



Background Note

Side event on promoting self-reliance and inclusion of refugees The Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC) and the graduation approach

Regional NGO Consultations for the East, Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) 29 June 2021

The Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC) is organizing a side event with a specific focus on the second objective of the NGO consultations, to discuss interventions that lead to **promoting self-reliance and inclusion of refugees**.

The session will be led by NGO partners with the following objectives:

- Showcase how the approach can lead to self-reliance.
- Highlight fund-raising successes and expansion/ replication in more challenging contexts.
- Encourage participants to contribute to improving the PAC's work.

The Coalition

The PAC is a coalition of UNHCR, the World Bank's Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI) and 13 INGOs, that aims to alleviate the poverty of 500,000 refugee and host community households across 35 countries within the next 5 years (of which eight are in East, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region). It was launched on 7 July 2019 at the UNHCR Global NGO Consultations. Subsequently, a joint pledge was submitted at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019 aiming to lift a minimum of 160,000 households out of poverty by the next GRF in 2023.

To this end, implementation in the EHAGL region requires funding of amount of US\$ 40 million. If raised successfully, this will support 136,000 households at an average cost of US\$ 1,446. It was pledged at the GRF to reach at least 1/3 of these resources before the next GRF in December 2023 (43,500 households). As of 14 June 2021, programmes have been initiated with **7,970 households or 18% of the pledge**.

The 13 INGOs committed to systematically include extremely poor Persons of Concern (POCs) and hosts in their existing or planned programmes across 35 countries with the fundraising support of UNHCR. To ensure oversight, UNHCR has supported the establishment of working groups in each country in which joint concept notes are developed. The participating countries are **Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda**. NGOs further report to UNHCR on programmes under a joint monitoring framework. The country specific responses can be found on [the Coalition's website](#).

The global convening [members](#) are BOMA Project, BRAC, Caritas Switzerland, Concern Worldwide (CW), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), GOAL, HIAS, Innovations for Poverty Actions (IPA) , Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Trickle Up (TU), Village Enterprise (VE) and World Vision (WV).

The Graduation Approach

[The Graduation Approach](#) is a well-proven poverty alleviation model. The model has been extensively used by the development community and is one of the few poverty alleviation strategies that works consistently across countries, cultures and conditions.

The model's success is based on a combination of support to meet participants' essential needs, while simultaneously enabling them to engage in a productive livelihood by the end of the programme. **The duration of a graduation programme is approximately 18-36 months.** Beneficiaries receive support to cover basic needs, market-oriented skills training for self- or wage employment, productive assets, access to inclusive financial services through savings groups and/or linkages to formal services, access to social and legal services and continuous mentoring. The consumption support ensures that people suffering from extreme forms of poverty are not forced to spend, sell, or consume their existing or future assets – be this in the form of cash or in-kind for entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, continuous mentoring supports ongoing livelihoods capacity-building for the extremely poor. This ensures that the program participant is on the right path to self-reliance and builds the necessary skills. Graduation programs are most effective when they build on existing services/programs.

The approach was pioneered by [BRAC in Bangladesh in 2002 with a success rate of 95% households graduating out of poverty](#). It has since been tested in over 43 countries worldwide. The approach guides households step-by-step from poverty to self-reliance.

The approach is explained in more details in the global programme document, which can be found [HERE](#)

UNHCR and Trickle Up have piloted the approach with refugees and host communities in 8 countries, with the support of the US State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) since 2013 and have found that the model significantly improves self-reliance of refugees. It is seen to work best when programmes mobilize all relevant partners, such as governments, financial institutions, and NGOs with longstanding experience in challenging contexts.

In the East, Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, several graduation projects are currently under implementation. In the East, Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, several graduation projects are currently under implementation both within and outside the Coalition. For example, in Uganda, [USAID/AVSI/Trickle Up project in Uganda targets 13,200 refugee and host community households](#).¹ Caritas Switzerland project targeting 450 households in Yumbe and West Nile. In Kenya, [The BOMA Project's](#) programme is implemented jointly with the government. In Ethiopia, Concern's **REGRADE (REsilience + GRADuation program + Evidence)** has been running for several years. In Rwanda, Caritas Rwanda is implementing the approach for 840 households with the support of UNHCR. In Somalia, Concern Worldwide supporting 200 households in Baidoa.

¹ Please note that AVSI is a local member of PAC, but not a global member and that this programme was initiated before the establishment of PAC and is not considered under the Coalition's work.

Outline of the Session

The specific focus of the session will be to:

1. Discuss the graduation approach, how it is implemented in different contexts, and its impact.
2. Consult with the participants to further understand how UNHCR can support accelerating and expanding the graduation approach for refugees, from the advocacy perspective, implementation, technical support, resource mobilization and partnerships.

The expected outcome will be a set of suggestions and recommendations from NGOs that will help UNHCR further understand their perspective and provide the needed support.

The side event will be a two-hour session on 29 June from 14:30 to 16:30 , co-moderated by Sarah King, co-Chair of the [regional economic inclusion working group](#) , and Regional Livelihoods & Food Security Adviser at the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

- **Introduce the graduation approach**, description, the most important key success factors, and overcoming challenges to expansion. Presenter: **Trickle up**
- **Panel discussion on implementation** of the approach in different contexts including Uganda and Somalia, and resource mobilization opportunities and challenges. Panellists: **AVSI, Concern Worldwide, and Village Enterprise**
- **Present impact related data and observed trends** with specific focus on the regional trends, impact related observations moving forward. Presenter: **PEI**
- **Discuss, review, and analyse** collective responses from participants to the challenges and opportunities of the graduation approach.
- **Consult with the participants** throughout the session and conclude with **key recommendations** on how UNHCR can enhance its support to strengthen, expand and ensure a more sustainable impact of the graduation approach.

Guiding Questions

1. How is the graduation approach implemented in the region? What are the main achievements and challenges?
2. How is the Coalition (PAC) coordinating among NGOs in designing implementation, coordinating activities, mobilizing resources, and enhancing partnerships?
3. How effective is this approach in promoting self-reliance, and economic inclusion of refugees and other populations affected by forced displacement?
4. Which challenges do NGOs see to implementing and scaling-up graduation programmes with refugees, as pledged at the GRF?
5. How can UNHCR play a role in supporting partners to strengthen, expand and enhance the impact?
6. What partnerships have been involved in delivering successful graduation programmes?