Matchmaker:
Linking Refugee Talents to Jobs in Uganda

Save the Children

RESPONSE INNOVATION LAB

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Welcome!

What is a Matchmaker?
A Matchmaker is a mechanism allowing one or several refugee response actors in Uganda to request information from Response Innovation Lab (RIL) Uganda about existing potential solutions to an identified challenge.

What is the explored challenge here?
The challenge is how to effectively match refugees' talents, skills, and interests with decent work opportunities in Uganda. This Matchmaker offers an overview of sampled potential solutions for linking refugees to jobs in Uganda.

Who is the challenge holder?
This Matchmaker was requested by Save the Children Uganda under the Uthabiti Activity, backed by other refugee response actors in Uganda from the livelihoods sector. Save the Children is the lead organisation of the USAID-funded *Uthabiti Activity: Building Resilience through Marked-led Livelihood Opportunities*. Uthabiti is a three-year Activity that is enabling access to off-farm income-generating opportunities for refugees and host communities and encouraging self-reliance. Uthabiti's partners are Swisscontact, Grameen Foundation, and the Response Innovation Lab (RIL).

Why a Matchmaker?
This Matchmaker identifies existing job linking approaches that could be applied in the refugee response in Uganda by Save the Children and other actors, including (I)NGOs, the private sector, and government actors, that provide training programmes for refugee and host community in Uganda and seek to ensure that graduates are able to find gainful employment. It does not cover entrepreneurship.

How was this Matchmaker developed?
This Matchmaker was informed by desk research, key informant interviews, and a short survey in Palabek and Nakivale with employers and recent training graduates, conducted in early 2023. It draws from solutions from Uganda (from the refugee context and other contexts) as well as other relevant refugee response contexts. The solutions are meant to be applicable primarily to the Uganda context, but could also be relevant to other refugee responses globally.

Who conducted the Matchmaker research?
The research was conducted by the Response Innovation Lab (RIL) in partnership with USAID's Uthabiti Activity. The RIL is a global collaboration between three leading humanitarian NGOs (World Vision, Oxfam, and Save the Children), and an international community-centered social impact accelerator (Civic). RIL operates Country Labs in Iraq, Jordan, Somalia, Uganda, and Puerto Rico to support humanitarian organizations and other stakeholders in protracted crises such as governments, NGOs, entrepreneurs, community-based organizations (CBOs), Refugee-led Organizations (RLOs), and academics, with contextualized learning and innovation.

Summary

SECTORS

Livelihoods, employment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

Uganda is Africa's largest refugee-hosting country, with more than 1.5 million refugees - the majority from South Sudan (60%) and The Democratic Republic of Congo (29%), with the remaining population from Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, and Eritrea. Outside of Kampala, refugees are hosted in 13 settlements: Nakivale (Isingiro District), Oruchinga (Isingiro District), Kyaka II (Kyegegwa District), Rwamwanja (Kamwenge District), Kyangwali (Kikube District), Kiryandongo (Kiryandongo District), Adjumani Settlement (Adjumani District), Palorinya Settlement (Obongi District), Palabek Settlement (Lamwo District), Lobule Settlement (Koboko District), Rhino Camp (Madi-okollo District), BidiBidi (Yumbe District), Imvepi (Arua District).
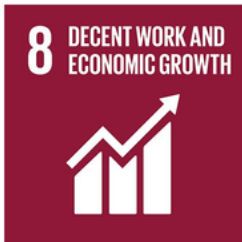
PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

Decent work not only improves refugees' livelihoods and self-reliance but also bolsters their economic and social integration in host communities.[1] Refugees in Uganda benefit from the same right to work as their host community members. Yet, the refugee unemployment rate reaches 31%, compared to 7% for the host community.[2] Humanitarian and development actors implement training/skilling programmes aimed at both groups. After graduating from these programmes, however, many refugee struggle to find decent work. While they gained specific technical skills, graduates may be lacking the necessary soft skills, information, and network to gain employment. They also find it difficult to link the newly acquired skills with the labour market demand. The core challenge explored here is, therefore, how to link refugees and host community members who have recently graduated from training programmes with employers and decent work opportunities.

CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT SOLUTIONS

Accessibility - Solutions must:
- be accessible to a majority, regardless of gender or age
- consider basic literacy and digital literacy levels
- account for availability of smart phones, access to computers, and internet access
- be actionable (i.e. Solutions did not focus on contextual barriers)

Contextualisation - Solutions must:
- be relevant and replicable to the Uganda context
- be adapted to the specific nature of jobs

Sustainability and scalability - Solutions must:
- promote autonomy for jobs seekers and employers
- be able to be rolled out relatively easily and quickly; be affordable; be duplicable
- ideally be managed remotely with minimal staff

Additionally, specific considerations were given to the contexts in which solutions were applied to ensure relevance and applicability, namely contexts:
- favorable to gainful employment for refugees
- with limited access to electricity, telecommunications, and internet
- with limited access to hardware, e.g. smart phones or computers
- with important language diversity

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[1] Decent work is defined by the International Labour Organization as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity"; ILO, "Employment and decent work, What is decent work."
[2] UNHCR, "Uganda Employment Policy Brief: Using Socioeconomic Evidence to Promote Solutions for Refugees in Uganda," July 2021.

Overview

From this Matchmaker mapping, three categories of solutions (both technological and non-technological) are proposed for adoption and adaptation in the Uganda refugee response - each with strengths and limiting factors that are described below. These solutions can be applied separately or combined, depending on the context.

Digital job platforms: These established web-based platforms include:
1) Platforms for offline work (including job boards and recruitment platforms for full-time physical work);
2) Platforms for digitally delivered work; and
3) Skill-building platforms.
They provide potential solutions for individuals with access to a computer, internet, and with digital skills; and can link them to opportunities from either local, national, or international employers or clients (including remote jobs).
- **Goal:** Helping digitally skilled individuals find physical or remote jobs and access information on professional development opportunities.

Job centres: These physical locations, known to both employers and job seekers, leverage existing community structures to provide a safe space with a variety of low-tech job search services, including a physical local job board, support in soft skills development, and group or one-to-one support/coaching.
- **Goal:** Building soft skills capacity and matching job seekers with local jobs.

Job search clubs: These informal or formal physical local clubs, where information on jobs and job searching techniques are shared, are organised by local job seekers, and are often supported by digital networks (e.g., WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups). This low-tech solution helps build confidence and enable job seeking peers to share skills and knowledge in a more "intimate" setting.
- **Goal:** Helping seekers better understand how and where to look for jobs, bolstering confidence, and sharing best practices for job seeking.

While not mentioned in this piece, other solutions include job fairs (in-person or virtual) and working directly with private sector partners/local employers through training programmes and job placement strategies. The private sector can be engaged by facilitating courses, and offering internships, professional support/mentoring, and long-term employment for graduates. Private actors may also be interested in supporting online job platforms if the latter help them address important labor shortages (e.g., sectoral unions or associations).

Various solution providers are mentioned, and introductions can be facilitated for follow-up conversations.
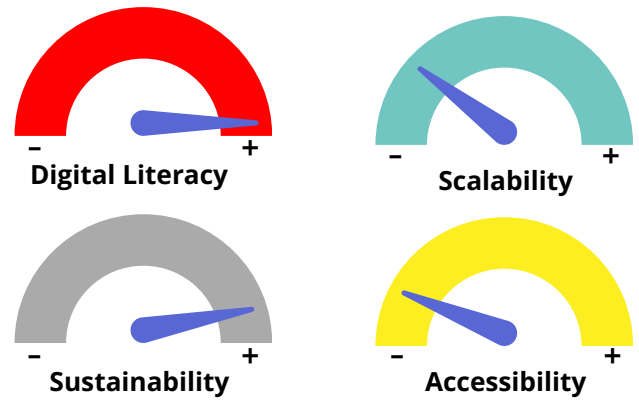
The Response Innovation Lab does not benefit from any solution or partnership listed.

MIX AND MATCH

The above solutions can be mixed and matched based on the needs, context, audiences, and budget.

DIGITAL
JOB PLATFORMS

Digital Literacy

Scalability

Sustainability

Accessibility

Key Information

As refugees and host community face many barriers in entering local labour markets, digital platforms may provide job linkage solutions, especially for digitally literate job seekers. These digital solutions can be labelled as "Jobtech platforms." Jobtech "involves the use of technology to enable, facilitate, or improve the productivity of people to access and deliver quality work."[3] Three categories of jobtech, as defined by the Jobtech Alliance,[3] are particularly relevant for this Matchmaker (and may be combined):

- **Platforms for offline work**, i.e. platforms connecting individuals to physical work opportunities (e.g., taxi and delivery, cleaning and domestic work, technical services, care services). This category also includes job boards and recruitment platforms which may offer hands-on recruitment for full-time jobs and additional services to job seekers, including training or mentoring. On job boards, employers can post jobs and job seekers can search by type of job and location. Certain job boards allow job seekers to create profiles and upload CVs to be contacted by potential employers.
- **Platforms for digitally delivered work**, i.e. platforms matching skilled workers to online freelancing gigs (e.g. graphic design, digital assistant, software development). The digitalization of work, accelerated by the COVID-19, enables refugees to access, more and more, remote jobs in both Ugandan and international companies.
- **Skill-building solutions**, i.e. platforms aimed at filling knowledge or skills gaps and strengthening employability.

Platforms can help refugees (and host communities) with the right skills and internet connection address some of the key barriers they face in finding jobs, including discrimination and restricted mobility.[4] However, various challenges remain (e.g. challenges in labor market structure in Uganda; poor access to internet, smartphones, computers, and digital skills; set-up and recurring costs) and potential risks must be carefully considered (e.g., making sure these platforms leave no one behind).[5]

KEY VALUE

- Jobtech platforms offer new forms of digital employment for refugees as access to formal employment is more complex due to the location of settlements. [6]
- The gig economy can increase work opportunities for refugee women by allowing greater flexibility.[7]
- Job seekers and employers do not need to travel to post a job, thus reducing job search costs; they are autonomous to post and search whenever suitable.
- Jobtech platforms can help training graduates adapt their new skills to the labor market and better transition towards work.
- Recruitment platforms can be useful for economic sectors facing structural labor shortages and productivity gaps. The private sector may be interested in sponsoring.

[3] Jobtech Alliance, "Jobtech Taxonomy," July 2022; Jobtech Alliance, "Job tech for refugees: Kampala case study," May 2023.
[4] Andreas Hackl, "Towards Decent Work for Young Refugees and Host Communities in the Digital Platform Economy in Africa," International Labour Organization, 2021.
[5] Briter Bridges, "Jobtech in Africa: Expanding Access to Employment," November 1, 2021.
[6] UNICEF, "Learning to Earning for Displaced Youth," August 2021.
[7] ILO, "Digital Refugee Livelihoods and Decent Work; Towards Inclusion in a Fairer Digital Economy," April 2021.

DIGITAL JOB PLATFORMS

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Piggy-backing: Humanitarian and development actors are strongly encouraged to work with existing digital job platforms, rather than creating new parallel platforms for several reasons. First, websites that are established and known by both graduates and employers are considered more trust-worthy than new, unknown websites, especially with regards to personal data posted by both the job seeker and the employer. Second, piggy-backing leverages private sector engagement by building on existing networks and support channels. Third, server hosting, regular maintenance, and advertisement are managed by the online platform and, as such, piggy-backing is likely to be more sustainable once project funding ends. Finally, piggy-backing supports refugee integration by avoiding the creation of parallel systems that may inadvertenly create discrimination.

Digital inclusion: Digital job platforms require digital literacy and access to a computer or smart phone and internet. This equipment costs money and cannot be accessed by everyone. Data shows that despite owning phones, few refugees own smartphones that would allow them internet connectivity. In Nakivale, while 93.4% of refugees have phone access, only 25.6% can access a smartphone, and the weekly internet data cost remains high for many.[8] Limited connectivity means that a purely technological solution is not ideal in rural locations. Moreover, since digital literacy is a prerequisite, this solution has a reduced audience and, in Uganda, is unlikely to scale without a larger digital literacy and connectivity campaign. As such, it may be combined with other low-tech solutions and digital literacy should be accelerated where/when possible.

Platforms for offline work

Platforms for digitally delivered work

Jobtech platforms in Uganda, The Jobtech Alliance, 2023

DIGITAL JOB PLATFORMS EXAMPLES

IN UGANDA:
- **Uganda Jobs:** Online job boards where job seekers can post their CVs and employers can post jobs. It is organized by regions in Uganda. It includes a section on remote IT jobs. Other well-known online job boards in Uganda include jobs.co.ug and jobmart.
- **FLIP Africa:** Freelance marketplace where small and growing businesses can hire experienced, rated, short-term talent across a wide variety of sectors. It covers several locations in Uganda.

IN/FROM AFRICA
- **Tunga:** Platform linking African software developers with over 250 national and international companies with IT staffing. It has an office in Uganda.
- **Fuzu**: Online job board, combined with access to online courses and a community. It offers a premium service for career coaching.
- A mapping of jobtech innovators and job platforms in Africa, including a focus on Uganda, is available **here.**

GLOBALLY:
- **NaTakallam**: Social enterprise connecting displaced persons and their host community members to income-generating opportunities as online language tutors, teachers, translators, and cultural exchange instructors. It has a global reach.
- **Workwell:** Skill-building solution providing technical IT-related training, professional development, and coaching to talented refugees, internally displaced persons, and host community.
- **Flexjobs:** Platform to find remote and flexible job opportunities. Special offers are available for organizations supporting refugees.

Other global platforms facilitating remote work for refugees:
- **Andela**: Platform linking software engineers to remote jobs; has a Uganda presence.
- **Na'amal**: Platform providing soft skill training, connects with digital skills trainings, and support remote job searches.

[8] Samuel Hall, "Innovating mobile solutions for refugees in East Africa." 2018.

JOB CENTRES

Digital Literacy

Scalability

Sustainability

Accessibility
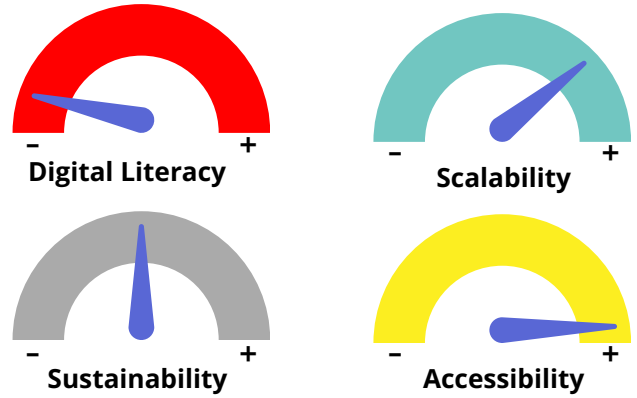
Key Information

The Job Centres solution involves tackling the soft skill gap between graduation and finding gainful employment by providing services in a physical location. The job centre is hosted and staffed by qualified career advisors who can provide collective and individual support and services to job seekers, including access to physical job boards for both employers and job seekers, as well as access to computers with internet connection for job seekers. Access to the job centre is free as is posting jobs for local employers.

Other solutions proposed in this matchmaker (i.e., all types of digital job platforms and job search clubs) can be integrated into a physical Job Centre.

KEY VALUE

- Research shows that employers and job seekers find jobs either through job boards or contacts, highlighting the importance of local networks.
- Services available in a job center include capacity-building in soft skills that are often overlooked in technical training, including writing a CV, presenting oneself to a potential employer, practicing for an interview, or building a Linkedin page. Services can be tailored and adapted to respond to emerging needs over time.
- Job centres within existing service locations are often already known to the community, and therefore to potential users. As such, over time they have the potential to be known to both local employers seeking to hire staff and job seekers.
- Job centres can host a local job board where jobs can be vetted by centre staff to ensure job legitimacy.
- Job centres have the potential to work in every settlement due to their flexibility: they can be connected to online services or solely offline.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES OFFERED

- Assistance to fill out online job seeking forms.
- Information about job opportunities.
- Facilitation between job seekers and local employers.
- Guidance and awareness of the labour law for employees.
- Organisation of job fairs to provide a space for local employers and job seekers to meet.
- Access to computers to create professional CVs, to printers to obtain hard copies, and to internet to access online resources.
- Physical paper job board for local employers to post jobs.
- Group classes on interview skills, soft skills training and support for job seekers.

JOB CENTRES

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Job centres respond to job linkage challenges by building graduates' capacity to search for, apply and succeed in obtaining work, regardless of the sector.

The goal of a job centre is to help job seekers understand their own employability, identify strengths and areas for development, and assess how these fit with employers' needs. Job seekers should not only demonstrate technical skills but must also learn how to package themselves and perform well in interviews. One challenge is that job centres bear costs, including the location, staff salaries, connectivity and electricity, and running costs. This means that they rely on external funding. As such, the job centre's sustainability should be considered from the onset to ensure continuity after a project ends. This can be achieved by working with local government or local organisations with long-term funding, and exploring alternative more viable financial mechanisms. Job centres should ideally be created in collaboration with local government partners.

Another challenge to consider is the distance aspect. Given distances of most rural settlements, a single job centre in a settlement may require too much travel for employers and job seekers.

A high number of users can also quickly saturate onsite services. Implementation should consider the catchment area and weigh the benefits of one large job centre versus multiple, smaller job centres spread apart.

Azraq Centre for Employment, ILO Jordan

JOB CENTRE EXAMPLES

IN UGANDA:
- **AVSI Foundation-supported Job Centres:** AVSI Foundation, in partnership with the International Labour Organization, implement a project titled "Rural Employment Services" in refugee host districts which includes supporting two physical job centres in refugee settlements of Nakivale and Omugo extension (Rhino camp). The pilot seeks to strengthen linkages between rural, semi-urban and urban labor markets. It includes matching services, job search assistance, provision of labour market information and referrals, among other activities.

IN/FROM AFRICA:
- **Salabrini Employment Access (South Africa)**: It aims to promote socioeconomic integration of asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants and vulnerable South Africans by facilitating access to employment though skills training, professional development, and access to resources.

GLOBALLY:
- **Adama Job Centre (Greece):** Established in 2021 by CRS and Caritas Hellas in partnership with UNHCR, the Adama Job Center supports refugee integration in local societies by providing in-person and remote employability and social services, as well as linking refugees and asylum-seekers looking for employment with prospective employers in Greece.

- **Azraq Centre for Employment (Jordan):** The Azraq Centre for Employment (ACE), set up in coordination with the Government of Jordan and sponsored by the Dutch Government, aims to facilitate access to formal work opportunities across Jordan for Syrian refugees living in the camps.

JOB SEARCH CLUBS

Digital Literacy

Scalability

Sustainability

Accessibility
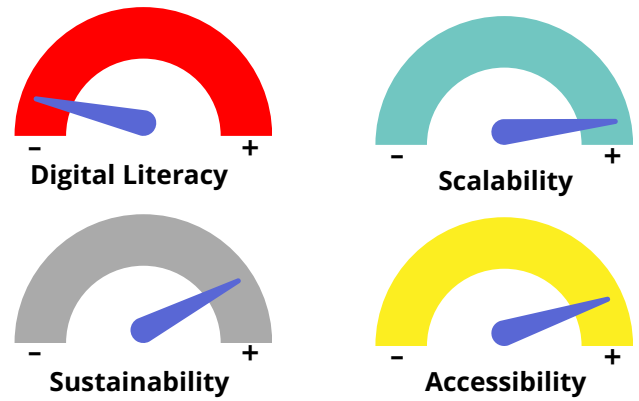
Key Information

Job clubs were first conceived as a behaviourally oriented, client-responsible model of job search and placement. The Job Club approach is based on two main hypotheses: (1) job seekers can function independently and effectively in their own job search; and (2) finding employment is in itself a full-time job which is easier done with a group of people. People who are energized by social situations and tend to procrastinate the lonely tasks of job-hunting may benefit from a job club.[9]

KEY VALUE

- Interviews conducted for this mapping and other research show that employers and job seekers largely rely on their personal networks to find workers and work.
- Job search clubs leverage their members' network and create a safe space to share information on available jobs and advice on job search.
- Job search clubs can be held anywhere as they do not need a fixed location.
- Leadership evolves as job seekers find work and new seekers join the group.
- Topics and techniques can be adapted on a weekly basis to meet the groups' needs and leverage the strengths of the members.
- Job search clubs can combine in-person meetings with a WhatsApp or Facebook group where participants can share job opportunities.
- Very few resources are needed to start and maintain a job search club. A leader is needed to convene and launch the group, after which members are encouraged to co-design meeting agendas.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

According to the research for this Matchmaker, job search clubs are not yet used, at least officially, in Uganda. Yet, the characteristics of job search clubs could match the factors for successful search as highlighted in literature and interviews (e.g., networks, safe setting, agility, peers-based support). As such, applying this option to the refugee context in Uganda may be an interesting innovative direction to explore. Job search clubs could help consolidate job search-oriented networks and reinforce or even formalize existing informal mechanisms. For example, women and youth groups are often formed in refugee settings and some already address the topic of employability in their discussion sessions. This demonstrate (1) an appetite for this type of discussions and (2) the existence of informal structures already used by refugees that could be leveraged for job search. Job search clubs could operate on their own or be added to existing community groups. Job search groups can help, in particular, those who lack adequate job search skills and other disadvantaged job-seekers. [10]

[9] Poverty Action Lab, "Reducing Search Barriers for Job Seekers," January 2022.
[10] ILO, "Job Search Club Manual for Facilitators",2015.

JOB SEARCH CLUBS

EXAMPLE JOB SEARCH CLUB AGENDA

- Members spend a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting sharing results and accomplishments of the previous week's job hunting.
- Members ask the group for support in specific areas. This portion of the meeting is a problem-solving and brainstorming session. Members can ask for advice, support, leads, ideas, strategies, and direct assistance. A professional facilitator may be useful in the beginning phase of a group to share best practices for job hunting.
- The meeting ends with members stating their job-search goals for the upcoming week. Members should set goals that can realistically be accomplished by the time of the next meeting. It may be helpful to lay out some good benchmarks, such as a productive yet realistic number of contacts that members should strive to add to their networks each week.

KEY RESOURCE

ILO Job Search Club Manual For Facilitators

BEST PRACTICES

- Have no more than 12 members. If larger, have breakout groups of 6-12.
- Require attendance commitments.
- Have a stated, agreed-upon agenda, for example: to support members in finding employment.
- Include sharing by former members who have recently landed jobs.
- Set weekly deadlines, which holds job seekers accountable.
- Ensure that job seekers have a specific goal for their job search;
- Help job seekers articulate verbally at least five skills and abilities that they would bring to a job.
- Ensure job seekers follow a particular pattern in the way they conduct their research

EXAMPLE OF A JOB SEARCH CLUB

- **Job Search Clubs (Jordan)**: Job Search Clubs form the basis of an ILO programme that aims to empower and assist young job seekers to find decent jobs in the shortest time possible. It involves two intensive weeks of activities, with members of the club meeting daily under the supervision of an ILO-trained coordinator to provide them with the guidance, information and tools they need to find decent work opportunities.

MIX AND MATCH

The above solutions can be mixed and matched based on needs, context, audiences, and budget:

▶ Job centres can host job search clubs on a weekly basis by providing a safe sitting area, access to computers, and punctual facilitation support. When funding and conditions allow, and computers with internet access can be provided, a list of recommended online job boards or platforms can be made available to job seekers. Employers who post printed jobs in the job centre can also be encouraged to use existing web-based job boards with the support of staff at the job centre.

▶ A job search club that meets on a weekly basis can propose to set a task for its members to consult at least one online job board. Members can be encouraged to discover the offers available online. This suggestion is contingent on members having access to internet and either a smartphone or a computer.

▶ An NGO seeking to facilitate employment can work directly with one or more online platforms as a private sector partners. Employers within the project location can be encouraged to post jobs on that website; the private sector partner (i.e. the platform) could be responsible for teaching employers how to use the website. Trainees would equally be trained on using digital platforms as part of their curriculum.