

The Wedding and Beauty parlour in Za'atari camp, Jordan, is a welcome business initiative for the refugee community



Encouraging Self-Reliance

Building the self-reliance of refugees helps ensure that they are empowered to contribute toward meeting their daily needs and paves the way for durable solutions. It also strengthens protection and reduces vulnerability to economic and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, however, many refugees and other people of concern do not have access to employment in a safe environment, leaving them dependent on humanitarian assistance. One way in which UNHCR's livelihood programmes seek to address this problem is by linking the productive capacity of refugees to local market opportunities. This is a win-win situation for all, as the host community also benefits from the knowledge and skills of the refugees. ●●●

A GLOBAL STRATEGY
FOR LIVELIHOODS

“UNHCR aims to ensure that all persons of concern are able to safely make a living which helps them meet their basic needs, contributes to their dignity, and provides for the full enjoyment of human rights.”

—UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018

UNHCR’s global strategy for livelihoods, developed in 2013, reflects the organization’s commitment to helping displaced people achieve self-reliance and provides a framework for increasing the quality and scale of livelihood interventions.

In addition to the loss of their home and personal belongings, displaced people leave behind their productive assets and their ties to the local market. The global livelihoods strategy aims to promote refugee access to economic participation and the right of refugees to work, and leverage their knowledge, skills and ambitions.

The strategy has a strong protection and solutions orientation, with its guiding principles being equity, access and community empowerment through the age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach. It emphasizes

communication and advocacy, partnership and coordination, capacity-building, evidence-based decision-making and impact measurement. The strategy will bolster the organization’s capacity to implement effective market-based interventions, in collaboration with governments, development actors and the private sector.

UNHCR will roll out its livelihoods strategy gradually. Priority operations will be given support to implement market-based activities and learn how best to help build the self-reliance of refugees. The strategy builds on proven, innovative models for livelihood programmes, such as the Graduation Approach presented below, and seeks to make greater use of financial services and the internet.

THE GRADUATION APPROACH:
REACHING FAMILIES LIVING IN
EXTREME POVERTY

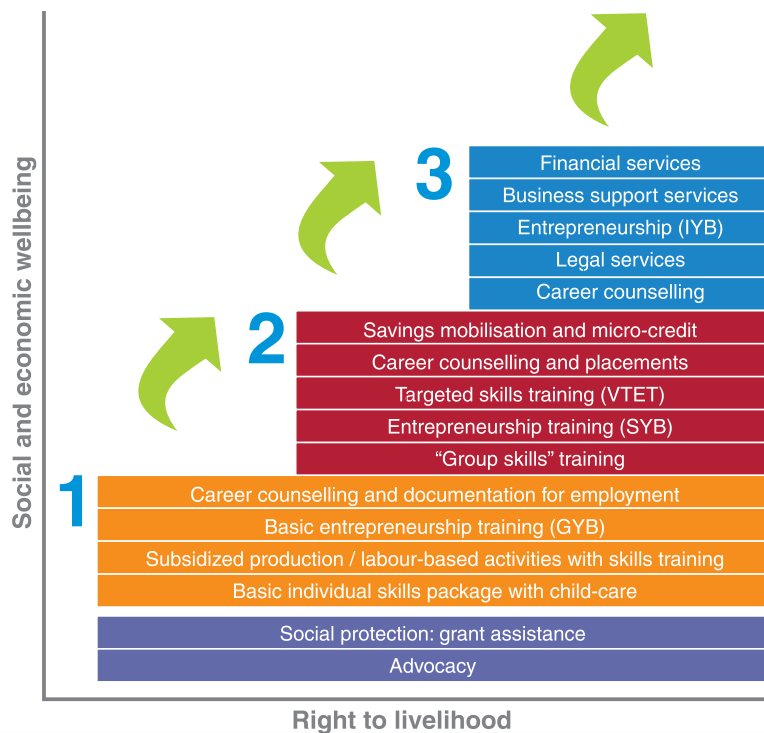
In 2013, UNHCR launched a new initiative which harnesses the expertise of development actors to strengthen refugee livelihoods in the long term.

The term “graduation” refers to the goal of moving participants out of extreme poverty towards food security and sustainable livelihoods. This process is undertaken in a time-bound manner through a sequenced combination of interventions. The approach was originally developed by BRAC, an international

● *A strategy for results*

UNHCR’s livelihoods strategy seeks to strengthen delivery through the following:

- Collection and analysis of socio-economic data
- Implementation of multi-year programmes backed by data and research
- New partnerships with national entities and the private sector
- Advocacy for the right to work
- Targeted initiatives based on interests and capacities
- Ease of access to financial services
- Job training appropriate for market opportunities
- Development of new income streams
- Creation of synergies with other sectors
- Application and documentation of good practices
- Exploration of new funding opportunities



non-governmental development organization based in Bangladesh, to help address the needs of those who were too poor for microfinance services.

Since 2006, the approach has been pilot-tested in 10 locations in eight countries by organizations supported by the World Bank's Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and the Ford Foundation. Between 75 and 98 per cent of the participants met graduation criteria after 18 to 36 months. The approach targets families in extreme poverty, living on less than USD 1.25 a day. Such families are often marginalized within their communities and lack access to services and programmes that could help them.

UNHCR believes the Graduation Approach has the potential to help

the poorest refugees lead active and productive lives, while weaving strong social, economic and cultural ties with their host communities. In partnership with the NGO Trickle Up and the BRAC University, which supported the design and implementation of all 10 CGAP-Ford Foundation pilots, UNHCR will expand the approach in collaboration with the assistance of local partners.

The first multi-year graduation pilot began in June 2013 in Cairo, Egypt and was followed by a second in San José, Costa Rica in November 2013. These initiatives tested the viability of the Graduation Approach when applied to refugee populations in both urban and camp settings as well as in protracted and crisis situations.

● *The Graduation Approach in Egypt*

Egypt has one of the largest urban refugee populations in the world: as of mid-2013, it was home to more than 183,000 registered refugees. The city of Cairo offers an opportunity to test the Graduation Approach in an urban setting and within two different populations requiring support: African refugees in protracted displacement and Syrian refugees in an emergency situation. Five hundred participants were chosen for the pilot study from among those already receiving direct cash assistance, with priority given to survivors of sexual and

gender-based violence, young people and women. More recently, the pilot was expanded to include 1,000 Syrian refugees. Along with cash assistance to cover daily needs, participants are given food vouchers worth EGP 300 (USD 43). They are also offered training and coaching that will enable them to choose one of two pathways to move away from cash assistance: self-employment or salaried employment. UNHCR will continue to assure the protection of all participants. ■

● *Connecting skilled refugee artisans to global markets*



UNHCR / A. AWAD

In Lebanon, despite the remarkable hospitality extended by hosting communities, over 1 million Syrians are struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, their need to find livelihood opportunities is increasing competition for jobs and putting a severe strain on Lebanese infrastructure. Yet, over 15 per cent of the Syrian refugees in the country are known to be artisans by trade.

As part of its search for livelihood solutions for refugees, UNHCR has formed a partnership with Nada Debs, a successful

international furniture designer of Lebanese origin, to connect Syrian refugees and Lebanese people affected by the ongoing conflict who already have artisan skills to global market opportunities in the crafts sector. In 2013, over 60 women were given specific training in woodblock printing, a technique involving the creation of ornately carved wooden blocks which are then dipped in dyes and stamped onto fabric to create patterns. The designs they have produced are being used directly in Debs' collections.

This initiative has provided 60 women with new opportunities for a sustainable livelihood. UNHCR will continue to seek partnerships like this with other retailers or designers, both traditional and online, to connect more refugees to global market opportunities. In an effort to enable refugees to find online market opportunities themselves, UNHCR is also providing and facilitating access to skills training in finance, computer literacy and numeracy. ■

The Graduation Approach is a key component of UNHCR's global strategy for livelihoods. Lessons learned from the two pilots will help the organization adapt the approach to new situations and expand it to more operations.

WFP/UNHCR JOINT EVALUATION FOLLOW-UP

The World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR have a long history of working together to provide food assistance to refugees and other

displaced people. In recent years, the two agencies have worked together to shift their focus from a "care and maintenance" approach for refugees in protracted situations to one of promoting self-reliance. Both organizations recognize that building self-reliance requires sustained livelihood programmes that draw on development assistance.

Evaluations conducted in 2012 in Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia and Rwanda showed that there is still much to be done in helping refugees

advance towards food security and self-reliance. The evaluations found that while the care and maintenance model has had positive effects on immediate food security, the desired evolution towards greater self-reliance has not occurred. Many refugee households lack food security and levels of chronic malnutrition remain unacceptable.

Following the evaluations, WFP and UNHCR agreed to formulate a joint strategy and operational framework to establish more effective

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013

Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a five-year <i>UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods</i> Redesigned the community technology access (CTA) programme, which will seek to remove barriers to livelihood and learning opportunities, including microfinance, data outsourcing and remote work via the internet
Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piloted the Graduation Approach in Costa Rica and Egypt Initiated a pilot project in two countries to follow up on the joint evaluations carried out in 2012 with WFP on the impact of food assistance on durable solutions in protracted refugee situations Provided technical guidance on livelihood strategy development in Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted a regional livelihood training in Bangkok, and a livelihoods Training of Trainers in Budapest, providing UNHCR staff and partners with skills in livelihood programming and training

UNHCR signs agreement to grant work permits for 30,000 refugees in east Sudan

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

2 OCTOBER 2013

linkages between humanitarian aid and longer-term development processes in protracted refugee situations. Both agencies agreed to identify areas with good potential for promoting livelihoods and self-reliance. They also sought to learn from the experience of refugees who have moved successfully from food aid towards self-reliance, and to identify key variables that contributed to these transitions. A commitment was made to begin working together to assist refugees improve their livelihoods. Launched in 2013, it lays the foundation for this commitment.

In 2013, UNHCR and WFP prepared to implement the joint strategy at headquarters, regional and field levels by piloting new livelihood interventions in Belom, Chad; Western Equatoria, South Sudan; and Rwamwanja and Kyangwali, Uganda – although South Sudan had to be put on hold due to the recent emergency. For these pilots, UNHCR and WFP are working whenever possible with local governments, other UN agencies, NGOs and donors. There is also an emphasis on ensuring that refugees participate thoroughly in all aspects of the process.

In 2014, WFP and UNHCR will present an initial report on the effectiveness and relevance of strategies tested in the two pilot programmes. The findings will provide the basis for the development of a joint WFP-UNHCR livelihoods framework that will signal a fundamental shift in the way the two organizations work to augment the productivity and self-reliance of refugees. ■

KASSALA, Sudan, October 2013 |
Nearly 30,000 work permits will be granted to refugees in Sudan's Kassala state to improve the livelihoods of refugees and reduce their dependence on external assistance.



UNHCR / A. AWAD

A group of refugees in eastern Sudan. Thanks to a new agreement, many will be able to work and become more self-sufficient.

Last week's agreement between UNHCR and Sudan's Commission for Refugees (COR), Kassala State, and Kassala Ministry of Finance – after negotiations that began in late 2011 – is an unprecedented step for refugees in Sudan. Work permits are essential for refugees to legally work and have the same employee rights as Sudanese citizens.

It is one of several recent interventions by UNHCR to help increase the self-sufficiency of refugees in eastern Sudan under the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) in conjunction with the Government of Sudan, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. It has been supported by Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States, as well as the IKEA Foundation.

UNHCR will work with the Ministry of Finance's Labour Office to inform refugees

about workers' rights to prevent exploitation. Beyond this, the Labour Office will be strengthened to streamline procedures for issuing work permits to refugees and enhance its ability to gather information about the labour market.

"It is the duty and responsibility of the Government of Sudan to provide a conducive environment and regulatory environment for refugees, with the support of the UN, enabling them to become active members of society and contribute to it," Abd Elmoiz Hassan Abdelgadir, acting Minister of Finance, said of the agreement.

Although Sudan's Asylum Act allows a refugee to work in any job except those related to security and national defence, work permits have been difficult to obtain. In 2012, only 180 refugees were issued with the required documentation.

Consequently, many found employment as casual labourers and were very disadvantaged. Refugees are also self-employed in sectors such as agriculture, livestock production and micro-business. Despite their efforts, a UNHCR assessment at the end of 2012 revealed that more than 52 per cent of the refugee population were living below the poverty line.

The TSI programme seeks to reduce refugee dependency on external aid by creating meaningful livelihood opportunities, so that refugee camps can operate as self-sufficient communities. To date, TSI has trained 1,263 refugees and 316 members of the host community in vocational skills such as driving, mechanics and mobile phone repairs. Issuing work permits and formally drawing refugees into labour markets will also contribute to the Sudanese economy. ○

