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Pledge Stocktaking Report

Multistakeholder Pledge on Economic Inclusion and Social Protection

December 2025

The Pledge in Brief

The Multistakeholder Pledge on Economic Inclusion and Social Protection (EISP) mobilizes diverse stakeholders to advance the self-reliance of refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and host communities by addressing structural barriers, strengthening resilience to shocks, and promoting synergies, resource matching, and accountability in implementing commitments on economic inclusion and social protection.

LEADERSHIP

Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI)

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa

Government of Denmark

Government of Mexico

Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Government of the United States of America

Supported by UNHCR

The pledge aims to:

- Support at least **15 States** to adopt and/or strengthen laws and policies supporting economic inclusion and social protection.
- Reach **one million refugees**, forcibly displaced and stateless people, and members of host communities with holistic economic inclusion and broader social protection programming.
- Expand **quality data and evidence** to promote effective programmes and policies for economic inclusion and social protection.

Technical co-conveners of this pledge include:

- The International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)
- The Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC)
- TENT Partnership for Refugees

Technical contributors include:

- International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- The World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement
- The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- UNICEF
- ODI
- The European Union (EU)

Pledge Progress

Since December 2023, the EISP Pledge has catalysed meaningful progress across its three pillars—law and policy, programmes, and data and evidence—with a record 285+ pledges made and USD 1 billion in investments mobilized.

Kari Diener, former Executive Director of the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI), announces the EISP Pledge at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. © UNHCR/Jose Cendon

- At least **11 States** have adopted or strengthened inclusive laws and policies.
- Nearly **500,000 people** have been reached through holistic programming that links economic inclusion with social protection, with growing engagement from the private sector, local authorities, and refugee-led organizations.
- The evidence base is expanding, with **20 research products** completed, including **refugee-led studies**, and **13 learning events** hosted by pledge partners.
- Good practices from Brazil, Armenia, Mexico, and the Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC) demonstrate that **inclusive, locally adapted, and rights-based approaches** are delivering results.
- In October 2024, a new **Donor Working Group on Self-Reliance** was launched to build on the momentum of the EISP pledge. Facilitated by the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) and co-chaired by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Government of the Netherlands, the group brings together more than **20 high-level government and foundation funders** committed to galvanizing global support for self-reliance opportunities for refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people, and host communities. Through coordinated advocacy, diplomacy, resource mobilization, and shared learning, members are working to advance support for policies and programmes that expand self-reliance and economic inclusion opportunities worldwide.

However, challenges remain, including funding gaps, limited pledge matching, and persistent legal and administrative barriers. Sustained political will, cross-sector collaboration, and investment in systems-based approaches are essential to scale impact and ensure durable solutions.

Pillar 1: Law and Policy Progress

At least 11 states have made significant progress in adopting and/or strengthening laws and policies that support economic inclusion and/or social protection, with five adopting new laws/policies.

COUNTRY	SUMMARY
Brazil	Adoption of the National Policy on Migration, Asylum and Statelessness, ensuring refugees, migrants, and stateless persons have equal access to health, education, employment, housing, and social assistance, while promoting integration and anti-xenophobia measures.
Cameroon	Action plan adopted by the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development (MINDDEVEL) with UNHCR support for the systematic inclusion of refugees in communal and regional development plans.
Chile	Progress in development of protocol to access social benefits, mapping persons in situations of vulnerability. Procedures under development for recognition of previous qualifications.
Ethiopia	Directive No. 1019/2024 to Implement Recognized Refugees' and Asylum Seekers' Right to Work. Strategy to be launched shortly.
Kenya	Launch of the Shirika plan. 2024 Regulations of the 2021 Refugees Act. New National Social Protection Policy inclusive of refugees.
Mauritania	National strategy for financial inclusion 2023-2028 with diagnostics on barriers for refugee access.
Norway	Parliament approval of the White Paper on Integration Policy.
Scotland	New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy framework and delivery plan (2024- 2026).
Thailand	Adoption of a resolution to grant 81,000 long-staying refugees from Myanmar the right to work in Thailand.
Zambia	National Refugee Policy and Implementation Plan launched in January 2024, establishing a progressive framework for refugee protection and self-reliance.
Zimbabwe	Stakeholder consultations on the Zimbabwe Refugees Act held in 2023; draft amendments presented to the Minister in 2024. Bill drafting underway in 2025.

Pillar 2: Programmes

Close to half a million people were reached through programming by contributing pledge entities, including private-sector entities that provide skills development and jobs. Programmes are increasingly designed to link economic inclusion with social protection, creating more holistic and sustainable outcomes.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO)

Advancing Decent Work and Inclusive Labour Markets in Forced Displacement Contexts

Since 2023, the ILO continued to promote decent work for refugees and uphold equality and non-discrimination, both in global forums and on the ground—deepening its engagement in UN processes, strengthening partnerships, and institutionalizing sustainable development responses to forced displacement, including through active engagement in a dozen UNCT pledges.

ILO PROSPECTS has launched a comprehensive lessons-learned initiative titled **"Responding to Forced Displacement – Lessons from the International Labour Organization's Engagement in the PROSPECTS Programme."** This effort includes a detailed report documenting Phase I interventions (2019–2023), as well as an accompanying online learning portal- prospectslearnings.ilo.org. The portal translates the report's findings into actionable guidance and insights grounded in PROSPECTS field experience. In addition, ILO PROSPECTS has launched a podcast series.

The ILO has launched a new **social protection and forced displacement brief**, which emphasizes the importance of transitioning from ad hoc emergency responses to rights-based systems, and demonstrates how universal social protection and equal treatment of nationals and non-nationals can help bridge humanitarian, peace, and development efforts. The ILO highlights the pivotal yet often overlooked role of the care economy in crisis and displacement contexts through a series of practical examples, including how, in displacement settings, the provision of childcare has enabled mothers to pursue education, training, or work, supporting both immediate coping and long-term empowerment. A new ILO brief explores the role of **employment-intensive investments for advancing decent work in the care economy**, including in crisis and displacement settings.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION COALITION (PAC)

Members of the Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC)—including AVSI, BRAC, HIAS, Fundación Capital, World Vision, NRC, Trickle Up, Village Enterprise, Mercy Corps, Concern Worldwide, GOAL, Caritas Switzerland, BOMA Project, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), and the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI)—have made tangible progress toward their joint Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledge to reach 3,500 displacement-affected households with holistic poverty alleviation programming by 2027.

- **AVSI** expanded its Graduation Approach in Uganda and Somalia, using participatory rural appraisal and community-based coaching. It contributed to the development of Uganda's Self-Reliance Index and co-founded a national Graduation Community of Practice.
- **HIAS** reached 2,473 individuals in Chad and Ecuador through its Graduation and Socio-Economic Support Programmes. It is piloting lighter-touch models to enhance cost-efficiency and is conducting research on integrating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into economic inclusion.
- **Fundación Capital** launched a pilot Graduation programme in Cali, Colombia, in partnership with UNHCR, targeting 100 households. The programme integrates gender equality, psychosocial support, and access to formal employment and entrepreneurship.
- **World Vision** pledged to reach 20,000 refugee households with Graduation projects across multiple regions in Asia, Africa, and South America. Following the cancellation of a major Graduation project in a fragile context—which had already surpassed that target—the current achievement stands at 9,389 refugees and host households supported, representing 47% of the overall pledge. These include three Graduation projects implemented in Syria, Rwanda, and Somalia.
- **GOAL** and its national partner, Shafak, jointly implemented graduation programming in Afrin, NW Syria, where, despite the devastating impact of the 2023 earthquake, 83% of households graduated. Together with Shafak and the RSRI, they innovated to use the Self-Reliance Index (SRI) to set and measure graduation. The SRI is proving to be a highly relevant tool for targeting, monitoring for adaptive management, and measuring graduation.
- **The Danish Refugee Council (DRC)** has reached a total of 7,657 households (28,671 individuals) with its Graduation Approach programming. It is also expanding its Protection-Adapted Graduation Approach in Chad to target 738 households, with a focus on prevention and response to gender-based violence, conflict sensitivity, and green livelihoods. Furthermore, DRC has launched the implementation of the Green Graduation Approach in Sokoto, Nigeria, targeting 360 households with GA interventions complemented by green livelihoods and community-based disaster risk management. DRC is continuing to pilot initiatives that incorporate a systems approach to Graduation, with an ongoing pilot in Kakuma, Kenya, where Graduation interventions are implemented within a broader framework of systems interventions aimed at strengthening livestock management and technical skills development.

These efforts underscore the PAC's commitment to advancing self-reliance and economic inclusion in displacement contexts. They demonstrate that poverty alleviation is achievable when programming is evidence-based, holistic, locally adapted, and grounded in dignity, agency, and long-term inclusion.

REFUGEPOINT

In 2024 and 2025, RefugePoint's Urban Refugee Protection Program (URPP) in Nairobi, Kenya, supported **more than 2,700 urban refugees and Kenyan nationals** facing extreme vulnerabilities through tailored, holistic services that set them on a path to self-reliance. During this period, **420 refugees** successfully graduated from the programme, regaining the ability to meet their own essential needs.

Using the Self-Reliance Runway Approach and the Self-Reliance Index (SRI), the URPP provides a clear, measurable pathway toward economic and social stability. By first addressing urgent protection needs—such as food, rent, medical care, school fees, and psychosocial support—the programme helps clients stabilize before transitioning to business skills training and grants that enable sustainable livelihoods. Data shows meaningful improvements within just six months of enrollment: households experienced reduced rent burden, more reliable access to food and healthcare, and increased school attendance for children. The URPP fills critical gaps in Nairobi's fragmented urban service landscape and challenges the traditional model of livelihoods programmes serving only those considered "viable" for employment or entrepreneurship. By prioritizing refugees facing the most significant vulnerabilities, the programme demonstrates that with the right support, even highly vulnerable households can and do achieve self-reliance.

GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ)

Special Initiative "Displaced Persons and Host Countries"

Promoting employment prospects for internally displaced people and surrounding communities in Northern Shan, Myanmar

- **Context:** The project contributes in a transformative way towards refugee self-reliance by strengthening systems for inclusion in basic services and economic opportunities.
- **Practice:** The project uses a two-track approach, working with non-governmental organizations to strengthen services that address the living, income, and employment situations of young people, young adults, and women affected by displacement and conflict in Northern Shan, Myanmar. These activities are complemented by capacity-building activities for state and non-state actors to build an activating social policy, in which measures to cover basic needs are combined with income-generating skills and opportunities. The training and further education offered, as well as grants for self-employment and legal support, are supplemented by complementary activities on social cohesion, such as the training of mediators, in order to build and strengthen trust between the different ethnic sections.
- **Impact:** Teenagers, young adults, and women benefit from training programmes in various professions. These include hairdressing, sewing, and baking. They also use conflict-sensitive and digital teaching methods from the partner organisations. Training, further education, legal suppor,t and grants for self-employment improve employment and income opportunities.
- **Relevance:** In fragile refugee contexts, economic and social integration can make an important contribution to stabilisation.

[CONT.] GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ)

Special Initiative "Displaced Persons and Host Countries"

Support for host communities of refugees in the border region of Colombia/Ecuador/Peru

- **Context:** The project contributes in a transformative way towards strengthening systems for inclusion in basic services and economic opportunities.
- **Practice:** The project supports the registration and regularisation of refugees as well as migrants and creates employment opportunities. It advises Colombian institutions regarding economic inclusion and creation of employment prospects for refugees, thereby directly leading towards including refugees and IDPs into existing systems. Furthermore, it offers technical support of local and national governments in the development of an inclusive social protection system, strengthening access to and provision by social protection systems.
- **Impact:** The programme is building local and national capacities in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. At the same time, it supports refugees and host communities in promoting employment and peaceful coexistence.
- **Relevance:** The effective support of state and civil society actors in the border regions and along the migration routes of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru is crucial to managing the influx of refugees from Venezuela and Colombia in a socially responsible and labour-efficient manner.

Creation of formal employment in Türkiye

- **Context:** The project implements an innovative financing approach that supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in creating jobs for Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens while also contributing to economic growth.
- **Practice:** Specifically, it follows a two-pillar approach:
  - SMEs receive concessionary loans from banks and subsidies from the project when they employ both Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens (1:1). These companies then pay taxes, create employment in the country, and contribute to repaying the loan. Refugees and vulnerable people from host communities are integrated into the formal job market and the security net it entails.
  - Banks receive guarantees for the loan through compensation payments made to the bank in case of non-performing SME loans, and with this, support private capital mobilisation.
- **Impact:** This financing method allows mobilizing more than four euros in market funds for every euro of public funds. Additionally, it sustainably strengthens the economic environment.
- **Relevance:** This project is a very good example of how leveraging financial resources and integrating market forces can improve the regional economic environment, thereby promoting employment and self-reliance.

[CONT.] GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ)

Special Initiative "Displaced Persons and Host Countries"

Supporting the Government of Ethiopia to strengthen an inclusive TVET system

- **Context:** The project 'Qualification and Employment Prospects for Refugees, IDPs and Host Communities in Ethiopia II' (QEP II) and the participation of a GCR advisor in the inclusion approach "Makatet" contribute in a transformative way towards strengthening systems for inclusion in basic services and economic opportunities, specifically an inclusive TVET system.
- **Practice:** The project works closely with the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour to expand the income and employment prospects of refugees, internally displaced people, and the host population in selected regions of Ethiopia. It aims to improve the quality of vocational education and training, adapt it to the needs of the local labour market, and expand career and start-up counselling. Therefore, the requirements of refugees and internally displaced people are considered in planning processes. A special feature of the approach is that public vocational schools are designed to be inclusive, enabling internally displaced people, refugees, and the host population to learn together. The project also expands psychosocial support services. These are to be institutionally anchored at vocational schools and thus, strengthen the psychosocial health and resilience of the population groups affected by the conflict.
- **Impact:** The income and employment situation for the Ethiopian population, especially young people, is improving through demand-oriented training and qualification programmes.
- **Relevance:** Improving the income and employment situation for refugees creates long-term prospects and enables them to live in financial security and dignity.

Somali refugees in Ethiopia prepare briquettes used for cooking. © UNHCR/Petterik Wiggers

Pillar 3: Data and Evidence

Pledge partners hosted 13 events related to learning, and partners reported the completion of **20 research products**, of which **three were refugee-led**. These efforts reflect a growing commitment to generating and using evidence to shape policies and programmes for economic inclusion and social protection.

Self-Reliance Evidence Review

The **Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**, **RefugePoint**, and the **Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI)** published the first comprehensive Evidence Review on refugee self-reliance, contributing to expanding sector-wide knowledge of effective, replicable practices, as well as highlighting key evidence gaps and research priorities. A key finding was the significant lack of refugee perspectives in existing research publications and knowledge-generation activities. In response to this critical gap, the RSRI launched the RLO-Led Insights Fund, which aims to empower refugee-led initiatives to generate valuable insights, knowledge, and practical solutions related to refugee self-reliance. Four RLOs in East Africa received grants from the fund in 2024, and additional grants are being made to RLOs in Colombia in 2025.

The World Bank – UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC)

The **World Bank – UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC)** has continued to advance its work program with a current portfolio of 61 supported activities at the global, regional, and country level. The data and outputs from these activities highlight the importance of socioeconomic inclusion, as seen in recent reports on Venezuelans in South American countries and on expanding development approaches for refugees and hosts in Ethiopia. Similarly, the support lent to the UNHCR Forced Displacement Survey is another example of JDC's engagement in the production of socioeconomic data to improve programming and policies. Moreover, the JDC is promoting new initiatives, such as the Marketplace on Forced Displacement Research, to stimulate the uptake of evidence in policymaking and create new opportunities for the socioeconomic inclusion of the forcibly displaced.

Displaced Livelihoods Initiative

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), through the **Displaced Livelihoods Initiative**, funded 29 rigorous studies—81% of which involved displaced persons in research teams and 33% focused on refugee-led organizations—contributing to the global evidence base on sustainable economic inclusion.

Building the evidence base on the impact of labor market access and the right to work: The Displaced Livelihoods Initiative is also supporting two projects in partnership with the Ethiopian government's Refugee and Returnee Services, in partnership with Oxford University, London School of Economics and Political Science, and the World Bank. They are the first rigorous, experimental evaluations of large-scale government programmes to support refugees in Ethiopia:

- (1) an evaluation of providing formal work permits and business licenses to refugees across four camps
- (2) an evaluation of refugee integration into national public works programmes

These studies represent the first systematic evidence on how different policy instruments affect economic, employment, and inclusion outcomes for displaced populations at scale.

Research good practices in fragile contexts: The Displaced Livelihoods Initiative also recently created a landing page to consolidate resources for high-quality, ethical research in complex contexts. The page includes blogs by researcher teams highlighting strategies that they've implemented to overcome challenges faced in the field. Lastly, the Displaced Livelihoods Initiative has also been running a webinar series highlighting new and forthcoming research on building sustainable livelihoods for displaced populations and the communities that host them.

A refugee tailor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo operates a sewing machine in Kakuma, Kenya.
© UNHCR/Eric Bakuli

Regional Updates

AMERICAS

Regional Mechanisms and Private Sector Engagement for Socioeconomic Inclusion

Across the Americas, regional mechanisms (i.e., **MIRPS**, the **Quito Process**, the **Chile Plan of Action**) have fostered coordinated approaches to refugee economic inclusion and social protection.

The updated **Regional Strategy for Socioeconomic Integration for Migrants, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Returnees in Latin America and the Caribbean (ERISE+)** was adopted within the framework of the Quito Process in 2025. The Chile Plan of Action includes robust programmes on socio-economic inclusion, Cities of Solidarity and host communities, a regional network of companies with refugees, and dignified return and sustainable reintegration. MIRPS States advanced the **Regional Pledge on Integration** by implementing the competency certification strategy with the International Labour Organization, updating the regional analysis of the specific needs of refugees and displaced persons to promote their inclusion in public employment systems, and presenting a document on regional recommendations for integration. Members of the **MIRPS Support Platform**, including Canada, Spain, the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank, supported these efforts through investments in decent work, social cohesion, education, and the reintegration of returnees with protection needs.

Honduras has implemented a youth internship programme across 17 municipalities, providing early labour market access and skills development for young people at risk of displacement or returning from migration.

Chile has made significant legislative and policy strides, including sustained advocacy in Congress to promote a human rights-based approach to migration and refugee protection. The government, with UN support, has expanded access to documentation, education, and social protection, and is considering a national regularization process. Chile also leads in private-sector engagement, with initiatives such as the *Compromiso Migrante* program and partnerships with employers and unions to promote decent work for refugees and migrants.

Guatemala has implemented a comprehensive digital platform to streamline labour permits, trained over 250 individuals and 30 employers, and issued 600 permits to refugees and asylum seekers. Through the Cities of Solidarity initiative, over 19 municipalities have formally committed to refugee inclusion, with investments in health, education, and livelihoods. The government also launched the OportuGuate app to link returnees with jobs and training, and established the country's first Departmental Commission on Migration and Refugees.

Canada has committed CAD $23.9 million to support the integration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants across Latin America. It also plays a leading role in donor coordination under the Quito Process and supports regional strategies to combat xenophobia and promote social cohesion.

Uruguay has integrated refugees into local development policies in Montevideo, achieving a 60% success rate in formalizing migrant women's employment. This includes targeted support for job placement, legal documentation, and access to social services, with a strong gender lens.

Brazil continues to lead in private sector engagement through the Forum of Companies with Refugees, coordinated by the UN Global Compact Network Brazil and UNHCR. Bringing together over 150 companies and institutions committed to inclusive hiring, training, and entrepreneurship for refugees and asylum seekers, the Forum's members collectively hire 17,000 refugees (2025), adapt recruitment and integration processes, and offer language training and professional development opportunities to 2,000 refugees. Companies such as Accor, Emflora, Foundever, Holiday Inn Manaus, and Construtora Tenda have implemented specific initiatives—from monthly hiring quotas and on-the-job training to partnerships with refugee-led organizations. The Forum also supports refugee women's empowerment through the Empowering Refugee Women project, now in its 10th edition, which offers training in seven cities across Brazil. By fostering collaboration between businesses, humanitarian actors, and local institutions, the Forum demonstrates how the private sector can be a powerful driver of refugee self-reliance, social cohesion, and long-term inclusion—offering a replicable model for other regions.

Mexico has provided formal work opportunities to more than 50,000 refugees, linking them to jobs with 600+ companies and generating an estimated 275 million pesos (~$15 million USD) in annual tax revenue. The Local Integration Programme has become a flagship model for public-private collaboration, demonstrating that refugee inclusion benefits both displaced populations and local economies.

Haitian refugee finds safety and stability in Mexico City.
© UNHCR/Jeoffrey Guillemard

El Salvador has facilitated the soft-skills training of more than 1,600 people to support their access to employment since the launch of the "Mi Primer Empleo" Programme in 2021.

Costa Rica has increased the number of displaced persons registered on the digital platform of the National Employment System and has conducted job fairs, employment guidance, and job placement activities for displaced persons.

Belize has expanded its technical training offerings for refugees.

EUROPE

Systems-Based Inclusion and Labour Mobility Pathways

Across Europe, governments and partners are advancing the economic inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons through national strategies, labour mobility schemes, and targeted support for entrepreneurship and women's professional inclusion. The **EU's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021–2027)** and the **Urban Agenda Partnership on Migrants and Refugees** provide overarching frameworks for coordinated action across EU countries. Municipalities continue to play a defining role in delivering inclusive services, despite persistent challenges in decentralised planning, funding, and housing access.

Labour mobility programmes—such as **Italy's Labour Corridors for Refugees**—are emerging as scalable models for safe, legal employment pathways for refugees. Employment and entrepreneurship initiatives, including those led by **Sistech**, **The Human Safety Net**, and **JRS Europe**, are expanding access to finance, mentorship, decent work, and markets. Key barriers to economic inclusion across Europe include legal and administrative constraints, tied to legal status and national frameworks, limited proficiency in local languages, low awareness of rights and available services among refugees, service providers, and businesses, as well as insufficiently resourced and established integration programmes.

Italy: Labour Corridors for Refugees launched with 70+ arrivals expected in 2025; sectors include shipbuilding, IT, goldsmithing, and airport services. Supported by UNHCR, ministries, and private sector partners.

Germany, Greece, Portugal, Croatia, Romania, Poland, Malta: Participating in JRS Europe's Livelihoods Project to strengthen refugee resilience and economic inclusion.

Scotland: New Scots Integration Strategy (2024–2026) includes £5M for refugee support services and family reunification.

Europe-wide:

- **Sistech:** Supported 1,000 refugee women with mentoring, digital access, and childcare; 71% secured employment.
- **The Human Safety Net:** Supported 275 refugee women in 2024 through incubation, mentorship, and training.
- **EU Commission:** Mid-term review of the Integration Action Plan highlights employment, housing, and health as priority areas for refugee inclusion.

A South Sudanese refugee in Kenya awaits travel to Germany, where she has received a scholarship to continue her studies. © UNHCR/Mohamed Maalim

Country Highlight: Armenia

In response to the 2023 mass influx, when over 100,000 refugees arrived, raising Armenia's population by nearly 4% and adding to existing communities from Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine, the Government faced an unprecedented humanitarian and socio-economic challenge. The Government adopted a systems-based, coordinated, and adaptive approach, emphasizing unified action across partners and anchored in national development priorities and institutional frameworks, under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister and with support from UNHCR. This approach channeled emergency assistance through national systems, ensuring that immediate relief strengthened state capacities while progressively advancing economic inclusion and social protection as pathways toward local integration and sustainable response.

Guided by **a whole-of-government and whole-of-society vision**, the response mobilized government ministries, UN agencies, international financial institutions, the European Union, NGOs, refugee-led organizations, and the private sector—particularly in the areas of social protection, employment, health, and education—to extend coverage to refugees while simultaneously strengthening service delivery for vulnerable Armenian citizens. This systems-based approach ensured that humanitarian assistance **reinforced national capacities**, **promoted equity between refugees and host communities**, and **laid the foundation for long-term inclusion** within the national social protection and development frameworks.

Early in the response, refugees were enrolled in public schools, registered with health facilities, and, where eligible, included in national employment and social protection programmes—turning a potential crisis into a demographic dividend that strengthened national service delivery and advanced the country's development priorities.

Key results include:

- By early 2024, **70% of refugees were registered in the ArMed national health system,** ensuring access to healthcare under the Basic Benefits Package; over **100,000 medical consultations were provided** through public facilities.
- By mid-2024, around **17,000 refugees had secured jobs,** and **over 1,000 had registered as entrepreneurs**, while teachers, doctors, and other professionals were integrated into public institutions through expedited recruitment.
- Around **16,700 refugee children were enrolled** in public schools and kindergartens under simplified procedures; over **430 refugee teachers were recruited**, and refugee students in higher and vocational education received tuition waivers and scholarship support.
- Nearly all new arrivals received **one-off and monthly assistance** and progressively transitioned into national social assistance, child, and disability programmes, while facilitating access to housing and livelihoods expanded through IFI-supported government programmes.
- **Legal reform reduced statelessness by 80%**, and a digital asylum system improved access and efficiency.

Through these collective efforts, Armenia transformed a period of acute strain into an opportunity to **strengthen institutions**, **enhance human capital**, and **promote inclusive, sustainable growth**. Armenia's coordinated and inclusive response demonstrates how GRF pledges can be operationalized through national institutions and existing systems, fostering shared responsibility and reinforcing government ownership. It offers a scalable and replicable model for other countries seeking to transition from humanitarian response to sustainable inclusion in labour markets, social protection, and public services—advancing resilience and national development.

WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

Institutional Inclusion and Climate-Resilient Livelihoods

Across West and Central Africa, governments are embedding refugee inclusion into national systems through institutional reforms, social protection inclusion, and climate-resilient livelihood initiatives. These efforts are increasingly supported by local authorities, regional bodies such as **ECOWAS**, and development partners, reflecting a growing commitment to durable solutions and inclusive development.

Cameroon has adopted an action plan to include refugees in communal and regional development plans. With UN support, refugees are now included in national education, health, and social protection systems. Over 108,000 refugees received multisectoral assistance in 2024, and formal MoUs with key ministries have institutionalized refugee inclusion in local planning and monitoring frameworks.

Nigeria is piloting inclusive agriculture and mobile documentation services in refugee-hosting areas. Refugees are now included in the State Social Register, a critical step toward accessing national social protection schemes. Community-based initiatives are also supporting displaced children and youth through civic engagement and inclusive education.

Chad has registered refugees in the national job-seekers' registry, enabling access to employment services. In a pioneering move, the government has also provided legal training to Sudanese refugee lawyers, enhancing access to justice and supporting professional inclusion.

Sierra Leone has launched a social safety net pilot in five districts, supported by ECOWAS, which includes cash transfers and solar infrastructure to improve resilience and basic service delivery in displacement-affected communities.

Burkina Faso is implementing five agro-pastoral projects that benefit internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and host communities. These initiatives promote climate-resilient livelihoods and social cohesion in fragile areas affected by conflict and displacement.

The Gambia has undertaken a study tour to Guinea-Bissau to learn from successful models of refugee inclusion in national development plans. This peer learning initiative is informing national strategies to embed refugee inclusion into local governance and service delivery.

Ghana has included refugees in the national household registry and allocated land for refugee farming initiatives, enabling access to agricultural livelihoods and food security.

Togo has added refugees to the national social registry and enabled access to the WURI ID system, a regional digital identity platform. Refugees also benefit from non-discriminatory access to microcredit, supporting entrepreneurship and financial inclusion.

Despite these advances, challenges remain in scaling successful pilots, harmonizing data systems, and ensuring predictable, multi-year support for host communities. However, the region's growing emphasis on **institutional inclusion**, **climate adaptation**, and **regional cooperation** provides a strong foundation for expanding durable solutions and inclusive development pathways.

EASTERN & SOUTHERN AFRICA

Global Leadership and Systems-Level Inclusion

The Eastern and Southern Africa region continues to lead globally in advancing the inclusion of refugees and host communities in national systems, with a strong emphasis on economic inclusion and social protection. The region's commitment to whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches offers a replicable model for other regions.

The **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)** has played a pivotal role in fostering regional cooperation and policy harmonization. Through the **IGAD Support Platform** and its **Declaration on Refugee Education and Livelihoods**, member states have committed to including refugees in national development plans, labour markets, and social protection systems. These efforts are underpinned by strong regional coordination, with IGAD facilitating cross-border learning, policy alignment, and joint advocacy.

Governments are also increasingly recognizing the importance of including refugees and other displaced populations in **national economic and social protection systems**. While challenges remain—particularly around legal identity, documentation, and access to formal labour markets—several countries are advancing promising reforms and pilot initiatives.

The region is also seeing strengthened development partnerships that reinforce socio-economic inclusion. The multi-year partnership between **UNHCR** and the **Mastercard Foundation** supports country-level efforts to expand access to secondary and tertiary education, strengthen livelihoods and economic inclusion programming, and advance practical measures to ease young refugees' transition into dignified work, with a strong focus on young women. Activities are underway across EHAGL and other regions in Africa, contributing to broader efforts to operationalize inclusive policies and improve opportunities for refugee and host-community youth.

Uganda continues to be a global leader in refugee inclusion. The Urban Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative (URRI) and the Strengthening Adolescents and Youth (SAY) Programme, funded by Denmark, are advancing climate-smart agriculture, youth empowerment, and access to social protection in refugee-hosting districts. JICA is supporting local governments in the West Nile Sub-Region to develop inclusive district development plans that reflect the needs of both refugees and host communities.

Ethiopia is integrating refugee inclusion into its National Digital Inclusion Strategy and Employment Policy, with support from the ILO and PROSPECTS partners. The country is also piloting disability-inclusive and gender-responsive livelihood interventions, with standard operating procedures being developed for scale-up.

Zambia is implementing a project with JICA to promote the local integration of former refugees in Mayukwayukwa and Meheba settlements. This includes support for livelihoods, access to land, and inclusion in local development plans. The ILO, under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) Project, has conducted legal and policy reviews on refugee access to labour markets in Zambia, Malawi, and Eswatini, with findings expected to inform national reforms.

A Syrian refugee bakes cookies in his pastry and bakery shop in Bishoftu, Ethiopia. © UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

Malawi is benefiting from ILO-led assessments on labour market access and social protection for refugees. These efforts aim to address systemic barriers and support the transition from informal to formal employment for displaced populations.

South Africa and **Namibia** are exploring area-based joint programming approaches to support refugee inclusion in urban and rural settings, with a focus on youth employment, skills development, and access to social services.

Kenya has made significant progress under the Shirika Plan, a government-led strategy to transition from encampment to integrated settlements. The Central Bank has launched the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, explicitly identifying refugees as a priority group for inclusion by simplifying know-your-customer requirements to facilitate, among other things, access to bank accounts. With support from JICA, the Department of Refugees is conducting sensitization campaigns in hosting areas. The ILO and UNICEF, through the PROSPECTS Partnership, are supporting the development of inclusive employment and social protection frameworks, including digital economy strategies and fair recruitment practices. The ILO also co-hosted, with IGAD and other partners, a high-level event at the ECOSOC Youth Forum, promoting refugee youth leadership and socio-economic inclusion.

While the region faces structural challenges, the groundwork laid by these initiatives—particularly in legal mapping, policy dialogue, and pilot programming—provides a foundation for scaling inclusive approaches. Continued investment and regional cooperation will be essential to sustain momentum and ensure that refugees and host communities can access dignified work and social protection.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

Advancing Refugee Inclusion through Social Protection and Pledge Matching

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, governments and partners are increasingly aligning refugee inclusion with national development and social protection systems. While progress remains uneven, **Mauritania** stands out as a regional leader, demonstrating how political will and donor alignment can drive systemic change.

Mauritania's pledge to include refugees in national systems is the **only matched pledge in MENA** under the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), with **Germany** providing technical and financial support. This collaboration exemplifies the potential of coordinated donor engagement to unlock structural inclusion.

Despite these advances, challenges persist. Fiscal appropriation for refugee-inclusive programmes remains limited, and donor contributions are often fragmented. A **multi-donor pooled funding mechanism** and systematic inclusion of new and existing partners are needed to ensure sustainable financing and full inclusion of refugees in national systems.

A Malian refugee woman demonstrates her handicraft skills in Mbera Camp, Mauritania. © UNHCR/Xavier Bourgois

Country Highlight: Mauritania

- The Government of Mauritania has pledged to include refugees in **social cash transfers**, **health insurance**, and **job creation programmes** by 2027.
- Refugees in **Mbera Camp**, identified as vulnerable, are already benefiting from the **Tekavoul national social protection programme**.
- Both **camp and out-of-camp refugees**, including new arrivals, were included in the **national lean season response programme**, with confirmed support from the IMF.
- Germany's matched pledge translated into technical and financial support for refugee inclusion in national systems—marking a unique example of **donor alignment** in the region.
- However, the programme currently lacks **dedicated fiscal appropriation** and remains dependent on **piecemeal donor contributions**, underscoring the need for predictable, long-term financing.

ASIA & THE PACIFIC

Resilience-Based Approaches and Inclusive Social Protection

There are several examples from across Asia and the Pacific, where governments, donors, and humanitarian actors are embedding refugee economic inclusion and social protection into broader development frameworks.

The region's diversity—ranging from protracted refugee situations to stateless populations—has spurred a variety of resilience-based approaches, skills development initiatives, and policy advocacy efforts.

Thailand: The government has taken steps toward providing pathways to permanent residency and nationality for stateless populations. Another breakthrough is the right to work in the country, where the long-staying 80,000 camp population has been granted the right to work. With the engagement of the private sector, employment is currently taking place. In Indonesia, coordinated UNCT advocacy has led to improved birth documentation for refugee children and expanded space for livelihoods programming. Malaysia continues to host large refugee populations, with ongoing efforts to improve access to education and employment through temporary protection mechanisms.

Myanmar: A BMZ-supported programme in Northern Shan is strengthening systems for inclusion in basic services and economic opportunities. Through a dual-track approach—supporting both service delivery and capacity building—the programme has improved employment prospects for displaced youth and women, while promoting social cohesion through conflict-sensitive training and legal support.

Bangladesh: Despite a restrictive policy environment, stakeholders continue to implement pledges focused on education, livelihoods, and vocational training for Rohingya refugees. The endorsement of a skills development framework in 2023 marked a key milestone, enabling targeted programming. Support from the Government of Switzerland to WFP has reached over 150,000 Rohingya refugees through agricultural skilling initiatives. However, access to formal employment, cash, and financial services remains limited.

India: Sri Lankan refugees have the right to self and wage employment, and also receive access to the government`s funds for entrepreneurship in Tamil Nadu.

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan: These Central Asian countries provide various opportunities to refugees for socioeconomic inclusion.

Philippines: A very conducive environment for refugee inclusion provides full access to protection services for refugees, stateless persons, and asylum-seekers, namely, access to socioeconomic services, social security benefits, gainful employment, education, participation in judicial and administrative citizenship proceedings, and legal assistance.

In addition to many programmes targeting self-reliance of forcibly displaced populations in Asia and the Pacific, a sub-regional, multi-year European Union-funded Regional Programme in support of durable solutions for displaced and returning Afghans and their host communities is ongoing. The programme focuses on self-reliance of forcibly displaced populations in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. At the regional level, actors such as **UNDP**, **ESCAP**, and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** are supporting governments to build **shock-responsive**, **digitally enabled**, and **inclusive social protection systems**. The **Asia-Pacific Regional Synthesis on Social Protection** outlines strategic priorities, including **financing**, **data systems**, and **policy coherence**, to ensure displaced populations are not left behind.

Civil society networks such as the **Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)** are also playing a critical role in advancing **refugee-led advocacy** and promoting **rights-based approaches** to economic inclusion.

Despite legal and policy constraints in many countries, the region is demonstrating that **resilience-based programming**, **skills development**, and **inclusive service delivery** can lay the groundwork for **long-term refugee self-reliance** and inclusion in **social protection systems**.

Refugees carry shelter materials home in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.
© UNHCR/Shari Nijman

The Way Forward

At this pivotal moment ahead of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Progress Review 2025, the pledge community is well-positioned to build on early momentum.

Key priorities include:

- **Accelerating pledge matching and implementation**, particularly in underfunded regions and sectors.
- **Investing in inclusive national systems**, including legal identity, social protection, and labor market access, to ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Scaling proven models** for economic inclusion and social protection through regional platforms, peer-to-peer learning, and replication of employer coalitions and integrated programming.
- **Strengthening refugee participation** in policy design, programme delivery, and monitoring to ensure accountability and relevance.
- **Expanding the evidence base,** with a focus on cost-effectiveness, social cohesion, and the impact of integrated approaches.
- **Mobilizing flexible, multi-year financing** to support continuity and scale of inclusive programming.

The pledge will be prominently featured in two GRF Progress Review Spotlight Sessions on:

- **Scaling Employment: Policies, Partnerships and Labour Mobility**
- **Bridging Gaps, Strengthening Systems, Fostering Well-being: Refugee Inclusion in National Health, Social Protection and Digital Identity Systems**

These sessions offer a timely opportunity to showcase progress, share lessons learned, and galvanize further action toward inclusive development and durable solutions.

After the GRF Progress Review, pledge group members will continue to focus on the incremental steps, pragmatic engagement, and financial commitments needed to achieve this collective, long-term vision for systemic change.

For updates, pledging technical guidance notes, a calendar of events, and information about how to get involved, please visit: **refugeeselfreliance.org/eisppledge**

To view contributions towards this pledge, please visit: **globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions/multi-stakeholder-pledges-2023/multi-stakeholder-pledge-economic-inclusion**