



## Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance

Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection  
and Solutions in Urban Areas



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# ACRONYMS

AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
BDS	Business Development Service
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CO	Community Organization
CTA	Community Technology Access
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Implementing Partner
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
MFT	Multi-Functional Team
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIP	People, Institutions and Processes
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan
PoC	Person of Concern
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

# OVERVIEW

The Right to Work is a right established in the Article 23.1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and in the Article 6 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. It allows men and women of all ages and backgrounds to live in dignity and to become self-reliant. The right to work includes refugees according to Articles 17, 18 and 19 of the 1951 *Geneva Convention*.

In urban settings, protection and livelihoods are closely intertwined. Forcibly displaced people need to acquire goods and services, and cash everyday, but many aspects of urban settings make the pursuit of livelihoods risky. Host government policy often makes it illegal for refugees to work or to own property or businesses. Even in situations where refugees can legally work, access to decent employment continues to be a huge obstacle. Cases of discrimination and harassment by the state (police, immigration authorities) can make it difficult for refugees to move around freely to work or engage in economic activities. Refugees often face greater expenses than other urban poor because of costs associated with bribes, often related to the lack of documentation. Refugees are discriminated against by landlords and employers who often require higher rents or extra “fees”. Refugees are targeted by criminals, who know they are less likely to seek recourse. The poor are more likely to rely on child labour and to engage in risky coping strategies including illegal and criminal activities such as prostitution and smuggling. Accessing public health and education services may pose a financial burden on refugees that exceed the burden experienced by other urban poor. In many cases financial shocks come in the form of school fees and hospital bills that exceed their monthly income and may indebt them to their community or employers.

Beyond meeting protection objectives, advocating for livelihood rights and supporting refugees in fulfilling those rights is appropriate and necessary for UNHCR in urban settings for the following reasons:

- Many refugees come to cities because they possess assets that are more effectively utilized in urban settings than in camps or rural areas. Livelihood programmes promote and preserve the use of skills and assets, which can prevent households and individuals from slipping into poverty, and enables them at the same time to support their own communities.

- Increasing the economic capacity of households can promote durable solutions, particularly successful repatriation. Refugees who can build and protect their livelihood assets are more able and more likely to return to their home countries when it is safe to do so.
- Livelihood programmes that also benefit local populations can address host government concerns about the presence of refugees in cities (economic competition, pressure on resources, etc.) and improve the asylum environment.
- The pursuit of livelihoods helps restore the dignity and independence of refugees.

This operational guidance to livelihood programming is aimed primarily at UNHCR Field Operations, starting with representatives and senior managers in field operations; at Multi-Functional Teams (MFT) that include Protection, Programme, Community Services, Field and Livelihoods Officers, where applicable; and at government counterparts and operational and implementing partners, including potential new partners that may include microfinance institutions, the private sector, foundations and academic institutions. Regional representations and decision-makers in headquarters are also addressed.

These guidelines address all urban persons of concern (PoC) currently under UNHCR's mandated and designated responsibility, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDP), stateless persons and returnees. The guidelines will specify where and how approaches to different groups vary. For the sake of this document, the term "refugee" refers generally to UNHCR's populations of concern. While UNHCR is not mandated to support the local population, it is generally acknowledged that they should be included in activities that are planned in areas with a high concentration of refugees.

This operational guidance is based on lessons learnt and good practices gathered across urban operations since 2008. This guidance is complemented by general guidance on livelihoods, on assessment, microfinance and advocacy for the right to work, available on Livelihoods pages on the Intranet (Protection and Operational themes > Livelihoods).

# OBJECTIVE

To provide guidance for UNHCR country programmes to advocate for and facilitate access to (and when necessary provide and/or support) **quality livelihood services for refugees** equivalent to those available to the national population.

# KEY PRINCIPLES

The key principles are based on global best practice and standards, on good practices emerging from UNHCR field operations, and on UNHCR's age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach, which advocates for a participatory, rights- and community-based strategy.

- 1. Access.** Advocate and ensure the right of refugees to access work and other livelihood opportunities as they are available for nationals.
- 2. Integration.** Avoid the provision or creation of parallel services. Use advocacy and capacity building measures to enhance refugee integration into private and public services and institutions that can boost livelihood development and self-reliance. Contribute to local development planning and processes and invest UNHCR resources in local services.
- 3. Assessment.** Conduct comprehensive livelihood assessments based on socio-economic profiling and define a strategic plan on the basis of quality data. Identify the policy environment as well as institutions and programmes, and understand economic diversity in the refugee population.
- 4. Targeting:** Match programme interventions with corresponding levels of livelihood capacity (existing livelihood assets such as skills and past work experience) and needs

identified in the refugee population, and the demands of the market. Develop a comprehensive multi-year strategic plan comprising short and long-term objectives and related activities.

- 5. Self-reliance.** Assist refugees in becoming self-reliant. Cash / food / rental assistance delivered through humanitarian agencies should be short-term and conditional and gradually lead to self-reliance activities as part of longer-term development.
- 6. Partnerships.** Convene internal and external stakeholders around the results of livelihood assessments to jointly identify livelihood support opportunities and develop a multi-year strategic plan. Ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the livelihood strategic plan draws on the comparative advantage of different partners and stakeholders, including development partners, private sector institutions and community representatives.
- 7. Participation.** Involve communities in all aspects of programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Increase interaction with refugee communities and communicate on a regular basis; organize reach-out activities and inform refugees about their livelihood support options and eligibility criteria.
- 8. Monitoring and evaluation.** Regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards programme objectives and expected outcomes in view of a gradual disengagement from direct support, a necessary shift of strategy and approach as well as resulting resource requirements.
- 9. Handing over.** Develop and implement a phase-down and handing over strategy within a livelihood plan with the purpose of gradually shifting interventions from resource-intensive grant-based support to longer-term livelihood support, and gradually reducing the number in need of assistance and livelihood support through the attainment of durable solutions.



# OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

## **1. ACCESS**

Advocate and ensure the right of refugees to access work and livelihood opportunities as they are available for nationals. UNHCR has the obligation to ensure that refugees can enjoy the freedom to choose employment strategies that allow them to generate income to cover essential needs without harassment, exploitation, intimidation or discrimination from state authorities or civil society.

### **Practical steps to increase access**

#### ***1.1 Promoting an effective legal environment***

*Analyze the relevant laws and directives in each country, and work out the practical implementation of these laws in terms of access to livelihoods and provision of services.*

- Analyze the Refugee Act or other legislation or directives that describe the rights of refugee to access work and livelihood opportunities. Identify host country reservations to the Articles 24, 17 and 18 in the 1951 Convention that relate to employment. Monitor any policy changes and keep 'Right to Work' information up to date.
- Remind governments together with UNHCR partners of their obligations towards refugees living within their territory to access work and relevant employment services.
- Identify restrictions on what types or areas of employment or businesses are allowed for foreign workers. Advocate for the removal of any discriminatory directives or practices that impede access to work and livelihoods. This includes higher fees for refugees, marginalizing refugee groups or individuals with specific needs, rejection of refugees who lost documentation/diplomas, etc. or discrimination and hostilities towards members of minorities and different groups.
- Advocate that refugees have appropriate status documentation/identity cards that will facilitate their access to work and livelihood services. Negotiate work permits for refugees and asylum seekers whose skills match gaps in the labour market.
- Analyze the employment situation in the host country, especially the informal sector as it holds more employment prospects for refugees.

## 1.2 Identifying and promoting access to services

Map out available public and private livelihood-support opportunities in urban areas. Define effective modalities to enhance access.

- Identify and assess existing livelihood-support opportunities and services. These may include:
  - banks and/or formal and non-formal microfinance institutions that offer a range of financial services such as savings, loans and transfers, insurance;
  - formal and informal vocational and technical education and training institutions, universities; some can be distance-based or available via Community Technology Access centres<sup>1</sup>;
  - entrepreneurship training facilities;
  - business development services' providers;
  - employment services and information providers in regard to the labour market; apprenticeship and job placement schemes;
  - legal services relating to employment and work permits or business registration.
  
- Advocate and negotiate with national and local authorities (Ministry of Labour/Local Government, municipalities), development partners (such as ILO and others) and the private sector that access to services is available to refugees at similar or lower costs than for nationals, particularly for youth and women seeking access.
- Adopt an integrated advocacy strategy to make existing government services affordable to refugees to improve their health and education status (see *Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas: Ensuring Access to Education and Ensuring Access to Health Care*, UNHCR 2011.).
- Support government services directly or through a partner organization in areas where large numbers of refugees live.
- Engage academic institutions, universities and technical colleges and mobilize support for scholarship programmes.
- Promote access for persons with specific needs to avoid exclusion of women, children, minority groups, the elderly and those with disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> CTA is a Global Programme aiming at enhancing access to livelihood and education opportunities through technology, such as computer literacy and distance learning. It is implemented in 13 countries as of January 2011.

## **2. INTEGRATION**

Avoid the provision or creation of parallel services. Use advocacy and capacity building measures to enhance refugee integration into private and public services and institutions that can boost livelihood development and self-reliance. UNHCR should contribute to local development planning and processes and invest resources in local services.

### **Practical steps to promote integration**

#### **2.1 Working with local leaders and institutions**

*Avoid the establishment of parallel structures and advocate with partners for the needs of refugees to be included in national strategic planning and donor proposals.*

- Ensure national ownership through the fullest possible engagement of national and local authorities in the assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring of livelihood activities.
- Use existing coordinating mechanisms rather than establishing new ones, and ensure effective communication and coordination mechanisms between UNHCR and public institutions with effective information and communication system, support local capacity in government institutions in monitoring refugee access to services.
- Advocate for including refugees issues into country strategies, donor proposals and national programmes with government, bilateral donors, UN Country Team (through UNDAF) and livelihood coordination groups/fora.
- Sensitize host communities on refugee issues, in particular local leaders, business people and civil society organizations.

#### **2.2 Integrating into government services**

*Advocate for urban refugees to be treated in a similar manner to nationals and promote the integration of refugees into the national system.*

- Advocate for refugees to access public institutions and services at similar or lower costs than nationals.
- Identify donor-funded work and employment programmes that might benefit refugees and nationals.
- Advocate for the recognition of previously obtained diplomas and certificates.
- Provide temporarily services if adequate public services do not exist in certain areas,

while building and strengthening government capacities to eventually provide these services by themselves.

- Assist community-based livelihood activities to be officially recognized and to register with relevant public or private institutions.

### **2.3 Alleviating the burden on government services**

*Discuss and decide with government/municipalities how to provide supplementary support to increase the capacity of public institutions and improve the quality of services, to alleviate the burden integration may create on public services in case of large concentrations of refugees in urban areas.*

- Provide support for capacity building through legal advice, support to information management, staff deployment, integration of government staff in relevant UNHCR workshops and trainings.
- Provide equipment and supplies.
- Facilitate information sessions on refugees rights for national counterparts and civil servants to increase public services outreach to and inclusion of refugees.
- Invest in capacity building of national and local service providers, whether public or private, to increase their outreach to and inclusion of refugees; and develop specific services such as language and skills training, entrepreneurship building, financial literacy, business support services, job placement and apprenticeship schemes, legal aid and documentation services for work purposes and serve both local institutions and refugees.

### **2.4 Integrating into local communities**

*Ensure that refugees are accepted and integrated into the local community, and enjoy the same rights. The goal is to increase “social cohesion” by using joint livelihood projects as a vehicle for peaceful coexistence.*

- Provide induction trainings and information sessions on the political, economic and social environment, and local language courses for newly arrived refugees to familiarize them with the host country and specifics of their urban setting.
- Assess the competency levels of refugee and host community members and offer joint trainings, such as entrepreneurship and computer skills, to facilitate integration and enhance social cohesion.

- Facilitate access of refugee entrepreneurs to Business Development Services, training (including on-line through Community Technology Access centres where they exist) and insertion into local business networks.

### **3. ASSESSMENT**

Conduct comprehensive livelihood assessments based on socio-economic profiling in order to define and develop tailor-made livelihood interventions on the basis of quality data. Assessments are to be conducted in regard to the policy environment and social or political processes that enable or inhibit access to work and other livelihood opportunities; diversity in the refugee population, in terms of their socio-economic status, i.e. the livelihood assets and strategies that households and individual men and women use to survive; the protection challenges refugees face in urban settings. Institutions and programmes that support or can potentially support livelihood development and create economic opportunities in the hosting areas also need to be identified.

#### **Practical steps to conduct comprehensive assessments**

##### **3.1 Defining the scope of the assessment**

*A livelihood assessment is a consultative process involving the participation and contribution of a Multi Functional Team, representatives of the refugee community, the host community and the public and the private sectors, as well as relevant organizations such as UNHCR's Implementing Partners (IP) and Community Organizations (COs).*

- Decide whether the assessment will cover both refugees and surrounding local populations - it is recommended to include local communities as they provide a reference as to what to expect in the target area.
- Identify and demarcate "livelihood zones" where large numbers of refugees live and share similar characteristics, livelihood strategies and vulnerabilities.
- Identify socio-economic groups with access to market opportunities that are specific to the livelihood zone; analyze whether these groups are exposed to similar challenges, trends and seasonal changes.

### **3.2 Assessing the urban livelihood context.**

*Undertake a mapping of factors influencing livelihoods and opportunities. Livelihood strategies are the combination of activities that refugees undertake to achieve their livelihood goals. A household's choice of livelihood strategies is determined by their assets and the extent to which the use of those assets is constrained by Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs).*

- Analyze livelihood assets and strategies used by households to engage in livelihood activities. The portfolio of livelihood assets comprises of both tangible assets and resources and intangible assets such as claims and access: Financial Capital, Human capital, Natural Capital, Physical Capital and Social Capital.
- Analyze the policy, legal and institutional context which includes host government policies, laws and regulations, and international instruments that can support livelihoods; employment markets, services and commodities, financial and social institutions, local government, development and humanitarian organizations, community based organizations, academic institutions; how stringently policies are enforced, the level of tolerance, and civil society attitudes.
- Gather initial information through key informant interviews. Details about household's assets (what they own) and livelihood strategies (what they do for a living) should be captured through organized focus group discussion and/or surveys.
- Analyze strategies keeping into account that livelihood strategies are used differently by men and women, and strategies change over time.
- Analyze on-going and planned economic activities of refugees: Self-employment or micro-enterprise; Casual labour; Regular labour.
- Identify protection challenges arising from livelihood strategies in a particular urban setting as well as the specific needs of individuals and groups, such as women at risk (e.g. ex-sex workers), survivors of human trafficking and SGBV, older persons, persons with disabilities.

### **3.3 Identifying socio-economic groups**

*Analyze the information about refugee households' livelihood assets and strategies in view of identifying socio-economic levels. Identify the main socio-economic groups within the assessed population by using the household as the main unit of analysis. For the purposes of a livelihood assessment, the targeted population should be sorted into wealth groups that include:*

- Extremely poor or destitute individuals and households: people with no means of income or very limited social support. Such groups commonly include the older

persons, or ill or disabled individuals with little social/family support.

- Economically active poor households: main income provided from the sale of labour, with few household assets, reduced number of economically active household members, no long term coping mechanisms in periods of hardship.
- Medium income households: diverse and somewhat regular income sources, ability to borrow money and lend small amounts, own or have access to productive assets – equipment and skills; some receive remittances.
- “Better off” households: these households are able to lend money to others in the community, have a higher public profile, employ others in the community, have diversity of household, productive assets, and skills, with extensive social and economic links outside their immediate community/locality.
- Other groups that do not fit into these categories may warrant attention – including households that are extremely rich in relation to the “better off”.

South Africa / Langton  
Sanyanga, a Zimbabwean  
asylum-seeker who completed  
a catering course funded by  
UNHCR through our partner,  
Cape Town Refugee Centre.  
Gainfully employed at one of  
Cape Town's hotels, Sanyanga  
demonstrates his craft by  
pouring a drink for CTRC Self  
Reliance Officer, Phaladi Kotsies.  
/ UNHCR / P. Rulashe





## 4. TARGETING

Once the livelihood assessment has been completed, the next step is to engage in the strategic planning process, again in consultation and coordination with a broad range of partners and stakeholders. Livelihood interventions must try to work around obstructive norms and find ways to work within existing constraints to continue supporting refugees (and host communities where applicable). Based on the assessment, an informed selection of appropriate interventions for chosen target groups can be implemented in a designed sequence, in order to support multiple objectives.

### Practical steps to define targeting

#### 4.1 Identifying assessment recommendations

*Identify and understand people's strategies in order to reinforce the positive aspects and prevent and reduce constraints caused by PIPs.*

- Specify the specific strengths/capacities and weaknesses/needs relevant to each wealth-group, for men, women and youth. Identify gaps, and means to address them relevant to the target groups.
- Build on existing opportunities and address external threats: address “external” challenges (relating to PIPs) to create a more enabling political, social and economic environment by influencing policy.
- Build on existing strengths and address internal weaknesses: address “internal” weaknesses (relating to livelihood assets of households or individuals in specific income groups) to create or build assets while helping to meet basic needs in the meantime.
- Support services that have been identified as real needs by both refugee and local communities and do not significantly challenge existing political, cultural and gender norms.

#### 4.2 Defining strategic objectives

*A comprehensive strategic plan for livelihood support will usually seek to achieve short, medium and longer term objectives by implementing a range of activities.*

- Implement a wide range of activities; some of these will be targeted and others will support all refugees regardless of capacities. Beneficiaries will be selected based on wealth groups identified further to the socio-economic survey.



- Livelihood provisioning interventions have a direct and immediate effect on people’s socio-economic wellbeing, aiming to reduce their vulnerability e.g. grant assistance, subsidized housing and basic services.
- Livelihood protection interventions have a direct and short to medium-term effect on people’s socio-economic wellbeing, e.g. conditional grants for micro-business development, individual skills training, targeted vocational or entrepreneurship training, job placement.
- Livelihood promotion interventions have an indirect and medium to long-term effect on people’s socio-economic wellbeing, e.g. advocacy, building capacity and investing in training institutions, access to formal financial services, access to career counselling and business support services.
- See in annex Selecting and Targeting Livelihood Activities.

## **5. SELF-RELIANCE**

Self-reliance is the social and economic ability of an individual, household or community to meet basic needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity. Self-reliance, as a programme approach, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern (PoC), and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian or external assistance. Livelihood programming should assist refugees in becoming self-reliant. Cash / food / rental assistance should be short-term and conditional and gradually lead to self-reliance activities as part of longer-term development.

### **Practical steps to support self-reliance activities**

#### ***5.1 Moving from one level of support to another as people’s capacities and needs evolve through time***

*Follow a “graduation approach” (Step 1 to 3) to livelihood programming, based on the capacities and related support needs identified for each socio-economic group during the livelihood assessment. Gradually reduce the number in need of assistance and livelihood support through the attainment of durable solutions.*

- Advocacy and social protection are ongoing activities which provide the foundation for all other forms of support. While advocacy activities may increase in time, the amount of grant assistance would be expected to gradually diminish.

- Step 1 combines most of the grant-based, capacity-building support delivered to the poorest households and individuals.
- Step 2 targets economically active individuals that have already acquired solid skills (or that have developed productive skills and previous working experience). These households would have normally graduated out of grant assistance, although still qualifying for free or subsidized access to education and health. They would benefit from support to small-enterprise development and eventually employ others, and/or to access work permits to utilize existing skills and experience in the local job market.
- Step 3 targets economically active, “better off” individuals that show a high capacity for successful economic and social integration into the host community but need time-bound support to become fully self-reliant.

## **5.2 Reducing vulnerability**

*Phase out gradually of short-term livelihood provisioning measures that are more costly than medium to long-term sustainable livelihood promotion measures.*

- Build capacities through livelihood-provisioning and livelihood-protection measures, towards longer term livelihood-promotion.
- Gradually reduce UNHCR direct investment in livelihood-promotion measures, so as to hand over programmes to development or government actors.
- Support entrepreneurs and skilled refugees through targeted interventions.
- Assess risk of exposure to harassment and abuse that can be associated with some livelihood strategy (security related to transportation, work at night, and corruption for example). Livelihood intervention targeting displaced women should take into consideration and build in protective elements, such as mixed gender discussion groups, to ensure that they reduce the female participants’ vulnerability and exposure to SGBV.
- Monitor indicators and identify criteria for individuals/households that require long-term social assistance. Those individuals/households will have reduced ability to “graduate” out of livelihood-provisioning programme.
- Identify households and individuals at heightened risk qualifying for social assistance during the needs assessment process and support them to integrate into national social welfare systems where applicable.

- Initiate a policy dialogue with governments to influence restrictive laws and directives and to assist refugee households and individuals at heightened risk until positive changes materialize.

## **6. PARTNERSHIPS**

While UNHCR may take a lead role in planning a comprehensive strategy, this role will usually diminish when it comes to implementing. Some activities will be carried out by local organizations, international NGOs or by government bodies, without UNHCR's direct investment. Activities that are highly relevant but have no means of being implemented by others should fall squarely under UNHCR's area of responsibility, and require both implementing and operational partnerships. UNHCR needs to increasingly work with governments and national authorities and attract development partners to allow for a smooth transition from emergency and relief to sustainable development.

### **Practical steps to develop, strengthen and coordinate partnerships**

#### ***6.1 Conducting a stakeholder analysis and defining roles of partners***

*Recognize the distinct objectives and modus operandi of humanitarian organizations (short-term) and business entities (long-term), and respect their different mandates, roles and approaches in view of leaving certain interventions to those institutions and organizations with a proven record and expertise.*

- National governments (ministries, municipalities, local authorities, etc.): Policy guidance and overall coordination; recognition of qualifications and documentation; training, support and supervision; coordination.
- Livelihood institutions (public and private): Access and enrolment of refugees; provision of quality services in safe and learner-friendly environments; infrastructure and equipment.
- Bilateral agencies (USAID, DFID, JICA, etc.): Livelihood funding to governments under bilateral agreements; programme support to UNHCR and NGO partners; input to policy dialogue; integration of refugees into the public system; provision of scholarships.
- UN and specialized agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, etc...): Advocacy; funding for livelihood activities; training support; input to policy dialogue: integration of refugees into national public system; capacity building support to relevant Ministries and institutions.

- Community organizations (associations, networks, etc.): Implementation of livelihood projects; participation in assessments, planning, implementing and monitoring; community sensitization and awareness rising; organization of joint activities between refugee and local communities.
- Private sector (companies, foundations, training institutions, etc.): Inclusion of refugees in on-going or planned livelihood programmes; support to refugee small-enterprise development and business start-ups; trainings and apprenticeships; placement in technical institutes, vocational centres and private enterprises; provision of funding and in-kind donations; microfinance and credit schemes; scholarships through foundations and local/international companies; agreement with private companies to reserve employment slots for refugees; development of partnerships with business associations, private training institutions and networks.
- Refugee and local communities: Participation in programme planning and implementation; involvement in advocacy and awareness rising activities; project inputs e.g. financial and material/in-kind contributions; organization of joint activities/projects with local communities.

## **6.2 Coordinating livelihood services for refugees**

*Liaise closely and organize coordination efforts with relevant ministries and other national and local authorities, partner agencies and other stakeholders aiming at joint advocacy and programme planning to integrate livelihood services for refugees into the public system.*

- Establish a Livelihood Coordination Group if suitable coordination mechanisms are not in place, including representatives from UNHCR, NGO implementing partners, government/public institutions and refugee/local communities. The Coordination Group will help to perform key tasks of facilitating exchange of information and lessons learned, ensuring consistency in designing, planning and implementing programmes and support advocacy, fundraising, monitoring and evaluation.
- Identify wider coordination mechanisms at government, donor and UN levels to participate in and advocate that urban refugees are provided with livelihood opportunities.
- Use these coordination meetings as platforms to promote increased access and improved services that also address underlying policy and institutional determinants of barriers to livelihoods such as general issues of poverty (no regular income, food insecurity, malnutrition, lack of housing, poor health, lack of education opportunities).

- Acknowledge the leadership of the government and relevant ministries and institutions and participate in meetings organized at national, local or municipal levels in which the livelihood needs of the urban poor, including refugees, are discussed.
- Follow a multi-functional team approach in planning and implementing a livelihood strategy, e.g. coordinating closely with health, education, community services, protection and livelihood staff where applicable.
- In the field of microfinance, refer to *Investing in solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Microfinance in UNHCR Operations*, UNHCR 2011.

### **6.3 Coordinating closely with UN and other international agencies**

*Link into opportunities provided by national coordination and UN Country Team (UNCT) coordination mechanisms and processes.*

- Identify livelihood opportunities through the UN Development Framework Assistance (UNDAF) and the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP).
- Liaise closely with ILO and other UN agencies involved in livelihood activities and map out areas of cooperation.
- Identify livelihood opportunities in national poverty reduction strategy plans (PRSP) supported by the World Bank, the Asian and African Development Banks and bilateral agencies.

### **6.4 Engaging operational and implementing partners for managing an urban livelihoods programme**

*Identify partners to assist in the implementation of urban livelihoods programmes and signs cooperation agreements.*

- Define the role and responsibility of the implementing partner in the sub-agreement. This may include:
  - Develop and implement a communication and information strategy to promote the importance of access to work and livelihood development to improve advocacy and coordination among stakeholders.
  - Assist refugees to access existing services e.g. through advocacy, financial and material support, coordination with local institutions and service providers, community outreach and mobilization; training support.

- Improve quality of services available to refugees by supporting public institutions with financial inputs, equipment, material supply or training. These inputs must be governed by a tripartite contractual relationship with the respective institution, specifying the expectations and obligations of all contracting partners.
  - Monitor the quality of public and private services by using UNHCR Result-Based Management tools.
- Identify and develop operational partnerships with entities and institutions that can deliver services to PoC on their own terms, outside of a formal sub-agreement with UNHCR. This leaves other opportunities for UNHCR to invest its funds in activities that are equally needed, but for which there are no service providers in the short- to medium-term.

## **7. PARTICIPATION**

Involve both local and refugee communities in all aspects of programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Increase interaction with refugee communities and communicate on a regular basis; organize reach-out activities and inform refugees about their livelihood-support options and eligibility criteria.

### **Practical steps to ensure community participation**

#### ***7.1 Engaging the community and strengthening their overall participation.***

*Promote the participation of refugees in assessing livelihood challenges and needs and analyzing internal and external factors influencing livelihoods.*

- Identify the locally available financial, material and human resources.
- Analyze the existing and changing relations between refugee and local communities.
- Assess the power dynamics within the community, including relations between language groups, and any groups that may be excluded (minorities, gender, etc.).
- Identify security issues, concerns and threats; safe and accessible work places and training locations.
- Analyze ways of reducing protection risks in the context of livelihood activities such as discrimination, harassment, exploitation and gender-based violence (GBV).

## **7.2 Promoting participation of refugees in the delivery of livelihood services.**

*Advocate and facilitate refugees to be involved in livelihood projects in various functions.*

- Promote the productive and creative potential of refugees, their skills and talents, through advocacy activities.
- Promote the full participation of youth in livelihood activities. They have not only a right to be heard in matters that affect their lives but should also be invited to actively participate in assessing, planning and implementing livelihood programmes and projects. Encourage their ability to initiate positive change and become agents of development.
- Strengthen the role of volunteers to promote livelihoods for refugees in their communities and their active participation in local committees or other consultative mechanisms such as municipal/district development committees.
- Advocate for progressive legislation permitting refugees to work, and that refugee professionals can be facilitated into employment with government departments, local institutions and skills/vocational training centres and in other sectors such as education and health.

## **7.3 Supporting representation of refugee groups and organizations.**

*Advocate and facilitate capacity building of refugee groups and organizations.*

- Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of refugee representative groups, networks, associations and community organizations (CO) through targeted capacity building activities. Use CO know-how through community-based financing schemes to enable refugees to access cash.
- Ensure community participation through the inclusion of refugees in local livelihood groups, committees and associations as part of a capacity building and empowerment strategy. In cases where there are legal restrictions negotiate an “observer status”.
- Sensitize refugees further on the importance of their participation and representation in livelihood activities as an investment in future self-reliance and durable solutions.

## **8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards programme objectives and expected outcomes in view of a gradual disengagement from direct support, a necessary shift of strategy and approach as well as resulting resource requirements. The operational context, namely the socio-economic profiles of the refugee population and external factors need to be monitored at regular intervals as these have a direct influence on the relevance and suitability of livelihood support strategies and plans.

### **Practical steps for efficient monitoring and evaluation**

#### **8.1 Developing and utilizing an effective monitoring and evaluation system.**

*Define an effective livelihood monitoring and evaluation system within the livelihood strategic plan.*

- Define baselines based on assessments, measurable output targets and performance indicators within the strategic plan.
- Include the timing and frequency of monitoring and evaluation activities, and the human, operational and budgetary resources required.
- Update the key findings of livelihood assessments, in particular the livelihood profiles (assets and livelihood strategies) of different socio-economic groups on an annual basis to track changes in household livelihood capacities, opportunities, and income levels.
- Record and document changes in surrounding policies, institutions, and processes that affect livelihood opportunities on a yearly basis.
- Review and evaluate livelihood activities and mechanisms and modify interventions and programmes to reflect new needs and realities on the ground.

#### **8.2 Monitoring the operational context.**

*Monitor changes that occur in policies and legal frameworks and in local economies and evaluate their impact on livelihoods.*

- Monitor policy and legislation changes towards the right to work and access to employment for refugees and changes in the local economy that influence refugees' livelihoods such as the housing situation, access to markets, land, education and health.



- Ensure that discriminatory policies and attitudes are reported and addressed by the relevant actors (e.g. Government, UN agencies, private sector, trade unions, etc.). Ensure that local authorities and key partners are involved in finding viable alternative solutions.
- Ensure impact monitoring is conducted by implementing agencies and UNHCR (through multi-functional teams) at least once per year through interviewing beneficiaries and visiting their households to assess socio-economic profiles, including the household's livelihood assets, livelihood strategies and levels of income.
- Organize joint evaluation teams, including donors and members of a Livelihood Coordination Group, if established, and undertake an overall evaluation of programmes and projects and assess the impact of interventions for the target groups.

### **8.3 Organizing a systematic and impartial evaluation**

*Ensure that an evaluation is conducted in the middle or at the end of a programme or project cycle. It should measure outcomes and evaluate whether expected results/targets have been achieved.*

- Use approaches and methods that produce timely and credible evidence of programme outcomes and impacts that can inform future action. Assess change over time and using a counterfactual.
- Conduct joint evaluations by involving government authorities at the national or local level, other UN agencies, donors, implementing partners and communities.



Yemen / refugees / Self Reliance project in Basateen, a neighbourhood with about a 30% Somali refugee population located near Aden, in southern Yemen. / UNHCR / R. Nuri / April 2009

## 9. HANDING OVER

Develop and implement a phase-down and handing over strategy (also called “exit strategy”), within a multi-year livelihood plan with the purpose of gradually shifting interventions from resource-intensive grant-based support to longer-term livelihood support. The exit strategy should be based on phasing out interventions once benchmarks of success have been attained, and phasing in more sustainable ones. The goal of such a strategy is to create a path out of poverty and away from dependence on humanitarian aid and to promote an attitudinal shift towards self-reliance.

### Practical steps to organize a handing over process

#### **9.1 Developing and agreeing on realistic benchmarks and timetables.**

*Phasing down UNHCR-supported and phasing in partner-supported livelihood activities requires a gradual and systematic approach, based on multi-year strategic plans.*

- Enter agreements with partners (governments, UN agencies, NGOs and communities) that are willing and ready, in terms of capacities and resources, to take over UNHCR-supported livelihood activities and agree on benchmarks and timetables for the handing over process.
- Prevent the abrupt collapse of a livelihood programme when resources run out. A significant problem has been the sudden downsizing or stopping of projects when staff and funds are lost as a result of budget cuts. Projects that are not yet sustainable and abruptly terminated create further uncertainties among refugee and local communities and impact negatively on their livelihoods.
- Implement a gradual scaling down of direct support and subsidies and organize transitioning into other livelihood services such as commercial microfinance and enabling access to business development services or national training programmes.
- Adopt a participatory approach, working with both refugees and partners in identifying benchmarks. Possible benchmarks depend on the specific livelihood project, and should be decided and agreed upon by all stakeholders on a case-to-case basis. The attainment of these benchmarks will indicate that the group is ready to move away from direct support by UNHCR to the next stage, e.g. to become clients of a local microfinance institution or a bank.

## 9.2 *Developing and agreeing on achievable objectives.*

- Reduce number of refugees in need of assistance and livelihood support interventions provided through the UNHCR programme.
- Ensure UNHCR or partners with sector knowledge act as interlocutors/intermediaries “introducing” refugees to the next level of support (“post-UNHCR”), and ensuring they have continued access to livelihood services.
- Ensure advocacy results in opening access to national public sector services on a par with host community, and private sector services for refugees (such as banks or microfinance institutions), so that they do not suffer a sudden loss of support.
- Ensure that the quality of public or private sector services is equal to those provided by UNHCR.
- Reduce gradually short-term financial commitments of UNHCR towards livelihood activities and secure longer-term support by development actors.

Bulgaria / Asylum seeker women attend a cosmetician course in the Sofia Refugee Reception and Integration Center in Sofia. / UNHCR / B. Szandelszky / July 2010



## ANNEX

<b>INDICATIVE LIST OF LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES</b>	
Programme Objective	Indicative activity
<b>Livelihood provisioning</b>	
Livelihood provisioning to meet basic needs	Grant assistance (in cash or kind) in emergency situations, subsidized housing and basic services
<b>Livelihood protection</b>	
To protect and build human capital	Individual skills training such as functional literacy, numeracy, basic financial literacy, local language skills, basic IT skills, life skills
Livelihood protection to prevent asset depletion and negative coping strategies	Labour-based activities in reintegration or camp settings (cash or food-for work for infrastructure construction, community contracting)
To prevent asset depletion and negative coping strategies	Job placement of skilled persons in urban settings (providing health, educational, translation, registration and other essential services to refugees)
To protect productive capital (human, social, natural, physical) and diversify income sources	Conditional grants with skills training to support sustainable use of natural resources (urban home-gardening, agriculture, livestock, fish-farming, beekeeping, timber or forest-product harvesting, brick-making, stone or sand harvesting) for consumption or sale
To protect productive capital (human, social, natural, physical) and diversify income sources	Temporary subsidies for production activities (natural resource use, crafts and manufacturing)
To protect and build human and social capital, and decent work strategies	Targeted training packages to build skills for workmanship, manufacturing, retail, and service delivery (infrastructure construction and maintenance, equipment installation, computer maintenance, electrics or vehicle repairs, health and education services, child-care, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) through Community Technology Access
To protect and build social capital	Group skills training, such as leadership, management, formation of associations, community organization and social organization, using ICTs
To protect and build human capital	Entrepreneurship training
To protect and build financial capital, and stabilise and diversify income sources	Sponsoring access to financial services (savings, money transfers, loans)

Programme Objective	Indicative activity
<b>Livelihood promotion</b>	
To improve human and social capital and promote decent work strategies	Career counselling and employment support services includes sponsoring apprenticeships, traineeships and other forms of job-placement, and supporting community-based employment networks
To improve human and social capital, and promote decent work strategies	Facilitating access to business support services including legal, financial, and networking advice for business start ups and “incubator” support
To improve political and social capital, and promote decent work strategies	Access to legal services relating to employment, work permits or business registration permits
To improve financial capital and promote decent work strategies	Facilitating access to (formal) financial services



Colombia / IDPs / Los Altos de Cazuca, Ciudad Bolivar shantytown (locally called “barrio”), Bogota. / UNHCR / B. Heger / January 2006



# RESOURCES

## RESOURCES WITHIN UNHCR:

See Livelihoods pages on the Intranet: Protection and Operational themes > Livelihoods

- Investing in Solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Microfinance in UNHCR Operations, UNHCR 2011
- *Livelihoods Assessments and Strategies: Template, Checklist and Guiding Principles*, UNHCR, Department of Operational Services (DOS), Operational Solutions and Transition Section (OSTS) Livelihood Unit, July 2009.
- UNHCR Operational Solutions and Transition Section (OSTS) – Livelihood Unit, “Urban Refugees’ Right to Work. Livelihood Options and Implications for Protection”, January 2009.

## EXTERNAL RESOURCES:

- Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network: Minimum Economic Recovery Standards, Second Edition, 2010. <http://seepnetwork.org/Pages/EconomicRecoveryStandards.aspx>
- *Building Livelihoods: a Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings*, created by the Women’s Refugee Commission. <http://womensrefugeecommission.org/programs/livelihoods.2>
- EMMA: Emergency Market Mapping & Analysis, Introduction and Overview of the EMMA Toolkit, [http://www.microlinks.org/ev.php?ID=38407\\_201&ID2=DO\\_TOPIC3](http://www.microlinks.org/ev.php?ID=38407_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC3)
- *Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities. Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth*, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children and School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. October 2008. <http://womensrefugeecommission.org/search?q=market+assessment>

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2 This field manual has been developed to provide practitioners with usable information and helpful tools so that they can design and implement more effective livelihood programs—programs that are based on market demand and are contextually appropriate; programs that build on the existing skills and experience within the target population; and programs that enhance the dignity and options for the displaced.

3 EMMA is a set of tools and guidance notes designed by a group of NGOs (Practical Action, Oxfam, and IRC) to assist humanitarian staff better understand, accommodate and make use of market-systems. EMMA tools are adaptable, rough-and-ready, speed-orientated processes designed to provide guidance to staff who are not specialists in market analysis. Although the EMMA toolset is intended for sudden-onset emergencies, it can easily be adapted for use in urban settings.



