Desk review on refugee-led organisations in East Africa

Acronyms

CESSI	Community Empowerment and Self-Support Initiative
HOCW	Hope of Children and Women Victims of Violence
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IP	Implementing Partners
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LERRN	Local Engagement Refugee Research Network
RLOs	Refugee-Led Organisations
RSC	Refugee Studies Centre
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
YUSOM	Youth United for Social Mobilisation

Introduction

This desk review explores the existing evidence on refugee-led initiatives in East Africa. The aim of this desk review is to inform the design and findings of the LERRN-RSC study on refugee-led organisations (RLOs) in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia.

The desk review asks the following guiding questions:

- What is the evidence on the activities and scope of RLOs in East Africa?
- What is the evidence on the creation and leadership of RLOs in East Africa?
- What is the evidence on the role of the regulatory framework in shaping RLOs' activities and impact?
- What is the evidence on the role of the identity of the RLO individual leaders in shaping RLOs' activities and impact?
- What is the evidence on RLOs' relations with external, non-refugee actors?
- What is the evidence on RLOs' access to resources?

This review followed a structured approach to allow the team to thoroughly explore the literature on RLOs in East Africa. This method entailed: 1) deriving specific and relevant sub-questions from the overarching research questions for the RLO study, 2) generating a list of keywords (e.g. "refugee", "faith group") and modifiers (e.g. "Kenya", "Dadaab"); 2) development websites, raw data repositories and elsewhere; 3) rapidly screening these sources by recency and relevance; and 4) analysing the sources to assess their credibility.

The strength of the findings of this desk review was limited by the lack of evidence on RLOs in East Africa. This literature review relies heavily on the Global Governed by Betts, Easton-Calabria and Pincock (2020) as the only high-quality academic publication that focuses on RLOs in both Uganda and Kenya. There is limited available information about RLOs and the forms that they take in Tanzania and Ethiopia. The research team was also unable to identify evidence on the impact of RLOs on refugee and host communities, and how communities perceive this impact. As a result, these questions are excluded from the desk review narrative.

What is the evidence on the activities and scope of RLOs in East Africa?

There is emerging evidence that refugees come together to serve the most vulnerable members of their community in many refugee-hosting contexts. Betts et al. (2021) suggest that there is an "emergence of an alternative strand of civil society, providing public goods to their fellow so-called 'vulnerable population' of refugees" in both urban and camp contexts.[1]

Several sources argue that RLOs have comparative advantages compared to traditional humanitarian organisations, especially in terms of community-level trust and social networks. For instance, looking at refugee-led microfinance groups in Kampala, Easton-Calabria and Hakiza (2021) find that those groups had managed to create a successful loan structure with low default rates thanks to the high level of trust between members.[2] Those groups also succeeded in accessing vulnerable refugee populations because of close social ties.

RLOs' activities generally aim at self-reliance, protection, assistance, advocacy, and political activism.

- **Self-reliance.** In Kampala, Easton-Calabria (2016) finds that RLOs focus on language, literacy, and skills training "in a variety of areas such as tailoring, arts and crafts, hairdressing and computer literacy" to foster self-reliance.[3]
- **Protection and assistance.** The literature identified several activities that RLOs undertake that can be classified under protection and assistance. This includes: food provision, shelter, education and health care."[4] In addition, there are several examples of RLOs that provide counselling and trauma services to refugees.[5]
- **Advocacy.** RLOs are also involved in advocacy to change "local and international structures, such as laws and humanitarian systems, which may hinder rather than enable refugees' access to such provisions."[6]
- **Political activism.** Easton-Calabria (2020) provides several examples of RLOs that are active in peace-building activities in their home country, from their host country (e.g. the Federation of Congolese Abroad "seeks to change the image of the country and advocate for an end to war").[7]

In addition to supporting refugee communities, some RLOs offer services to host communities. Several RLOs identified in the mapping serve both the refugee and host communities. For instance, Hope of Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW),

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[1] Calabria, Evan Easton, Betts, Alexander, and Pincock, Kate, "Refugee-Led Organisations: Collective Action for Collective Assistance | Rethinking Refuge," Google scholar, September 17, 2021, https://www.rethinkingrefuge.org/articles/collective-action-for-collective-protection-refugees-as-providers-of-humani#.

[2] Evan Easton-Calabria and Robert Hakiza, "In the Interest of Saving: Refugee-Led Microfinance in Kampala, Uganda," *Development Policy Review* 39, no. 1 (2021): 22–38.

[3] Evan Easton-Calabria, "Refugee-Run Organisations as Partners in Development," Forced Migration Review, 2016, https://www.fmreview.org/solutions/eastoncalabria.

[4] Evan Easton-Calabria and Kate Pincock, "Refugee-Led Social Protection: Reconceiving Refugee Assistance," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 58 (2018): 56–60.

[5] Easton-Calabria and Pincock.

[6] Easton-Calabria and Pincock.

[7] Easton-Calabria and Pincock.

based in Kampala, Uganda, provides various livelihood activities for both refugees and local Ugandans. Around 40 percent of training participants at HOCW are Ugandans.

Faith actors play a critical role in providing services for refugees and can in some cases be considered RLOs. Betts et al. (2020) find that churches and mosques are often "the first point of call" for refugees, although providing the nuance that in Nairobi, churches play a key protection role for Congolese refugees, while Somali mosques would direct "Somalis to those who could provide material assistance, but it was unlikely to provide for them directly unless no other assistance could be find."[8] Easton-Calabria and Pincock (2018) concur and find that RLOs […] can be religious in origin, with mosques and churches across both cities holding collections for refugee families.[9]

RLOs established by members of marginalised groups play a key role in providing services to their fellow community members. This is for instance the case of LGBTIQ RLOs in Nairobi. Moore (2018) provides several examples where LGBTQI-led RLOs are "resourceful and promising providers of community-based protection", and they provide economic activities with pertinent legal, psychosocial, and medical issues.[10]

Easton-Calabria and Hakiza (2020) also find that informal refugee-led micro-finance structures play a key role in refugees' self-reliance in Kampala. In Kampala, East-Calabria and Hakiza (2020), find that "across Kampala, Uganda, refugees meet to place small amounts of money into group savings and take out and repay microloans."[11] There are several other examples in the literature, including ayutos in the Kakuma Camp,[12] and women-Led IDP Iddir and Equb in Adama, Ethiopia.[13]

There is emerging evidence that there are differences between urban and camp-based RLOs in terms of the factors that motivate them to establish themselves. Some sources argue that urban RLOs are responding to a unique set of needs stemming from limited direct aid for urban refugees from UNHCR and its partners. For instance, Pincock (2020) contends that because "refugees in urban areas are not provided with basic necessities such as food and shelter" urban RLOs "offer ways for fellow refugees to draw upon and contribute to networks of assistance beyond the limited means of UNHCR".[14] Similarly, other sources like Duale (2020) point to a difference in the scope of activities and argue that urban RLOs "focus on maintaining a sense of cultural identity"[15] as a reaction to their invisibility in urban settings.

In the wake of COVID-19, several sources explained that RLOs have adapted their activities to fill new gaps in the community. While researching RLOs in Kenya and Uganda, Betts et al. (2021) find that RLOs have responded in various ways: "providing

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[8] Kate Pincock, Alexander Betts, and Evan Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?: Refugees as Providers of Protection and Assistance* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[9] Easton-Calabria and Pincock, "Refugee-Led Social Protection."

[10] Hester K V Moore, "Lessons from LGBTIQ Refugee-Led Community-Based Organisations," 2018, 3.

[11] Easton-Calabria and Hakiza, "In the Interest of Saving."

[12] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*

[13] Abadi, Dilena, "IDP-Led Women's Assistance: New Roles for Traditional Groups," Google scholar, Rethinking Refuge, April 14, 2021, https://www.rethinkingrefuge.org/articles/idp-led-womens-assistance-new-roles-for-traditional-groups.

[14] Easton-Calabria, Evan, and Kate Pincock. "Refugee-Led Social Protection: Reconceiving Refugee Assistance." *Forced Migration Review*, no. 58 (2018): 56.

[15] Mohamed Duale, "'To Be a Refugee, It's like to Be without Your Arms, Legs': A Narrative Inquiry into Refugee Participation in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Nairobi, Kenya" (Local Engagement Refugee Research Network Paper No. 7, May 2020) 12

public information, supplementing capacity gaps, healthcare delivery, shaping social norms, and virus tracking and contact tracing."[16] They provide the example of the RLO Hope of Children and Women (HOCW) in Uganda that started "distributing food and soap to refugees and Ugandans in the Ndejjearea of Kampala", and of the Youth United for Social Mobilisation (YUSOM) that is "running information campaigns to raise awareness on COVID-19 among refugees."[17] Some sources argue that the role of RLOs in providing services to refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted their high capacity of adaptation – a significant comparative advantage over humanitarian organisations.[18]

What is the evidence on the creation and leadership of RLOs in East Africa?

RLOs are often created organically in the host country. Duale (2020) and Betts et al. (2021) both explain that RLOs often start as an informal group to fill a gap they identified in their community. Betts (2020) suggest that few RLOs go on and formalise themselves through registration.[19] Many of them remain self-help groups or organise as cooperatives.[20]

RLOs are sometimes a continuation of pre-existing organisations. In Kampala, Betts et al. (2020) find that South Sudanese refugee leaders were often the heads of pre-existing organisations in South Sudan and chose Kampala to continue working for their efforts for peace in South Sudan, due to Uganda's more open stance towards refugees.[21]

In some cases, RLOs are co-led between refugees and host community members. In some countries like Kenya, requirements for registration stipulate that at least one Kenyan be involved in the registration of the RLO, and that RLOs are required to have Kenyan nationals within the board of directors and general membership and to have activities pertaining to the local community.[22] There is little evidence on co-led RLOs, and on the differences between co-led RLOs or organisations fully led by refugees.

It appears that RLOs are increasingly coming together as networks. Betts and al. (2020) give the example of the Refugee Led Organisations Network (RELON) in Kampala, which comprises over 20 RLOs. They explain that RELON was created to 1) coordinate the activity of RLOs in Kampala and 2) gain legitimacy "through a show of unity".[23]

What is the evidence on the role of the regulatory framework in shaping RLOs' activities and impact?

Registering legally is a significant challenge for RLOs in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, even in countries where they have the right to register.

- **In Kenya**, the Kenyan Societies Act of 1968, which regulates community organizations, does not mention refugees' right to create associations. Duale (2020) suggests that the lack of regulation makes it difficult for RLOs to register. As a result,

[16] Alexander Betts, Evan Easton-Calabria, and Kate Pincock, "Localising Public Health: Refugee-Led Organisations as First and Last Responders in COVID-19," *World Development* 139 (2021): 105311.
[17] Betts, Easton-Calabria, and Pincock.
[18] See for instance: Edmund Page, "Localising Humanitarian Aid Has Been Shown to Be Even More Urgent by the COVID-19 Crisis – Xavier Project," September 4, 2020, https://xavierproject.org/why-localising-humanitarian-aid-has-been-shown-to-be-even-more-urgent-by-the-covid-19-crisis/.
[19] Calabria, Evan Easton, Betts, Alexander, and Pincock, Kate, "Refugee Led Organisations."
[20] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*
[21] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.
[22] Duale (2020)
[23] Calabria, Evan Easton, Betts, Alexander, and Pincock, Kate, "Refugee Led Organisations."

most RLOs in Kenya are unregistered and informal. RLOs are required to "have a large number of Kenyan nationals within the board of directors and general membership and to have activities pertaining to the local community." [24]

- **In Uganda**, the Refugee Act 2006 states that refugees have the right to association for non-political and non-profit making associations and trade unions. RLOs are registered as NGOs or CBOs. However, there are several bureaucratic challenges that refugee leaders will encounter in the process of registering an organisation compared to their national counterparts, including delays, excessive scrutiny, limited access to information, and registration costs.
- **In Ethiopia**, Article 27 of the revised refugee proclamation of Ethiopia (Refugees Proclamation No.1110/2019) allows refugees to create associations, stating that "recognized refugees and asylum-seekers have the right to association, as regards non-political and non-profit making associations and trade unions in the same circumstances as the most favorable treatment accorded to foreign nationals pursuant to relevant laws." Anecdotal evidence suggests that, since the Refugees Proclamation was issued only two years ago, there are no regulations and directives for RLOs to register and operate on the ground.
- **In Tanzania**, the 1998 Refugee Act and the Non-Governmental Organizations Act do not mention whether refugees are allowed to register organisations they create. In camp settings, anecdotal evidence suggests that refugees are unable to register their organisations with the camp commander, who is the representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs in the camp.

The precarity of refugees in East Africa also limits their ability to create and lead organisations. In Kenya, Duale (2020) suggests that urban refugees in Nairobi tend to stay hidden to avoid suffering from police harassment and in fear of being sent back to camps.[25] In Kakuma, Duale (2020) also finds that tensions with the local Turkana communities limited their freedom of movement, and, as a result, their ability to meet and organise activities.

What is the evidence on the role of the identity of the RLO individual leaders in shaping RLOs' activities and impact?

It appears that the structures, priorities, and activities of RLOs are shaped by the ethnic identity of its founders. Easton-Calabria and Pincock (2018) argue that RLOs may be organised along "tribal, ethnic or national lines of solidarity," and are often interlinked "with the informal religious and cultural support networks."[26] In Kakuma, Betts et al. (2020) find that the Congolese community was "the most prolific in setting up formal community-based organisations", despite being smaller in size than the Somali or South Sudanese communities. [27] They explained the prevalence of Congolese RLOs in Kakuma by 1) the fact that the majority of South Sudanese in Kakuma were women who did not have time to set up initiative, 2) the lack of language abilities and the level of education required to work with implementing partner organisations among South Sudanese refugees.[28] Similarly, in Kampala,

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[24] Duale.
[25] Mohamed Duale, "'To Be a Refugee, It's like to Be without Your Arms, Legs': A Narrative Inquiry into Refugee Participation in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Nairobi, Kenya" (Local Engagement Refugee Research Network Paper No. 7, May 2020).
[26] Easton-Calabria and Pincock, "Refugee-Led Social Protection."
[27] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*
[28] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.

Betts et al. (2020) find that the Somali, South Sudanese, Congolese communities had different priorities: they argue that for Somalis, "the formal provision of social protection is not a priority" and refugee needs are expected to be met by kinship structures (such as the Somali Community Association). Like in Kakuma, Congolese RLOs are the most common in Kampala, and are often formalised and better connected with international actors than their South Sudanese counterparts.

According to Betts et al. (2020), the identity of an individual RLO's founder appears to have a significant influence on the success of the RLO. The Global Governed describes some RLOs as outliers that managed to flourish because of their **"**founders' exceptional leadership and the creation of transnational networks that offer opportunities for funding."[29] However, those outliers also demonstrate how "CBO creation is generally only available to a small 'elite' group of refugees,"[30] who tend to be educated, largely English-speaking and mostly men who had direct experiences with humanitarian organisations as incentive workers.[31]

Indeed, personal connections of RLO leaders with humanitarian organisations play a key role in determining the success of RLOs. In Nairobi, Betts et al. (2020) find that "the trajectories of some RCOs were linked to the relationships of their leaders with UNHCR and its implementing partner organisations (IPs)."[32] Thanks to those personal connections, positions as community intermediaries, and their personal reputations, those RLO leaders were able to access institutional partnerships and funding opportunities.

As a result, hierarchies between refugees are reflected in the RLO landscape, and issues of representation remain. In Nairobi, Moore (2018) find that refugee-led LGBTQ organisations were "dominated by men who have sex with men," excluding LBQ women refugees from being represented in these organisations or in forums.[33]

Structural challenges faced by women also make it harder for them to create or participate in RLOs. For instance, in the Kakuma Camp in Kenya, Duale (2020) suggests that "social barriers within the camp context, particularly the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and family obligations, seem to reduce female participation. Participation in social activities can also be made difficult by regular outbreaks of general violence, lack of affordable transportation, and police harassment."[34]

What is the evidence on RLOs' relations with external, non-refugee actors?

RLOs lack access to meaningful partnerships with traditional humanitarian actors who could provide them funding and training. Traditional humanitarian actors rarely engage with RLOs as partners, but instead invite them to "participate as implementers or mobilisers

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[29] Examples include: Hope for Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW) – Kampala;, Solidarity and Advocacy with Vulnerable Individuals in Crisis (SAVIC) Kakuma; Kobciye, - Eastleigh; the Wakati Foundation – Nakivale; the Community Empowerment and Self-Support Initiative (CESSI) - LGBT, Nairobi. See: Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*

[30] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*

[31] Duale.

[32] Examples include: Hope for Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW) – Kampala;, Solidarity and Advocacy with Vulnerable Individuals in Crisis (SAVIC) Kakuma; Kobciye, - Eastleigh; the Wakati Foundation – Nakivale; the Community Empowerment and Self-Support Initiative (CESSI) - LGBT, Nairobi. See: Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*

[33] Moore, "Lessons from LGBTIQ Refugee-Led Community-Based Organisations."

[34] Duale, "'To Be a Refugee, It's like to Be without Your Arms, Legs': A Narrative Inquiry into Refugee Participation in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Nairobi, Kenya."

for pre-defined programmes."[35] Easton-Calabria (2016) reported that several refugee-led initiatives were launched as a result of support and training from organisations such as the Refugee Law Project (RLP), Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) and International Rescue Committee (IRC).[36] However those activities were not "labelled as partnerships."[37]

The available literature outlines several factors that has led to a lack of meaningful partnerships between RLOs and the humanitarian sectors:

- **There are no clear guidelines for the UN and INGOs on how to engage RLOs "equitably, systematically, and effectively."[38]** The Global Compact does not explicitly mention RLOs and their roles. As a result, while the UN and some NGOs engage with RLOs to engage refugee communities, this engagement remains sporadic and there is "significant variation in practice." [39]
- **A commonly cited reason for the absence of engagement are related to the issues of risk and accountability.** Donors appear to be reluctant to fund RLOs because they are unlikely to meet their reporting requirements.[40] This is for instance the case of UNHCR in Uganda, that only funds directly organisations with the implementing partner (IP) status.[41]
- **There is evidence that many UN and INGO staff are not aware of the work of RLOs.** This is for instance the case in Kakuma in 2018, as described by Betts et al (2020). When interviewing UNHCR, staff were not able to identify RLOs beyond the few subcontractors that were implementing programmes on behalf of implementing partners (IPs).
- **Duale (2020) argues that UN and INGOs are reluctant to engage RLOs due to political reasons.** They suggest that the host governments and UNHCR may find engaging RLOs sensitive because of concerns that refugees could challenge the refugee regime or get involved in the politics of their home countries if given more resources – which would create "political problems for both the host state and UNHCR."[42]

The variation in engagement between the UNHCR and RLOs is evident in Kampala, Nakivale, Nairobi, Kakuma, and at the multilateral level, as outlined by Betts et al. (2020) because of varying institutional contexts:[43]

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[35] https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/eastoncalabria-pincock.pdf
[36] Easton-Calabria, "Refugee-Run Organisations as Partners in Development."
[37] Easton-Calabria, "Refugee-Run Organisations as Partners in Development."
[38] Betts, Easton-Calabria, and Pincock, "Localising Public Health."
[39] Betts, Easton-Calabria, and Pincock, "Localising Public Health."
[40] Pincock, K., Betts, A., & Easton-Calabria, E. (2021). The Rhetoric and Reality of Localisation: Refugee-Led Organisations in Humanitarian Governance. *The Journal of Development Studies*, *57*(5), 719-734.
[41] Pincock, K., Betts, A., & Easton-Calabria, E. (2021). The Rhetoric and Reality of Localisation: Refugee-Led Organisations in Humanitarian Governance. *The Journal of Development Studies*, *57*(5), 719-734.
[42] Duale, "'To Be a Refugee, It's like to Be without Your Arms, Legs': A Narrative Inquiry into Refugee Participation in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Nairobi, Kenya."
[43] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.

- In **Kampala**, Betts et al. (2020) characterise the institutional context as a 'monopoly', with InterAid being the only IP of UNHCR for the past 20 years, leaving little space for RLOs to engage with the UNHCR and receive funds.[44]
- In **Nakivale**, Betts et al. (2020) characterise the institutional context as 'co-optation', with many refugees accusing "UNHCR and its IPs of 'stealing' their better ideas," resulting in RLOs disengaging with the traditional humanitarian sector.[45]
- In **Nairobi**, Betts et al. (2020) characterize the institutional context as 'contract', whereby the UNHCR is open to working with RLOs, but the terms of these collaborations tend to be top-down, with tasks subcontracted to RLOs. However, RLOs lack "recognition, collaboration or funding on the basis of their own agenda or based on the priorities of the community."[46]
- In **Kakuma**, Betts et al. (2020) characterize the institutional context as a 'market', whereby "UNHCR expects refugee-led CBOs to compete in order to meet a demand for social services." [47] UNHCR encourages refugees to register RLOs formally but does not support RLOs over other organisations.
- At the **multilateral** level, the UNHCR is increasingly supportive of the idea of engaging RLOs, "having supported their presence at major events such as the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019,"[48] and having launched a global working group on RLOs in Geneva.
- There is no evidence on the relations between RLOs and the UNHCR in Ethiopia and Tanzania. A recent study in the Gambella region in Ethiopia found no refugee-led organisations that have established formal ties with actors in Gambella's refugee response.[49]

A few sources warn against the polarisation (and politisation) of RLOs if partnerships with the humanitarian system increases. For instance, writing about LGBTQ RLOs in Nairobi, Moore (2018) suggests that there is a risk that funding some RLOs over others may affect relationships between refugees, and between refugees and service providers; and that there is a risk that it may promote "unrepresentative leadership structures, hindering the empowerment of marginalised groups."[50]

What is the evidence on RLOs' access to resources?

Lack of funding is a significant challenge for RLOs and limits their ability to scale up their activities. Easton-Calabria (2016) argues that RLOs often prioritise the basic needs of their organisations, such as "paying rent, accruing funds and tools to implement livelihoods training, and providing stipends to volunteer teachers and staff",[51] over than increasing their capacity to reach more refugees.

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[44] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.
[45] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.
[46] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.
[47] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.
[48] Alexander Betts, Evan Easton-Calabria, and Kate Pincock, "Why Refugees Are an Asset in the Fight against Coronavirus," The Conversation, April 28, 2020, http://theconversation.com/why-refugees-are-an-asset-in-the-fight-against-coronavirus-136099.
[49] The report was shared in confidence with the RLO research team and is not yet publicly available.
[50] Moore, "Lessons from LGBTIQ Refugee-Led Community-Based Organisations."
[51] Easton-Calabria, "Refugee-Run Organisations as Partners in Development."

RLOs struggle to secure funding from traditional donors. According to Betts et al. (2020), donor governments, the UN system and international organisations are often reluctant to fund RLOs directly because of their "inability to meet fiduciary and auditing requirements."[52] RLOs are also rarely recognised as operational partners by the UN system, which prevents them from receiving funding.[53]

There are a few RLOs who have managed to get funding from the UNHCR in East Africa, despite those challenges. According to Betts et al. (2020), two RLOs in Uganda have received funding from the UNHCR – Young Africans for Integral Development (YARID) and One Youth One Heart (1Y1H) – through the Youth Initiative Fund coordinated as a one-off competition by UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva. However, there were challenges associated with receiving the funds and both RLOs complained about bureaucratic delays.[54] In Nairobi, Betts et al. (2020) reports that special interest groups whose issues are prioritised at the international level have been able to access funding – this is notably the case of Community Empowerment and Self-Support Initiative (CESSI), a LGBTQ RLO.[55]

There have been signs that increased attention given to RLOs globally may lead to more funding, but those initiatives remain sparse and timid. In a 2020 blog post, the Refugee Law Initiative argues that humanitarian organisations have started recognizing "the importance of refugees' participation and have taken an interest in how refugee-led organizations are responding to the COVID-19 challenges."[56] This is for example the case of Amnesty International that published an article on RLOs' responses to COVID-19 in Kenya and Uganda.[57] At the same time, the visibility of RLOs during the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to encourage some traditional donors to invest into their activities. Betts et al. (2020) report that the Open Society Foundation has mobilised resources to support RLOs and that several governments, including Canada, Australia, Denmark, and the Netherlands, have signed the Global Refugee Network's Refugee Participation Pledge.[58]

RLOs continue to rely on non-traditional donors to fund their activities, including the diaspora. Betts et al. (2020) give the example of Congolese organisations in Kakuma who use online technology and their networks to engage diasporas in Europe and the United States for support, funding, and advocacy.[59]

To avoid the partnership model, some RLOs have set up social enterprises to self-fund their activities. For instance, Resilience Action International, an RLO operating in Kakuma Refugee Camp, owns a profit-making enterprise called Okapi Green Limited that provides solar powered electricity in the camp. Profits are used to fund the activities, in addition to

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[52] Betts, Easton-Calabria, and Pincock, "Localising Public Health."
[53] Betts, Easton-Calabria, and Pincock, "Why Refugees Are an Asset in the Fight against Coronavirus."
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[55] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*
[56] Refugee Law initiative, "Refugee-Led Organizations: The Time Is Now," Refugee Law Initiative Blog, August 5, 2020, https://rli.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2020/08/05/refugee-led-organizations-the-time-is-now/.
[57] Amnesty International, "Refugee-Led Organizations Need Support and Funding so They Can Continue Their Vital Work," August 19, 2020, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/08/refugee-led-organizations-osf-asylum-access/.
[58] Betts, Easton-Calabria, and Pincock, "Why Refugees Are an Asset in the Fight against Coronavirus."
[59] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, *The Global Governed?*

private funding from the diaspora. A RefugePoint's representative cited in Betts et al. (2020) explained that this allowed refugees to have more freedom to promote community-based solutions, over solutions imposed by the traditional humanitarian system.[60]

[60] Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria.

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