



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges 2018: “Protection and solutions in urban settings: engaging with cities”

18 & 19 December 2018

Roundtable on Africa

Summary

This roundtable provided an opportunity to showcase some of the good practices in enhancing self-reliance and economic inclusion of refugees in urban settings across Africa. In addition, it examined the role of municipalities in strengthening refugee protection and self-reliance.

The following issues in particular were highlighted:

1. Urban refugees contribute to the local economy despite legal restrictions and discrimination

While restrictive laws often prioritize encampment policies due to national security concerns, governments are increasingly developing progressive policies to grant more rights to refugees residing outside camps. Although a camp policy remains in place in Zambia, the Government is increasingly issuing residence cards to refugees living in urban areas, which allows them to access healthcare and financial services. Mozambique has also adopted measures to foster livelihoods and business opportunities for refugees residing in urban areas, including the issuance of identity cards, which allow access to the labour market and increased freedom of movement.

Participants underscored that where refugees are able to actively engage in economic activities, it often benefits both host communities and refugees. For example, refugee-led businesses offer employment opportunities to host community members. Despite not being allowed to work, refugees living in Addis Ababa have used their entrepreneurial skills to also benefit the local community. The Ethiopian Government, in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, is seeking to develop policies that offer greater socioeconomic opportunities to refugees.

2. Municipal governments are at the forefront in assisting refugees settling in cities

Many municipalities are developing progressive policies and have expressed their support for the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Greater investment and capacity-building at the local level is required to enable local leaders to implement the GCR and strengthen refugee protection and self-reliance in cities. Participants also highlighted the need for enhanced dialogue between local governments and the international community, including the private sector, on improving refugee protection and assistance in urban settings.

3. Multi-sectoral partnerships are essential for durable solutions in relation to forced displacement

Participants highlighted the important role that refugees play in creating jobs and stressed the need for greater private sector expertise to help establish new markets in protracted refugee situations. For example, the Kakuma camp in Turkana County, Kenya, which is one of the largest and longest-standing refugee camps in the world, has become a city that is recognized as a dynamic marketplace, offering opportunities for increased private sector engagement. UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations were also encouraged to establish stronger links and synergies with development actors in order to achieve durable solutions to forced displacement in urban areas, particularly in protracted situations.