

Meeting Minutes

Livelihoods Working Group Meeting

28 February 2019

On Thursday 28 February 2019, UNHCR convened a livelihoods sector coordination meeting. The meeting was chaired by Kristine Hambrouck, UNHCR's Assistant Representative for Programme. The meeting benefited from the presence of key humanitarian and development partners¹. The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

1. Objective of the meeting (Kristine Hambrouck)
2. Refugee Proclamation: Rights to work (Kaleab Zelalem)
3. UNHCR Livelihoods/Economic Inclusion Strategy 2019 - 2021 (Robert Nyambaka)
4. Private sector participation: Scoping brief (Carolyn Ndawula)
5. Coordination (Kristine Hambrouck)
6. Wrap up and AOB

Objective of the meeting:

- The meeting commenced with an introductory note by Ms. Kristine Hambrouck on the objectives of the meeting, the importance and need for coordination and the role of UNHCR under the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).
- She noted that economic inclusion and self-reliance of refugees are key focus areas for both humanitarian and development partners participating in Ethiopia's CRRF agenda.
- Coordination of interventions in the livelihoods sector is currently very weak and there is a need to have an effective coordination platform that brings all partners around a table for the realization of better impacts.
- Donors were not invited at this time; the focus was have technical experts from implementing agencies to first agree on a coordination mechanism and maybe later on have a presentation brief for donors.

Refugee proclamation: Rights to work (Enabling Legal, Policy and Regulatory Environment):

- The revised refugee proclamation (proclamation number 1110/2019) contains a progressive provision² that grants refugees the right to work through recognized pathways (wage employment, self-employment and enterprise development) with the most favorable treatment accorded to foreign nationals.
- More importantly, paragraph four of the specific article stipulates a joint projects approach where refugees and communities engage in projects that are jointly designed by the Government and the international community. In such joint projects, the Government will provide residence permits to refugees and refugees will be given equal treatment as accorded to Ethiopian nationals engaged in the same projects. Though the proclamation prevails over other federal and regional laws on refugee matters, subsequent regulations and directives need to be developed and reviewed to translate the rights enshrined in the proclamation into practical conducive enabling environment. UNHCR is currently supporting the Government with a review of secondary legislation.

¹ See full list of participants in Annex I below.

² Article 26 of the revised refugee proclamation.

- The role of sectoral line ministries and agencies should also be defined to avail clarity on the rights to work including the issuance of residence permits. This process is Government driven. However, the contribution of humanitarian and development partners is also vital.

UNHCR's Livelihoods /Economic Inclusion Strategy 2019 – 2021:

- UNHCR has drafted an internal strategy document to guide its role in the livelihoods sector moving forward, taking into consideration and referencing UNHCR corporate livelihoods documents and Ethiopia specific documents.
- UNHCR's global guiding principles for economic inclusion of refugees are; 1) enhancing the enabling environment through advocacy such that refugees have the legal and de facto access to decent work, 2) partnering with expert or specialised entities to facilitate the inclusion of refugees into existing programmes/services and as a last choice, 3) implementing interventions when the presence of expert or specialised entities is limited, not available or the engagement of other stakeholders is not possible or still insufficient to meet the needs of refugees.
- UNHCR's strategic objective is "to enhance the economic inclusion and self-reliance of refugees and host communities by advocating for an enabling environment and for the creation of self and wage employment opportunities for both populations."
- UNHCR's role is limited to the following;
 1. Protection advocacy on behalf of refugee populations, advocating for and supporting development of appropriate legal frameworks and policies
 2. Coordination of livelihoods and economic inclusion platforms with strategic partners so that investments and interventions can effectively generate results
 3. Joint programmes for economic inclusion with a wide range of strategic partners contextualized to the development priorities of regional governments
 4. Facilitating private sector participation to generate jobs in refugee hosting areas through public private dialogues and partnerships with specialized entities
 5. Generating data and information that is accessible, of high quality and that is reliable through partnership with specialized agencies
 6. Strengthening capacity of relevant federal and regional Government agencies to develop work and livelihoods action plans for effective implementation of pledges
- UNHCR will not be implementing livelihoods and economic inclusion interventions. Rather UNHCR will facilitate joint assessments, the design of joint projects and joint fund raising for interventions that will translate into economic inclusion and self-reliance of refugees and host communities.
- UNHCR has also developed global key performance indicators for livelihoods in response to the reporting requirements requested by the Secretary General of the UN. These are intended to put together results from the wide array of development and humanitarian actors to report back results of the GCR at the Global Forum on Refugees.
- The strategy and clarity on UNHCR's role in livelihoods and economic inclusion was welcomed by participants.
- Specially, for a coordinated effort towards shifting into targeted humanitarian assistance through enhancing the self- reliance of refugees is very critical while WFP's food assistance is significantly dropping³.
- It was noted that coordination of livelihoods and economic inclusion initiatives has to be a Government led process where other mandated agencies like UNHCR have a supporting role. However, the capacities of ARRA to convene these platforms need to be established first.

³ WFP delegate stated that WFP food assistance will decline by additional 30 percent in May 2019 if additional funding is not secured.

- It was also stressed that UNHCR needs to trickle down this coordination to the regional and Woreda levels to support local level Government bodies.

Private sector participation: Scoping brief

- UNHCR presented preliminary findings from scoping exercises conducted in refugee hosting areas to assess the status and potential participation of the private sector.
- The scoping covered all major refugee hosting regions (except Gambella) to assist the federal and regional Governments to identify entry points for private sector participation in supporting Ethiopia's pledges related to work and livelihoods; and to also identify refugee protection and refugee data areas that should be focused on ahead of implementation.
- The scoping exercise looked at the nature of the private sector, potential sectors and subsectors that can create significant jobs for refugees and host communities, the refugee voice and refugee and host community linkages.
- Also assessed was the enabling environment for participation of the private sector including; the legal, policy and regulatory environment, infrastructure, institutional capacity, markets and skills.
- The scoping also revealed cross cutting barriers that may hinder the participation of the private sector in the refugee hosting regions.
- One of the impressive findings of the scoping was the interest and willingness of domestic investors to work with refugees once the enabling environment is conducive enough. Thus, improving the enabling environment and enhancing the investment climate of refugee hosting regions is critical to ensure the participation of the private sector in the CRR agenda.
- Further, the findings of the scoping exercise will not provide full information but, indicates key areas for deepened assessments and studies by relevant partners with the required mandate and expertise.
- UNHCR is in the process of finalizing the scoping report and will share once the report is internally approved.

Coordination - The Way Forward

- Participants unanimously agreed that a coordination platform for a core group composed of strategic humanitarian and development partners is a critical step towards an effective coordination structure.
- This core group will continue to meet every two months to openly discuss on issues related with economic inclusion of refugees through the CRR agenda.
- A Terms of Reference that outlines the scope, mandate and approaches of the coordination platform will be drafted and shared by UNHCR.
- The Next coordination meeting will be conducted on April 25, 2019 at UNHCR.

Action Points

1. UNHCR to draft and share a terms of reference on the coordination structure with partners for comments.
2. UNHCR to share draft Economic Inclusion Strategy with partners for comments.
3. UNHCR to share the report of the preliminary findings of the status of the private sector in refugee hosting areas.
4. Members of the coordination group to recommend key strategic partners that should be invited to be part of the coordination meetings.

Annex I

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