



UNHCR / D. SENEVIRATNE

Encouraging Self-Reliance

Sri Lankan IDP Nageshwari and her husband have finally returned home and have used the UNHCR shelter grant to set up this small shop.



UNHCR HAS INCREASED ITS engagement in the livelihood sector substantially in recent years. The organization's global budget for livelihood programming reached nearly USD 157 million in 2011, a 33 per cent rise from USD 118 million in 2010.

UNHCR's approach to livelihood programming is guided by the following key principles:

- The lack of access to livelihood opportunities heightens the prevalence of child labour, makes people vulnerable to exploitation and increases threats to personal security. It also has the potential to generate secondary irregular movements. Supporting the creation of livelihood opportunities is therefore an essential protection tool.
- In prolonged displacement situations, self-reliance alleviates

the burden of poor countries of asylum, where host communities are struggling to meet their own needs. Livelihood activities also enable refugees to be active members of society who can enrich the host country's social, economic and cultural life, in addition to promoting peaceful coexistence between displaced and host populations by boosting economic opportunities for both.

- Initiatives to protect and enhance the livelihoods of refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) should be informed by comprehensive socio-economic assessments of the displaced and host populations, and of the host area.
- Effective livelihood interventions cut across multiple sectors and require multi-year strategic plans. Interventions should be carefully targeted and sequenced and flexible enough to respond to changing attitudes, knowledge and skills. They should also be able to adapt to changes in local policies and the employment market. An area-based approach, in partnership with development actors, is essential for an effective livelihood response.

UNHCR's livelihoods interventions aim to protect the skills and productive assets that displaced people carry with them, to build the capacities they might need in a new environment, and to broaden opportunities for self-reliance

In 2011, UNHCR focused on the following areas to improve the social and economic ability of refugee individuals, households or communities to meet basic needs in a sustainable manner and with dignity.

QUALITY PROGRAMMES

AN ANALYSIS OF UNHCR'S GLOBAL livelihoods budget was conducted in 2011 in order to better understand livelihood priorities in different field operations and inform planning for the 2012 programme. Twelve operations in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe

UNHCR'S LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS AIM TO PROTECT THE SKILLS AND PRODUCTIVE ASSETS THAT DISPLACED PEOPLE CARRY WITH THEM, TO BUILD THE CAPACITIES THEY MIGHT NEED IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT, AND TO BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-RELIANCE

- Livelihoods support is a complex combination of economic and social interventions that requires dedicated expertise and the right choice of partners, including private- and public-sector institutions, to ensure quality and sustainability.

and the Middle East and North Africa region were given guidance or assistance through strategic planning missions to design comprehensive livelihood programmes during the year.

A number of countries developed multi-year livelihood strategies

based on recommendations following assessments. The process continues in Ecuador, Egypt, Kenya, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mexico, Senegal and Yemen, with support from Headquarters and regional hubs. Several countries in West Africa have also used the upcoming application of the cessation clause for Liberian refugees as an opportunity to refine strategies for those living in urban areas.

UNHCR assisted the Women's Refugee Commission to conduct an assessment of urban livelihood opportunities in India, South Africa and Uganda. The evaluation in India was followed by a support mission to improve livelihood programmes. Country support was also provided by the Headquarters team and regional livelihoods officers.

In Chad, the livelihoods team conducted a planning mission to follow up on a socio-economic study in the south of the country. A comprehensive, targeted livelihood strategy developed for this region will be implemented locally following the creation of a new livelihoods post.

In Tunisia, under the purview of the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNHCR engaged various partners, including the ILO, national microfinance institutions and banks, economic development actors and business skills providers, in an innovative programme to boost small and medium-sized enterprises in the refugee-hosting areas bordering Libya. The objective of the programme was to expand economic activities, mainly in agriculture, crafts and other

services. It incorporates business skills development, institutional capacity building and the creation of a network among collaborating partners. It also endeavours to deliver benefits to host communities, in recognition of their efforts to accommodate the refugees and migrants who fled from Libya.

In Eastern Sudan, initiatives to improve and diversify livelihood opportunities for long-staying refugees were enhanced by the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI), a collective effort of UNHCR, UNDP, the World Bank and national partners. The initiative includes a joint UNDP/UNHCR programme targeting three camps and host communities; a UNHCR/World Bank project targeting one refugee camp and one IDP camp, along with host communities; and the UNHCR multi-year self-reliance project. The joint UNHCR/UNDP and UNHCR/World Bank projects will commence in 2012 and use an area-based and phased approach in interventions. Activities implemented in 2011 fell under the UNHCR multi-year self-reliance project.

In Eastern Sudan, TSI provides a framework for transitioning displacement situations to durable solutions, through partnership between humanitarian and development actors to increase self-reliance. Projects are designed to benefit the host populations as well as the displaced, and have a strong component of national ownership and capacity development of local government, without which sustainable solutions would be challenging.

In Guinea, UNHCR's self-reliance activities have been at the core of local integration efforts. These aim to ensure that refugee families are assisted to become economically independent and able to integrate socially and culturally into the Guinean community. The approach is highly participatory and community-based, and has involved the Government and NGOs. A referral system helped each family that decided to integrate locally to be assisted to find solutions, with emphasis placed on socio-economic advancement, legal aid and housing and educational support.

In Niger, livelihood activities with urban-based refugees are challenging owing to the poverty of the population and the difficulties refugees face in making a living without the assistance of UNHCR and its partners. UNHCR therefore supports refugees with entrepreneurial skills so they can develop a stronger sense of economic independence. A new system of access to microloans was put in place to ensure that refugees who already have viable businesses can gain access to credit facilities.

UNHCR conducted a livelihoods assessment and deployed a technical support mission on microfinance to Mexico. A new microfinance scheme was also designed in the Dominican Republic. It is anticipated that these schemes will help more people of concern in 2012. The updated UNHCR microfinance guidelines were used in the design of these new schemes.

CAPACITY BUILDING

A NEW SET OF LIVELIHOOD TRAINING materials, including a trainer's guide, participant handbook and key reference documentation, was developed and updated based on lessons learned during the pilot livelihoods training workshop conducted in Uganda in

2011. The new training programme prepares for a series of regional operations-based workshops, as well as an e-learning component. It leads the participants from livelihoods assessment and strategic planning processes to partnership building and project design, including instruction in microfinance, employment promotion, enterprise development and use of productive assets. The programme also features presentations by guest partners. Furthermore, it introduces the best practices featured in the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards developed by the Small Enterprise Education and Promotion Network (a non-profit network of more than 120 international organizations).

Two sets of guidelines were produced and disseminated in 2011, one on microfinance, *Investing in Solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Microfinance in UNHCR Operations*, and another on urban livelihoods, *Promoting Self-Reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*. A brief guide on the links between livelihood issues and sexual and gender-based violence was also drafted.

In addition, a guide on advocacy for the right to work will be disseminated in 2012. A new comprehensive operational guide on livelihoods programming produced in 2011/2012 will replace the 2005 *Manual for Self-Reliance*. This set of new guidelines firmly establishes UNHCR's approach to livelihood programming.

With the creation of new livelihoods posts in Chad and Kenya in 2011, plus existing posts in Egypt, Yemen and Eastern Sudan, UNHCR now has five local, two regional and two headquarters posts providing livelihood expertise. These are supported by two secondments from ILO.

PARTNERSHIPS

THERE IS A CONTINUING NEED FOR UNHCR's protection, community services and field staff to gain greater knowledge of livelihood concepts and tools so that they can work effectively with expert partners. The latter include microfinance institutions, development agencies and government technical departments. This issue was addressed in 2011 by introducing a training programme that will continue in the coming years.

UNHCR worked to mobilize funding for the expansion of educational and livelihood opportunities for people of concern through access to technology.

A systematic review of strategies to combat sexual and gender-based violence was conducted at the global level in order to ensure that strengthening livelihoods could serve in the protection of refugees affected by SGBV. An additional tool, *Essential Guidance for Working with Persons with Disabilities in Displacement*, provides practical information on how to best protect and support persons with disabilities.

Livelihood interventions for refugee populations are complex and therefore require cooperation with specifically selected partners. UNHCR continues to build joint initiatives with development actors such as the World Bank's Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP). For instance, UNHCR has initiated discussions on two pilot projects in refugee settings in Yemen and East Sudan to implement CGAP's Graduation Model. The model, which has been implemented in a dozen countries worldwide, aims to "graduate" people in rural or urban areas out of poverty through a sequence of interventions that include grants, capacity-building and microfinance.

UNHCR worked closely with global partners such as the Women's Refugee Commission and development actors,

among them the ILO's Social Finance and Crisis section, to develop training methods and related products such as guidelines and tools.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

THE COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY ACCESS (CTA) project is a flagship initiative which aims at enhancing access to livelihood, vocational training and educational opportunities via new technologies for school children, youth out of school and adults from refugee, IDP and host communities. Facilities provided under the project can be used in urban and camp settings for educational, employment, business and personal purposes.

An estimated 20,000 people are benefitting from the project each year. They attend classes in computer technology, languages and life skills, with the latter covering health- and gender-related education, human rights and social issues, violence prevention, peace building and environmental sensitization. Beneficiaries of the programme can also undertake training in entrepreneurial/business skills and accountancy, as well as on practical subjects such as the preparation of CVs.

Some former students have become trainers for their communities. Others have found jobs which had been previously been inaccessible to them due to their lack of computer skills. The CTA also addresses gender issues by ensuring and promoting a safe-learning environment.

By the end of 2011, the CTA project was being implemented in 22 countries and 42 centres in the following operations: Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, Tajikistan, the Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen. ■