serve.

The displacement-affected people NRC serves have complex and diverse needs that we cannot tackle on our own. We recognise that local actors are the main responders in any crisis and we need to improve on the involvement of these actors in our humanitarian responses.

By end of 2025, we will have identified ways of working with private sector and academia that can be rolled out across NRC.

We already collaborate with different types of local actors in the countries we work, but we want to do much better and significantly increase our collaboration and exchange of expertise with local actors. There are a multitude of local actors that are

relevant for our LFS work, but in this strategic period we have prioritised the private sector and academia (universities and research). This is because we see them as particularly relevant for the implementation of system approaches, be it food, agriculture or market systems.

Global initiatives will include:

- awareness raising among LFS staff on the importance of working with local actors, for quality, accountability and sustainability
- exploring ways of working with the private sector, sharing best practices across country offices and regions
- exploring ways of improving our collaboration with universities and research institutions to improve quality and evidence base of our work
- identifying best practices and piloting new initiatives looking at continuity of services in the event of NRC's exit

6 Promote inclusive business entrepreneurship and employment opportunities

Strategic outcome:

People affected by displacement are engaged in employment that strengthens household economy, leading to self-reliance and wellbeing, either through engagement in business practices that produce demand-driven, marketable and affordable goods and services, or through securing decent employment.

Economic activities like wage employment or self-employment face contraction and disruption in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. People, in particular women and youth, who have lost their means of living, and those who lack experience and/or relevant skills, find it difficult to be economically included and achieve self-reliance and durable solutions.

By end of 2025, we will have contributed to increased decent employment and business establishment/expansion for the people we serve in collaboration with local actors.

In close collaboration with other core competencies and thematic areas within NRC, and relevant stakeholders outside NRC, LFS will facilitate ways that support and create opportunities for the development and expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and bridge labour supply and demand. We will advocate for enabling policy and administrative conditions, to support the inclusion of

displacement-affected people in local labour markets, both urban and rural, with increased attention on women and youth.

Global initiatives will include:

- collaboration with ICLA on legal aspects related to business establishment and workers' rights
- promotion and advocacy for entrepreneurship and business rehabilitation by securing access to capacity building and income opportunities, and strengthening the local market economy
- facilitation of access to relevant, marketable and appropriate life skills and business development skills training, in collaboration with NRC education
- building capacity of LFS staff to be better equipped to support in gender-sensitive labour market assessment, and working with the private sector on coaching and mentoring, apprenticeships, and job matching
- collaboration with NRC climate and environment teams to develop a guiding paper on green jobs³



Soap production as a business, Burkina Faso. Photo: Ibrahim Zaman Allah/NRC

³ There are different definitions of green jobs, and we have not developed one for NRC yet. For now, we can make references to the ILO definition: “Green jobs are decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.”

7 Explore financial inclusion in NRC

Strategic outcome:

LFS will work to promote access to useful and affordable formal or informal financial products and services – transactions, payments, savings, credit and insurance – that meet the needs of displacement-affected people and are delivered in a responsible and sustainable way.

For displacement-affected people, the lack of access to, and skills in using, formal or informal financial services create an enormous hurdle on their journey to self-reliance and economic inclusion. Without the ability to receive money or carry out payment, and without a safe place to save and access credit, they have far fewer options to transact in the market or engage in economic activities. Women are more excluded than men because of their much lower level of financial literacy, limited access to information, and other sociocultural barriers that hinder them from active engagement.

By end of 2025, we will have developed guidance and piloted how NRC should work on financial inclusion across our country offices, in collaboration with CVA and self-reliance and durable solutions programmes.

Financial inclusion is essential to ensure people affected by displacement are included in economic activities from the initial stage of displacement until they are self-reliant or have found a durable solution. When looking for solutions, it is important to ensure equal opportunities are given to all and specific activities are designed for women.

Global initiatives on financial inclusion will include:

- supply-focused interventions, promoting the use of saving and credit groups or linking people we serve with formal financial service providers like mobile money operators, microfinance institutions or commercial banks
- demand-focused interventions, where we facilitate capacity building on financial literacy for displacement-affected people
- advocacy-focused interventions, where LFS, in collaboration with ICLA and Advocacy and Media teams, analyse barriers to financial inclusion and use this information to advocate for more inclusive financial products and services.

8 Use holistic, people-centred approaches

Strategic outcome:

To apply inclusive, need-based approaches, LFS will promote collaboration across and outside of NRC, to provide a holistic package of support to displacement-affected people that will enable them to have lasting livelihood opportunities.

Displacement-affected people have multiple needs, and women, men, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities have specific needs related to their sociocultural status. A single core competency response rarely solves food security and livelihood-related gaps in a family. Therefore, NRC should promote an integrated response building on the assessed gaps and needs for the individual or family.

By end of 2025, we will be using a holistic, people-centred programme response for the displacement-affected people we serve.

As much as possible, LFS will promote holistic and integrated approaches where we will take a proactive role in engaging other core competencies, thematic areas and support functions within NRC, as well as relevant local actors, to achieve the best possible support to the people we serve. Inclusion of vulnerable groups will always be taken into account, and LFS staff will involve the people we serve in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of the projects.

Global initiatives will include:

- promoting multisectoral need assessments and analyses, in addition to specific livelihood analyses, for better integration and holistic responses to people's needs
- exploring the use of the Graduation Approach where appropriate, to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in a community or family. To succeed, this approach requires wide collaboration between all core competencies and thematic areas within NRC.
- promoting economic inclusion as a pathway to self-reliance. This will include barrier assessments that are multisectoral and require extensive collaboration across the NRC family.



Fish farming in Madre Seca village, Anori, Colombia. Photo: Sandra Ibáñez/NRC

9 Improve adherence to Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP) ▶

Strategic outcome:

There is meaningful participation of communities in all steps of programming, ensuring needs-based, safe and inclusive LFS programming that amplifies the voices of affected populations.

When a disaster happens, the most vulnerable in a community – women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly – face particular challenges in accessing LFS services. We might face challenges related to protection risks associated with delivery of food security and livelihoods services, such as sexual exploitation and abuse (e.g. pressure on women, girls and boys to exchange food for sex), child abuse, or backlash (e.g. intimate partner violence) against women’s income generation activities.

By end of 2025, our staff across all country offices will implement NRC's Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP) Minimum Standards throughout the implementation of our LFS programmes, from design to evaluation.

As part of our SIP approach⁴, we are committing to deliver our operations in a way that responds to the specific needs and risks of displaced and vulnerable people, inclusive of gender, age and diversity considerations, and avoiding unintentional harmful consequences. We will involve displacement-affected communities, ensuring they lead the process and have decision-making powers, identifying and prioritising the challenges that need to be tackled. We will establish local ownership and deliver lasting results.

Global initiatives will include:

- development and dissemination of LFS-specific guidance for safe and inclusive programming, in collaboration with the SIP team
- building capacity of NRC's LFS community of practice to ensure all have the knowledge, skills and tools to apply the SIP Minimum Standards in their daily work
- building capacity and understanding of NRC's Community Engagement Toolkit among LFS staff, in collaboration with Protection from Violence colleagues, to ensure LFS programming applies a people-centred and participatory approach
- analysis/response to feedback from community feedback mechanisms (CFMs) to strengthen programme quality

Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP):

SIP ensures the mainstreaming of protection, age, gender and diversity in NRC programmes. Our SIP Minimum Standards describe a number of actions, in a suggested hierarchy of urgency, that guide NRC country offices to ensure that our programming is safe, accessible, accountable and participatory.

⁴ Safe and Inclusive Programming is the term that NRC uses to describe protection mainstreaming. It is foundational to our way of working. NRC aligns with the Global Protection Cluster's four elements of protection mainstreaming: safety, dignity and avoidance of harm; meaningful access; accountability; and participation and empowerment.

See Protection Mainstreaming | Global Protection Cluster:

<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/themes/protection-mainstreaming/>

10 Promote environmentally sustainable programming

Strategic outcome:

LFS will integrate environmental and climatic vulnerabilities in strategies, response design and implementation to promote sustainable use, and protection of, natural resources.

In conflict and displacement settings, the natural resource base often comes under increased pressure with consequences such as environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and pollution. This can be due to the dynamic relationship between crisis, environment and climatic drivers, breakdown in governance systems, and the direct impact of the humanitarian response.

By end of 2025, we will have adopted NRC's Environmental Minimum Standards in LFS.

To minimise the negative environmental impact of our responses, we will include practices and methodologies that are more sustainable, linked to waste management, energy, input sourcing, production diversification and intensification. Procedures will be put in place to protect the environment from further harm.

Global initiatives will include:

- building capacity of LFS staff and adopting the implementation of NRC's Environmental Minimum Standards for LFS
- promoting the use of key environmental analysis parameters into response planning, design and monitoring, including use of the Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT+)
- exploring the opportunity to use organic waste to improve soil fertility, in collaboration with NRC's WASH team
- developing guidance on how NRC should work with clean and renewable energy to reduce the use of natural materials for cooking, in collaboration with Climate and Environment and Shelter and Settlements teams
- exploring how NRC could integrate circular economy principles and practices that enable the sustainable use of natural resources, in collaboration with the Climate and Environment team and external research actors

11 Explore the use of appropriate technologies and digital tools

Strategic outcome:

LFS promotes innovative technological and digital solutions that are appropriate to the needs and priorities of the people we work with, and that are inclusive, especially for women and the elderly, and suitable to the context.

In a world where technology and digital solutions are expanding, displacement-affected people are often left behind or neglected. Lack of electricity and connectivity (phone and internet) are key factors that prevent the people we serve from taking part in technological development.

By end of 2025, we will have developed guidelines for digital livelihoods⁵ in NRC, in collaboration with NRC Digital.

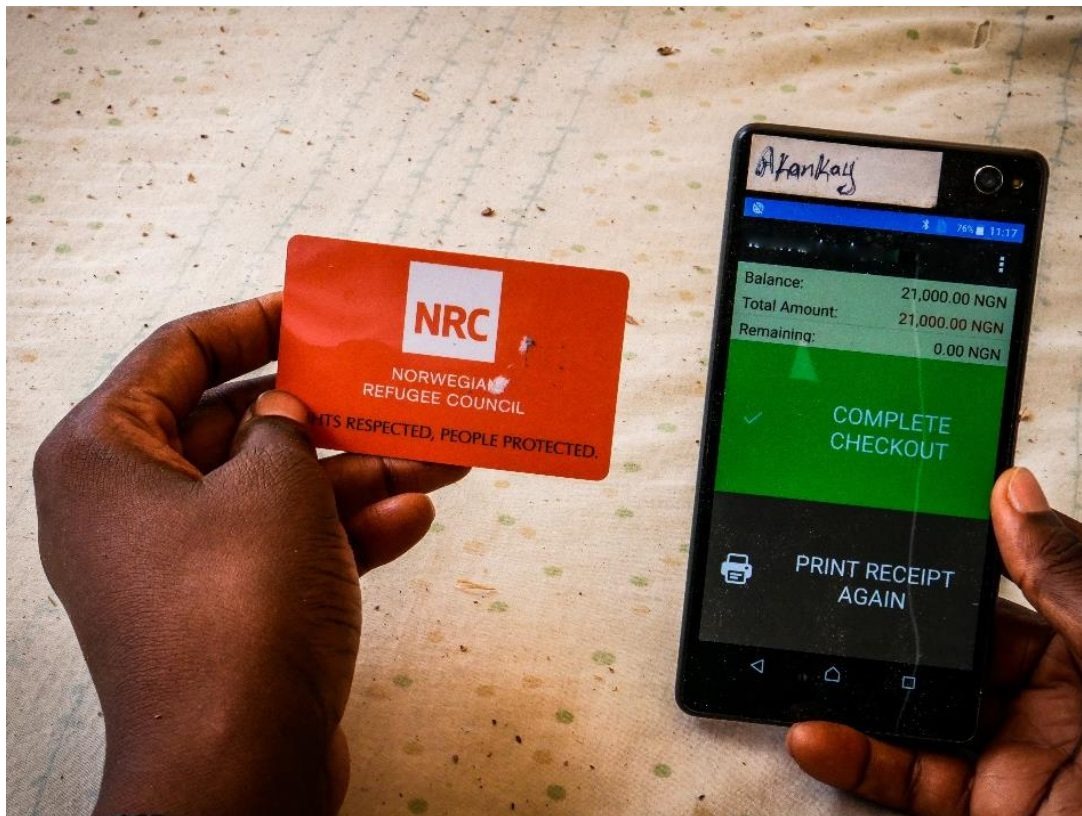
Livelihood prosperity, food security and stability rely on the selection and implementation of the most appropriate practices, technologies and digital solutions based on local needs and preferences. In conflict and displacement settings, it is critical that we support communities in shaping and strengthening their own methodologies and pathways.

Global initiatives will be:

- equipping LFS staff to use NRC's digital programme tools
- developing guidance on how we can use technology better in weather forecasts, early warning, GIS and satellite analyses, in collaboration with the private sector and academia
- exploring how NRC can work on digital livelihoods, including gig economies⁶, in collaboration with NRC Digital
- exploring how e-wallets and other digital tools can be used for financial inclusion and business establishment/expansion, in collaboration with the CVA team

⁵ Digital livelihoods can be characterised as work done remotely by any capable/qualified individual using digital platforms.

⁶ Gig workers are independent contractors, online platform workers, contract firm workers, on-call workers and temporary workers. Gig workers enter into formal agreements with on-demand companies to provide services to the company's clients.



E-voucher for farmer inputs like seeds and tools in Nigeria. Photo: Hajer Naili/NRC

12 Operationalise housing, land and property (HLP) rights in LFS

Strategic outcome:

LFS will, in close collaboration with ICLA, seek to increase knowledge and ways of making housing, land and property (HLP) rights operational to increase quality of our programming and to promote HLP rights for the people we serve.

During conflicts and disasters, relationships and institutions tend to weaken and break down. Sometimes, the breakdown of trust in the relationships and systems that govern housing, land, property or natural resources are contributing factors to the conflict itself. Therefore, all humanitarian actors whose interventions rely on access to land, buildings or natural resources must pay careful attention to these relationships – because failure to do so can add new layers of HLP and natural resource disputes or reignite old ones, thereby harming communities. Ignoring these risks can have legal, financial and reputational consequences for NRC.

By end of 2025, we will have built the capacity of staff and operationalised HLP across our LFS interventions.

During this strategy period, LFS will focus on due diligence in HLP. Done correctly, due diligence can become an entry point for a people-centred approach as well as a tool for risk management and mitigation. Due diligence is required for all projects implemented by NRC which require access to buildings, land, property or natural resources, as a concrete way to ensure that NRC's interventions "do no harm".

Global initiatives will include:

- technical support on HLP to LFS staff by ICLA colleagues and HLP consultants
- understanding and making operational existing HLP documents for LFS
- conducting analyses on how HLP is influencing the work we do in LFS (related to land for agriculture production, property for business operation, processing, storage and markets, assets for productive use etc.)



Technical vocational education (TVET) students in South Sudan ready to graduate. Photo: Kemisa Barbara/NRC