

Handbook for Self-reliance



UNHCR

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Handbook for **Self-reliance**

Prepared by

*Reintegration and Local Settlement Section
Division of Operational Support
UNHCR, Geneva*

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For further information, please contact:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Reintegration and Local Settlement Section
Division of Operational Support
PO Box 2500
1211 Genève 2 Dépôt
Switzerland
E-mail: HQTS02@unhcr.ch

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Design and Layout by:

Creative Lynx, Jackson et Associés
Rue de Saint-Léger 2
CH-1205 Genève

Illustrations prepared by Dorothy Migadde, Nairobi, Kenya.

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For further information, please contact:

Infocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction
Recovery and Reconstruction Department
International Labour Office
4, route des Morillons
1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

Tél: +41/22 799 62 70 or 799 61 32

Fax: +41/22 799 61 89

E-mail: IFPCRISIS@ilo.org

FOREWORD

Currently, the world has 12 million refugees, nearly 8 million of whom have been living in camps or settlements for more than ten years. Some refugees have lived in such camps for generations. Many of them are prohibited from moving about freely and, over time, develop dependency on humanitarian aid, such as food, shelter, health care and education. Durable solutions cannot be realized if refugees are denied some of the basic human rights, and remain passive recipients of aid. Furthermore, situations in which refugees lack opportunities for self-reliance can quickly lead to resentment and become breeding grounds for further conflict.

Self-reliant refugees are more likely to achieve durable solutions. This is why the promotion of self-reliance is an integral component of UNHCR's Framework for Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons. The Framework is based on the realization that the protection provided to refugees and other displaced persons by UNHCR and its partners can be effective only if material assistance is directed towards enhancing self-reliance and empowering refugees. The Handbook for Self-Reliance was developed against this backdrop.

The Handbook is based on the premise that refugees who have achieved some degree of self-reliance during asylum, either through enhanced skills or engaging in income-generating activities, can be an asset to their war-torn homelands once they return. They can also have a positive influence in their hosting communities by bringing new skills and additional income, thus galvanizing the local economy. Uganda and Zambia provide clear examples of countries that have witnessed the positive change that refugees can bring to isolated and neglected areas.

The Handbook for Self-reliance provides UNHCR field-based staff and their partners with an invaluable operational tool for formulating and implementing self-reliance strategies. Based on the realization that employment and the opportunity to make a sustainable income are building blocks not only for self-reliance but also for local economic growth, the Handbook also contains practical material that will guide Field Offices to promote employment-oriented strategies in conflict-affected settings. These were developed with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

It is expected that the Handbook will be put to use in the initial phase of the planning of all operations to support the development of multiyear self-reliance strategies. As planning is an inclusive process involving all stakeholders, including persons of concern, the Handbook will guide the joint effort to support refugees in making decisions on their own development and to provide opportunities for sustainable livelihoods - such as access to land, skills training and microcredit.

It is my sincere hope that this Handbook will establish an environment conducive to helping refugees and other displaced persons to gain the courage to start anew, to seek powerful opportunities for personal and community development, and to find dignity and hope in the challenges they confront in their search for durable solutions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marjon Kamara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Marjon Kamara
Director, DOS/UNHCR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Reintegration and Local Settlement Section (RLSS) in UNHCR's Division of Operational Support (DOS) has completed the Handbook for Self-reliance. We would like to express our gratitude to all of those who contributed to the realization of this publication.

We wish to thank, in particular, Christopher Davey for writing and finalising the Handbook. His creative ideas have materialized into a practical tool based on field experiences and a range of scenarios and situations. Myriam Houtart, former Senior Self-reliance Officer for RLSS, initiated the work and led the team - providing commitment, input and a wealth of practical experience. Thanks are also due to Joanne Philpott for research and preparation of initial material for this publication; Maria Eugenia Lazarte, intern to RLSS, for her valuable insight and work on the short-guides; and Soo-Eun Chae, Associate Economist Planner, Johanna Reynolds, Junior Professional Consultant with RLSS, for excellent support in editing and finalising the Handbook. Special thanks go to Dorothy Migadde who prepared the illustrations. She has captured the messages and provided marvellous drawings that are also simply good to look at.

Many UNHCR colleagues have contributed valuable input and we wish to thank all of them - with special mention of those in the Department of Operational Support (DOS), the Department of International Protection (DIP) and the Bureaux.

We are grateful for input by the International Labour Organization (ILO) - particularly their preparation of Employment for Peace: ILO Tools to Rebuild Conflict-Affected Communities in Appendix Two.

Finally, we would like to thank Pablo Mateu, Chief of RLSS, for his continued support, guidance, input and excellent management.

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section explains: what the Handbook is about; for whom the various sections have been written; where and when it should be used; and how to use it. It also indicates how this Handbook relates to other relevant publications prepared by UNHCR.

A. Introduction

Self-reliance is a key component in any strategy aimed at avoiding or addressing protracted refugee situations, enabling agencies and refugees to find durable solutions that are truly sustainable; providing a foundation for building towards the Millennium Development Goals; and developing capacities contributing to the pursuit of the Agenda for Protection¹.

B. Purpose of the Handbook

This Handbook is about social and economic self-reliance - developing and strengthening livelihoods of people of concern, and addressing or preventing their long-term dependence on humanitarian assistance. It will be used by different people in different ways - but mostly by people working with UNHCR. It is written for:

- **Senior managers**, to explain why to direct efforts towards self-reliance - clarifying what it is, justifying its incorporation in programmes, recognising that it requires a change in attitudes among staff and partners, strengthening commitment to its adoption, and providing guidance to ensure implementation is effective.
- **Middle managers**, to help them make self-reliance work by knowing what should be done, when and where - guiding the design of self-reliance activities, tailoring interventions according to local natural and policy environments, planning their implementation, identifying where resources will come from, supervising implementation and evaluating impact and sustainability.
- **Field staff**, to tell them how to go about it - providing ideas and possibilities, providing tools and knowledge for implementing self-reliance activities, building partnerships, coordinating implementation, maintaining records and monitoring progress.

¹ Goals 4 and 7 of the *Agenda for Protection*, UNHCR/DIP, 3rd Edition. Geneva: UNHCR, October 2003.

C. When to use the Handbook

It is relevant in all phases of refugee operations and programmes.

- For **senior managers** it is particularly useful when exploring ways to avoid dependence and the loss of human capacities, and when: old programmes need new approaches; avoiding conflict between refugee and host populations; anticipating breaks in the food supply pipeline; budgets decrease but needs do not; and building a basis for durable solutions.
- For **middle managers** it is especially important when: reviewing and designing programmes; undertaking assessments; preparing the Country Operational Plan; preparing reports; and preparing/undertaking evaluations.
- For **field staff** it will be in regular use for a wide range of purposes including: preparing proposals; working with partners; undertaking surveys, assessments and understanding refugee needs/opportunities; monitoring implementation; and reporting.

D. How to find your way around the Handbook

After this brief introductory section there are two 'books', a toolkit and three annexes.

- **Book 1: Why self-reliance** is short, and is essential reading for everyone.
- **Book 2: Making self-reliance work** is for use by those who are to catalyse the establishment and monitor the implementation of self-reliance activities.
- **The Toolkit** contains guidelines and other tools for doing the various tasks.
- **Appendix One: References** contains essential information - the sort of detail that is important, interesting and useful, but which would clutter up the practical detail in the two 'books'.
- **Appendix Two: Background reading** contains a lot of general reading on the subject.
- Finally, **Appendix Three: Employment for Peace** contains materials prepared by ILO.

E. Links with other UNHCR publications

Self-reliance is a key component in any strategy aimed at avoiding protracted situations and is central to building durable solutions. A number of other publications address these related areas. How do you know which publication to use for what sort of tasks? The chart (Figure 1: UNHCR publications and their use in an operation) provides an indication of 'what' comes 'where' or 'when'.

F. What to do next

This is suggested in Book 1 in the section **H: What to do**.

Figure 1: UNHCR publications and their use in an operation

