Online-Roundtable 08.08.2025

Regenerative solutions in refugee camps and settlements
Documentation & Key Insights

"What if we could transform refugee camps into regenerative communities?" - GenR

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Summary

On August 8, 2025, Generation Restoration e.V. hosted an online roundtable with around 25 registered participants from diverse organizations, including representatives from refugee settlements, NGOs, IOs and research institutions. The roundtable took a leap from the critical themes of scaling to the essential topics forming standardization.

The roundtable series took the next steps in standardizing approaches across refugee settlements which is intrinsic to GenRs strategy of providing social and financial capital to advance from scaling up to standardization and, ultimately, business development. Scaling has been a recurring theme in previous roundtables. Participants were therefore reminded of the highlights from the previous roundtables, which were gathered by two working groups that discussed seed production and conservation as well as impact assessment and scaling. Furthermore, we discussed the first step in standardization: alignment. Last time, participants identified key challenges and solutions for coordinating resources and strategies, as well as assessing early donor involvement

The goal of this roundtable was to start developing two key documents for the essential topics forming the second part of standardization: institutionalization.

The overall theme was then:
How to institutionalize?: Training and capacity building models and policy advocacy for Regenerative Agriculture in Displacement Settings

The session introduced the model that is implemented for the past and next months, focusing on alignment, institutionalization and standardization (see chart below).

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The definition of alignment focuses on two essential collaborations. First, the coordination between NGOs and IOs and, second, with governmental bodies. Both, from a GRO perspective, coordinating training and capacity building models and policy advocacy.

Coordination with NGOs and IOs
from a GRO perspective

Coordination with governmental bodies
from a GRO perspective

As the goal was to start two working group documents on this coordination, the plenum was intended for an open exchange. The working group documents for both coordination scenarios will be distributed by GenR to all participants to work on it until the next roundtable. Afterwards, the key findings will be made available to all actors of interest in the vision to design refugee camps and settlements as regenerative places.

Coordination with NGOs and IOs from a GRO perspective

Coordination with NGOs and IOs remains a critical challenge in refugee settlement. The roundtable plenum sharing session has specifically pointed towards these observations:

Power Dynamics & Design Control:
- Larger organizations often dictate program design and impact assessment, leaving little room for GRO input. This limits genuine collaboration and reinforces a top-down approach.

Capacity Expectations:
- Refugee-led organizations are expected to adapt to standard NGO/IO models, rather than being supported in developing their own ways of working. However, this only seems to be true for larger NGOs/IOs.

Visibility & Representation:
- Smaller organizations, including funders, often face challenges to showcase their work, limiting knowledge sharing and potential partnerships. NGOs and IOs can be a key enabler here.

Positive Practices:
- Open and regular communication (e.g., monthly meetings) fosters better collaboration.
- Realistic goal-setting contributes to successful outcomes.

Funding & Evaluation:

- Consortium models can help distribute lump-sum funding more equitably.

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- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) remain essential but should be co-designed to ensure relevance and ownership.

Coordination with governmental bodies from a GRO perspective

Coordination with governmental bodies remains a critical challenge in refugee settlements. The roundtable plenum sharing session has specifically pointed towards these observations:

Bureaucratic & Political Challenges:

- The process of NGO registration and permit renewal is highly bureaucratic, involving multiple layers (subcounty → district → ministry → NGO board).
- The number of requirements has increased (from 9 to 21), creating additional burdens.
- There's a widespread perception of **corruption**—e.g., unofficial costs of **2 million UGX to renew** and **1 million UGX monthly fines** for expired permits.
- **Political suspicion** (viewed as "opponents") adds pressure and discourages some GROs from formal registration.

Operational Barriers:

- Government bodies like the **Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)** often provide **little to no support**.
- District-level officials, who must visit GROs for evaluations or recommendations, often claim **lack of transport**, stalling the process.

Opportunities:

- OPM is launching a **new partnership program**, and GROs are encouraged to prepare and engage—especially those without prior connections.
- This could be a strategic opening for improving collaboration.

We'd like to express our deep gratitude to all who contributed to the roundtable discussion. This documentation is based on voluntary engagement of this diverse group. Thank you!

Next Online-Roundtable on November 14, 2025, 9 am EAT

Generation Restoration will host the next roundtable continuing with the finalization aspect of standardization.

Please register here: https://form.campai.com/KIx2tEoWEbQS.

In the meantime, discussions can be continued in the Generation Restoration LinkedIn Group, as well as in the working documents (if you do not have access to them yet, write us an email: connect@genr.world).

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