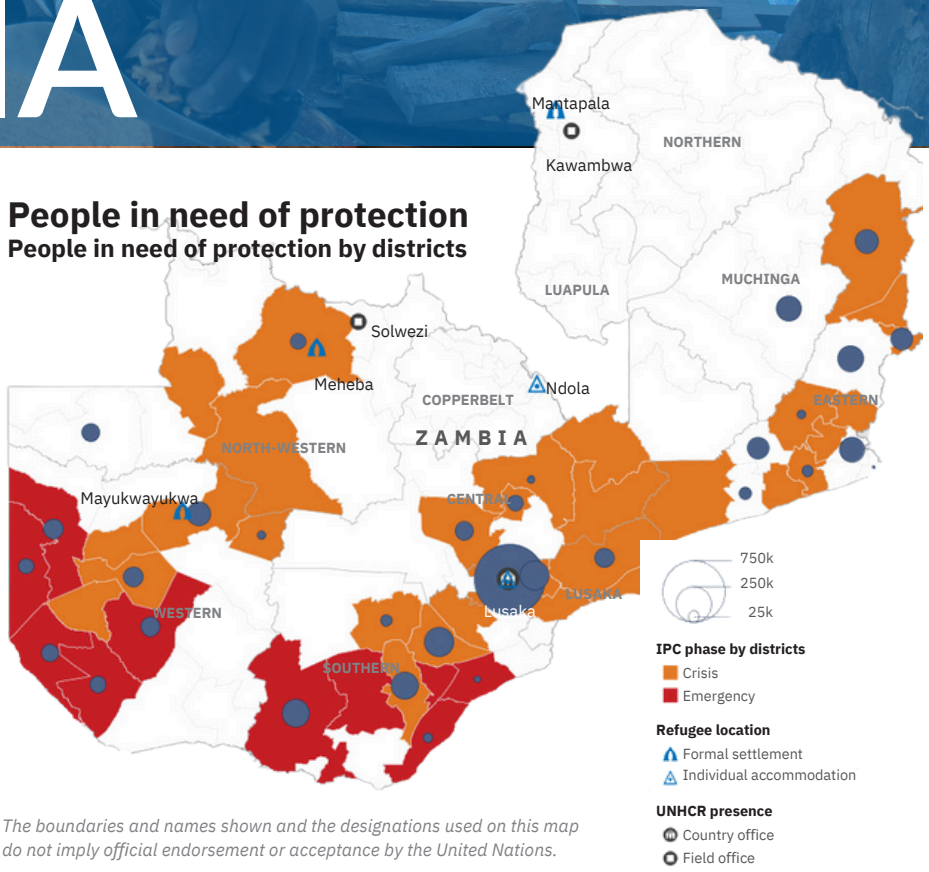
ZAMBIA

Currently hosts over 102,000 refugees, asylum seekers, and former refugees from DRC, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and other countries. Most of them are hosted in Mantapala, Mayukwayukwa, and Meheba Settlements, while about 25,000 refugees live in and around Lusaka, Ndola and other urban centers.

At the Second Global Refugee Forum, the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) made ten multi sectoral pledges focused on local integration, digital civil registration, livelihoods opportunities, inclusion in the farmer inputs support program, full cycle education inclusion, social inclusion, sustainable energy, national statistics, alternatives to immigration detention, health insurance.

People in need of protection

People in need of protection by districts



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Vision For Sustainable Programming in Zambia

Whole-of-government leadership of the refugee response, which leverages the financial and technical capabilities of the private sector, humanitarian actors, and development agencies to make the necessary policy and legal revisions and investments to advance the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and former refugees in order to prepare them for durable solutions while contributing to the socio-economic development of Zambian host communities.

Pillars of Sustainable Programming in Zambia

Pillar I: Enabling protection, legal and policy environments.

In January 2024, the GRZ launched the National Refugee Policy, which paves the way for harmonization of the regulatory framework aimed at improving refugee rights and advancing local solutions for forcibly displaced persons. The Policy and resulting harmonization is expected to lead to sectoral policy revisions needed to for an enabling legal and protection environment for refugees to achieve self-reliance. The World Bank is currently designing a 30 million USD project that will support the harmonization of existing laws and issuance of digital IDs. Looking beyond the World Bank project, action needs to be taken that will support and advance the policy and legal harmonization processes (including those related to education, health, social protection, and private sector development to implement the policy). In the context of Sustainable Programming, the Government will be supported to review the policies and administrative practices of key public sector institutions.

Pillar II: Inclusion from the start during emergency phase and progressively phasing out parallel systems.

Local governments and line ministries play a significant role in the delivery of education and health services to refugees and former refugees. Building on this, the GRZ will be supported to systematically include refugees and former refugees in: (i) national and sub-national development plans and strategies, building on the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supported One Meheba and the proposed One Mayukwayukwa local area development plans: (ii) government service delivery systems for health, education, WASH, and social services; and (iii) the social protection system.

Pillar III: Transforming refugee settlements into economic hubs.

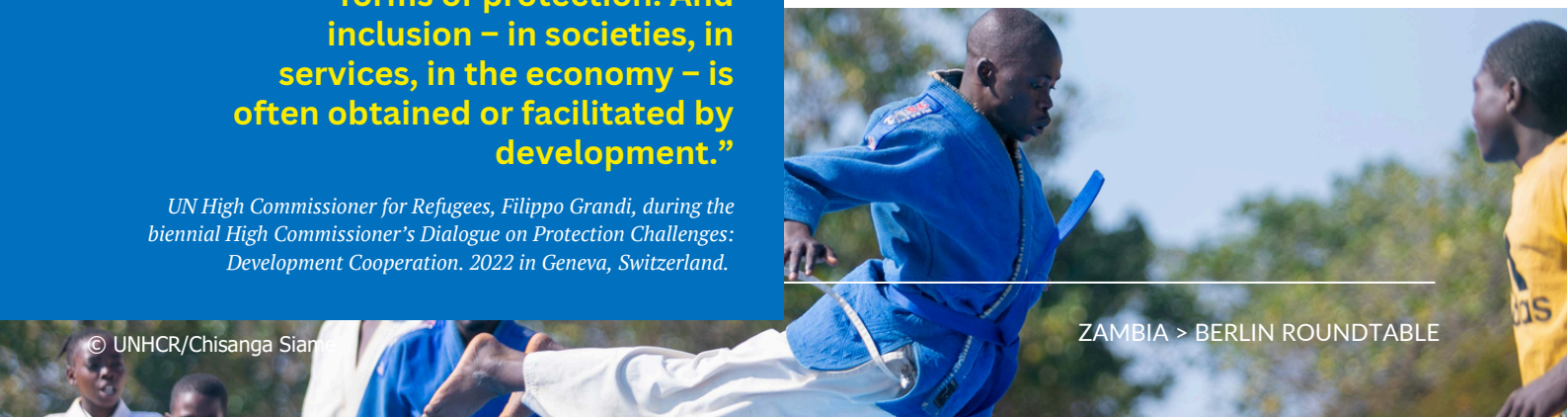
In line with the GRZ's revised Modernization of Refugee Host Communities and Settlement Approach (MORHCSA), actions will be directed to transform the three refugee-hosting settlements into economic hubs. Multi-sectoral area-based programs that target districts with settlements hosting refugees, former refugees and Zambians: (i) strengthen basic service delivery and community infrastructure; and (ii) address environmental rehabilitation and natural resource management needs. Efforts will be made to systematically include the entire community (including refugees and former refugees) in the identification, prioritization, and implementation of community infrastructure projects.

Pillar IV: Promoting economic and financial inclusion by creating markets and strengthening private sector engagement.

The refugee-hosting districts in Zambia have tremendous untapped economic potential, especially in the agribusiness sector. In North-Western Province, the large mining companies (e.g., First Quantum Minerals and Barrick Gold Corporation), the Mutanda Farm, and other private sector actors present market opportunities that can support economic inclusion activities. The IFC-supported Public-Private Dialogue Forum provides an opportunity to expand economic opportunities in refugee-hosting areas. With the support of the IFC-UNHCR Joint Initiative, an agribusiness study will be undertaken to identify opportunities for agribusiness development in refugee-hosting districts and inform stakeholder engagement and public-policy dialogue on agribusiness. In addition to agribusiness, efforts will be made to build on the existing access to mobile money and banking and advance financial inclusion, small-medium enterprise development and entrepreneurship.

"Inclusion is one of the best forms of protection. And inclusion – in societies, in services, in the economy – is often obtained or facilitated by development."

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, during the biennial High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Development Cooperation. 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland.



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Enablers of Sustainable Programming

1 Responsibility sharing and financing

Zambia is currently facing multiple challenges, including debt distress, a severe drought (national emergency declared in February 2024), inflation, and unemployment. In the spirit of responsibility sharing, external financial and technical support is needed to advance the transition to sustainable programming. Going beyond buying goods and services, international development financing can advance legal and policy revisions, nudge incentives and broker deals that could promote inclusion and protection. In addition to humanitarian and development aid, the transition to sustainable programming in Zambia needs to include other sources and modalities of finance, including private sector investments, remittances, blended finance, and other sources of innovative financing.

2 Promoting a whole of government leadership of the forced displacement response by:

(i) Supporting government to lead the multi-stakeholder process. The GRZ established an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee to ensure a coordinated and whole-of-government approach to deliver the revised Modernization of Refugee Host Communities and Settlements Approach (MORHCSA). In the context of the transition to sustainable programming, UNHCR will work with development actors to support this direction that aims to enhance coordination and advocacy with line ministries and local governments; and (ii) supporting the transformation of the government refugee agency.

3 Partnership and Coordination across the HDP Nexus

Coordination between the various stakeholders is critical since no single government entity or aid agency can act alone to effectively advance the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Zambia. Given the cross-cutting nature of sustainable programming, the coordination required is multi-dimensional. Collaboration is needed between different government agencies, including the government agencies responsible for asylum/refugee management, the resettlement areas and disaster response, line ministries and local governments. The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee will be supported to ensure coordination across the various government entities. Refugee issues will be included in the existing coordination and dialogue platforms, including the Public-Private Dialogue Forum supported by the IFC. In addition, UNHCR and the Commissioner for Refugees (CoR) in the Ministry of Home Affairs will organize regular dialogues between different stakeholders to ensure sufficient attention is given to the transition to sustainable programming.

4 Enabler IV: Data and evidence

With the support of EU-INTPA, UNHCR is currently undertaking a Forced Displacement Survey (FDS). In addition, in the context of sustainable programming, a concerted effort will be made to enhance the availability, quality, reliability, and comparability of socio-economic data on forced displacement with the support of the Joint Data Center (JDC).

Good Practice Example

JICA's support towards integrated area-based plans in Meheba and Mayukwayukwa settlements.

Through the Project for Promoting Local Integration of Former Refugees in Mayukwayukwa and Meheba, the Government of Japan is supporting integrated development planning to advance the local integration of former Angolan and Rwandan refugees who were not willing to return to their countries of origin through the "Strategic Framework for the Local Integration of Former Refugees in Zambia" (2014-2016) and the "Sustainable Resettlement Programme in Zambia" (2017-2021). Although various measures have been implemented, the program has made slow progress due to limited basic infrastructure, livelihood opportunities and other obstacles.

The project aims to contribute to promoting the local integration in Mayukwayukwa and Meheba resettlement schemes by developing the following approaches; (i) resident-oriented resettlement planning; (ii) improving sustainable livelihoods that encompasses inclusive market-oriented agriculture with better household management; and (iii) enhancing information sharing and coordination among the Government and development agencies for resource mobilization.