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LOCAL ACTION ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT:

LESSONS AND STORIES FROM SUBNATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIPS

A UNDP/UNHCR joint document

FOREWORD

In a world increasingly defined by complex challenges, forced displacement stands out as one of the most pressing and polarizing global issues of our time. With over 120 million people uprooted by war, violence and persecution, we face a crisis that tests not only our compassion but also our ability to find sustainable, effective solutions. Yet, in many places, the narrative has shifted to one of impossibility — where walls, deterrence and exclusionary policies dominate the discourse. These approaches not only fail to address the root causes of displacement but often exacerbate suffering and instability.

Forced displacement is not a distant phenomenon: it is as critical to our collective future as climate change, pandemics and global security. It requires not only our attention but our action. Humanitarian aid alone is insufficient to tackle its root causes and long-term impacts. For both forcibly displaced and host communities alike, humanitarian programmes must be harmonized with cohesive development strategies and advancements in peacebuilding.

Recognizing this, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are strengthening integrated responses in over 40 countries. Through the UNDP-UNHCR Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions (2023–2025), we are leveraging our respective strengths to respond more effectively to current and future crises.

This report, *Local Action on Forced Displacement*, explores the tangible ways in which such integrated strategies can deliver meaningful change. By examining three distinct contexts — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras and Ukraine — it highlights how collaboration between UNDP and UNHCR is fostering innovative, locally grounded solutions to support displaced populations and host communities.

Each case study demonstrates the potential for solutions when the right ingredients — visionary policies, engaged leadership and strategic international support — come together.

In Ukraine, an impactful project in Mukachevo showcases the power of local governance in fostering social and economic integration between internally displaced people from frontline areas and host communities. The project's success underscores the importance of agile collaboration, even in the absence of formal agreements, and the critical role of municipal governments in sustaining medium-term impacts.

In Honduras, our partnership in the Municipality of Choloma reveals how complementary interventions can address both protection and livelihood needs. Despite the challenges posed by gang violence and limited resources, the initiative demonstrates the transformative potential of collaboration involving local authorities, national governments, the private sector, NGOs and communities.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the case study focuses on Haut-Uélé, a remote province where logistical and security challenges significantly complicate efforts to assist refugees and returnees. Refugees are welcomed with warmth and solidarity, however local leaders stress the urgent need for more sustained development support. Here, the adaptability and persistence of UNDP and UNHCR, in coordination with local authorities, underscore the importance of flexibility in reaching underserved populations.

These stories are not just about challenges: they are about opportunities — for stability, inclusion and dignity. They illustrate that solutions do exist, and they do not only benefit displaced populations but also the communities that host them. Whether through building community centers, enhancing local governance, or fostering social cohesion in urban areas, these initiatives show what is possible when we work together across sectors and levels of governance.

This report also draws key lessons for future action. Success requires tailoring approaches to local contexts, fostering engagement, and prioritizing inclusive decision-making with communities and NGOs. The importance of flexibility in partnerships and sustained collaboration with local authorities cannot be overstated.

Ultimately, this report is a call to action. It challenges us to move beyond tired rhetoric and towards meaningful, evidence-based solutions that reflect the local realities on the ground. By learning from the experiences of Mukachevo, Choloma, and Haut-Uélé, we can build a more compassionate and effective response to forced displacement — one that prioritizes human dignity and shared progress.

As you read these case studies and recommendations, we invite you to reflect not only on the challenges but on the possibilities they represent. Together, we can transform the narrative of impossibility into one of hope and action.
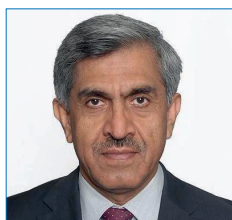
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Contents

Summary of Country Studies

Country: Democratic Republic of the Congo

Cities: Haut-Uélé Province, Faradje Territory, Chiefdoms of Kakwa Ima and Logo Lolia

Type of Displacement: Refugees, returnees

Project Name: 'Joint project to support local governance and development in areas hosting refugees and internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo'

Amount in US$: 364,000 for 2019, 200,000 for 2020, 270,000 for 2021

Consultation Participants: UNDP and UNHCR staff and consultants, National Commission for Refugees (CNR), local governments, civil society and NGOs, host community and beneficiaries

Country: Ukraine

Cities: Mukachevo, Zakarpattia Department

Type of Displacement: Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Project Name: 'Integration Hub – Platform for Joint Action', 'Creating space and conditions for social cohesion of civil society from the affected and host communities'

Amount in US$: 150,350

Consultation Participants: UNDP and UNHCR staff and consultants, national and local governments, civil society and NGOs, host community and beneficiaries

Country: Honduras

Cities: Choloma, Cortés Department

Type of Displacement: IDPs and returnees

Project Name: Local initiative part of the project 'Trinational Response for Dignified, Peaceful and Inclusive Human Mobility in North of Central America'

Amount in US$: 935,000

Consultation Participants: UNDP and UNHCR staff and consultants, national and local governments, civil society and NGOs, host community and beneficiaries

Acronyms

GENERAL SECTION

CSO	Civil Society Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual, and many other terms (such as non-binary and pansexual)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, DRC

ADSSE	Association for Social Development and Environmental Protection
AIDES	Actions and Interventions for Development and Social Management
AIRD	African Initiative for Relief and Development
CLDP	Local Committee for Peace and Development
CNR	National Commission for Refugees
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
INTERSOS	Italian humanitarian organization that brings immediate assistance and aid to victims of war, violence, natural disasters, and extreme exclusion
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
PLD	Local Development Plan
PNC	DRC National Police Force

HONDURAS

CAMRs	Centres for Assistance to Returned Honduran Migrants
CCICH	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Choloma
CIPPDEF	Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons
MOMUCLAA	Women's Movement of Colonia López Arellano and Surrounding Areas
SEDH	Ministry for Human Rights
SINARDEFI	National System for Response to Internally Forced Displacement
UMAM-RD	Municipal Unit for Assistance to Returned Migrants and Displaced Persons
UMAPPDEF	Municipal Units for the Attention and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons

Young musicians of the Integration Hub Music Group, Mukachevo, Ukraine. © UNHCR/UNDP

Introduction

In order to address the complex challenges faced by vulnerable populations, particularly those affected by displacement and crisis, the United Nations recognizes the importance of multifaceted strategies and of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches. Humanitarian aid alone cannot address the root causes and long-term impacts of displacement crises and human suffering. This understanding aligns with global commitments articulated in pivotal documents such as the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Chair's Summary of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, which acknowledge the necessity of concurrently advancing development, peace, and humanitarian efforts.

The UN recognizes that, for both displaced persons and host communities, a cohesive development strategy must be harmonized with humanitarian programmes and advancements in peacebuilding. The 2019 OECD's Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus[1] underscores the inter-connectedness of these elements, emphasizing their collective role in providing effective and enduring protection and solutions. Highlighting the importance of understanding the needs and potential of forcibly displaced people, the UN advocates for regular assessments that triangulate information gathered from UN staff with perspectives from affected populations, national government representatives, local civil society, and the broader international community.[2]

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[1] OECD DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, 2019
[2] UNHABITAT (2020): Internal Displacement in an Increasingly Urbanized World, New York: Submission to the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/synthesis_report_urbaninternaldisplacement.pdf, UNHABITAT

UNDP and UNHCR are working side by side in forced displacement settings in over 40 countries through a combination of national strategies and regional platforms. The UNDP and UNHCR Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions (2023-2025) provides a framework for both agencies to bring their comparative advantages to areas in which working together can deliver better results in responding to current and future crises and challenges.[3]

A notable example of growing programmatic cooperation at local level lies in areas such as local governance and the rule of law. This localized collaboration is exemplified in programmes where UNDP and UNHCR pool resources to establish community centres and to foster projects for durable solutions and community development providing a comprehensive support network for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities.

Local and regional governments are at the heart of forced displacement governance. It is at the local level that we see principled yet pragmatic and people-centred approaches that spearhead and exceed the commitments of global frameworks such as the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.[4]

In crisis situations, local actors emerge as crucial first responders, playing central roles in service delivery, protection, and integration of needs into local planning. From grassroots organizations to faith-based entities, non-state actors actively participate in community life, offering immediate support where it is most needed. Their responsiveness becomes vital where there is an absence of efficient governance structures. Simultaneously, local-level push factors can contribute to driving displacement, as communities grapple with inadequate services and weak governance. The lack of essential services and governance shortcomings exacerbate vulnerabilities, compelling populations to seek refuge elsewhere and move onward, emphasizing the urgent need for strengthened local capacities and governance frameworks.

Faced with forced displacement, municipalities and other local authorities are at the forefront of responding to current and future crises and challenges. Playing a key role as first responders in providing immediate assistance and support to those affected, local authorities and other local actors are often tasked both with helping displaced persons to navigate the new reality in their host communities and with fostering their inclusion in local society and economy when their presence becomes more protracted. The commitment to this role is reflected in global commitments by local authorities, such as the 2018 Marrakech Mayors Declaration, to realize the Global Compact on Refugees at the subnational level.[5]

Mayors and leaders from across the globe convened in Geneva, Switzerland, for the United Nations Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2023. Five years after the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States, met at the GRF to assess the progress made and to advance joint action towards refugee protection and inclusion. Cities had a key opportunity to showcase their leadership in welcoming and including refugees and displaced populations, provide recommendations for more efficient solutions, and gain visibility by meeting with high-level UN, government, and donor representatives. The Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and partners mobilized a delegation of local government leaders to participate in GRF activities and elevated city pledges through the

3   UNDP-UNHCR (2022): Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions 2023-2025, New York: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-11/UNDP-UNHCR-Global-Collaboration-Framework-for-Inclusion-and-Solutions-2023-2025.pdf, United Nations Development Programme-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
4   The Mayors Mechanism, Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees, see: https://localaction.mayorsmechanism.org/ (accessed 10 December 2023)
5   Local Authorities and Protracted Refugee Crises: Sharing Key Lessons Learnt and Recommendations, see: https://phap.org/PHAP/Events/OEV2022/OEV221212.aspx (accessed 11 November 2023)

Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees. According to estimates, globally about 60 percent of IDPs[6] and more than 60 percent of refugees[7] are living in urban areas. Worldwide, cities and towns continue to demonstrate solidarity towards refugees, IDPs, and stateless residents. They promote progressive policies around housing and employment and work to strengthen social cohesion so that all residents feel that they belong in their local communities and have access to shared services. No urban setting is the same, and the way in which services are delivered differs across cities and depends on a range of factors such as decentralization, capacity, and local socio-economic contexts.[8]

Initiatives aimed at supporting IDPs and refugees in cities should extend beyond meeting immediate needs and basic services to encompass the full spectrum of political, social, economic, and cultural rights that contribute to a dignified urban life. The complexity of these challenges necessitates a collective response, acknowledging that no single actor or agency can singularly provide comprehensive solutions to support meaningful urban lives for forcibly displaced people.

To improve targeted technical support to local stakeholders in addressing displacement, there is a need to i) gain detailed understanding of successful (or failed) locally led approaches to forced displacement; ii) provide space for local actors to share lessons and inform UN programmatic support; and iii) identify areas of expanded support to local actors in emerging and protracted situations of forced displacement.

This joint initiative 'Local Action on Forced Displacement' collects stories and analyses lessons on local action to address forced displacement, with a focus on case studies in which UNHCR and UNDP (together or separately) provided assistance. This will help inform global-level humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding dialogues, as well as key local governance forums, with key messages and advocacy on how to support local actors and further localize interventions

Methodology

In accordance with the UNDP-UNHCR Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions, UNDP and UNHCR initiated this collaborative effort by selecting three country case studies to explore specific local experiences and lessons. The countries were selected to reflect a diverse range of settings that would effectively illustrate local approaches in different operational and displacement contexts, with varying levels of coordination, collaboration, and complementarity between UNDP and UNHCR. For each country, a thorough document review was conducted to identify a specific project or initiative that could demonstrate these aspects. This selection process was conducted in consultation with national and local staff from both agencies.

With the valuable assistance of UNDP and UNHCR focal points, principal stakeholders involved in the project were then identified for interviews. These key actors included representatives from national and local government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, community leaders, as well as representatives from both the host community and beneficiary groups.

Next, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted, each lasting between 45 minutes to one hour. These interviews aimed to examine the engagement and participation of stakeholders in

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[6]   UNHCR (2023): Global Trends Report 2022, Geneva: https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

[7]   City residents and urban refugees: from shared living to shared futures, see: https://globalcompactrefugees.org/news-stories/city-residents-and-urban-refugees-shared-living-shared-futures (accessed 8 December 2023)

[8]   Cities and Municipalities as first responders to refugee situations, see: https://globalcompactrefugees.org/compact-action/cities-and-municipalities (accessed 5 November 2023)

the project and identify specific local experiences, programming lessons, and overall impact. Based on these interviews, two stakeholders with compelling narratives were identified from which to extract detailed insights that constitute the central element of this document.

Overview of Country Contexts

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our analysis focused on an initiative directly implemented by both agencies in the Haut-Uélé province, a remote area of the country. There, UNHCR maintains a local presence to support refugees and returnees, whereas UNDP, lacking local staff, engaged consultants exclusively for activity implementation. To ensure adaptability to the evolving context and responsiveness to emerging population needs, the two agencies signed three annual MOUs. The scope of activities considered in this study represents only a segment of the project's overall vision and is confined to a specific geographical area.

Significant collaboration with local authorities was established, while the national government was primarily involved in the project's design phase, with limited engagement in the specific local activities. This nuanced approach underscores the dynamic interplay between the agencies and the contextual intricacies influencing their operations in Haut-Uélé.

Persistent security challenges in the region occasionally impeded the study, making it difficult to safely access implementation locations for interviews. Virtual meetings faced hurdles due to precarious internet connectivity and participants' challenges in reaching predetermined meeting points for interviews.

In Ukraine, the study focused on a small project situated in the town of Mukachevo in the western part of the country. Due to its location far from the Russian border and the conflict zone, Mukachevo enjoys relative tranquility and has emerged as a significant hub for the internally displaced population. Both UNDP and UNHCR maintain a local presence through field offices, which has allowed for more agile collaboration during the project implementation phase.

Remarkably, this initiative, despite lacking a specific MOU, has evolved into an exemplary model with the potential for replication in other regions across the country. The success of this undertaking underscores the efficacy of collaboration in addressing the complex dynamics associated with internally displaced populations.

Despite the persisting conflict, the involvement of the national government is notable, with active engagement throughout the project. The Mukachevo Municipality assumed a pivotal role throughout the implementation phase, engaging in the project's earliest meetings and demonstrating its commitment to ensuring the sustained impact of the initiative for years to come.

The project was executed through the collaborative efforts of NGOs in partnership with UNHCR and UNDP, establishing sustained cooperation across various project phases. IDPs and members of the local community actively participated in project activities, emerging as valuable allies whose proactive involvement significantly contributed to the success of the initiative.

In Honduras, our analysis delved into a local initiative as part of a trinational project spanning Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. The focus area was the Municipality of Choloma, situated along a pivotal transit corridor for goods and population. In recent years, this region has experienced a surge in incidents of violence perpetrated by local gangs seeking control of the territory.

Despite the lack of a specific MOU for activity implementation, UNDP and UNHCR collaborated within the overarching framework of the main project, which also includes the International

Organization for Migration (IOM) as a third participating UN agency. UNHCR, leveraging local offices for migrant assistance, operated in tandem with UNDP, which coordinated activities from the country office without local staff. The activities undertaken exemplify the complementarity in the interventions of the two agencies, strategically addressing diverse needs on the ground for IDPs and returnees.

The engagement of the national government in the initiative was comprehensive, from the design phase to active involvement in the implementation of select local activities. Simultaneously, the Municipality of Choloma assumed a dual role, serving as both beneficiary and implementer of activities. Collaboration with local NGOs and civil society further enriched the implementation process. This multi-layered participation, involving governmental and municipal entities alongside local partners, illustrates a holistic approach that fosters synergies and ensures a more comprehensive impact on the ground.

Outline

This report offers an analysis of three contexts where UNDP and UNHCR have collaborated in different modalities to support refugees, IDPs, and host communities. Each case study will present the purpose and implementation of the projects analysed, highlighting two stories that shed light on the community impact of the activities implemented. In each case study, 'testimonials' or detailed accounts of the experiences of two project stakeholders are provided to show the direct involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

A brief comparative analysis of the cases will be provided at the end of the paper, which aimed at understanding the impact of different ways of collaboration between UNDP and UNHCR in different contexts. The collected material will serve as a basis for providing recommendations for the development of future collaborations at the local level between the two agencies, following the global-level directions mentioned in the introduction.

Office of the Municipal Unit for the Assistance of Returnees and Displaced Persons, Municiaplity of Choloma, Honduras. © UNHCR/UNDP

The DRC faces one of the world's most complex forced displacement crises, including hosting refugees and asylum seekers from South Sudan. © UNHCR/UNDP

Case study 1: Democratic Republic of the Congo - DRC

Introduction

For over two decades, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has grappled with one of the world's most complicated humanitarian and displacement crises. Persistent deficiencies in local governance and state institutions have contributed to an alarming humanitarian situation marked by recurring cycles of violence. Weak coordination among humanitarian, development, and peace operations is thought to have hindered the adoption of a holistic and sustainable approach, exacerbating the challenges faced by communities. Despite the formal end of the civil war in 2003, armed and intercommunity conflicts have persisted, resulting in substantial population displacement.

The DRC is currently home to 6.38 million IDPs and hosts over 523,528 refugees and asylum-seekers who have fled violence in neighbouring countries, primarily Burundi, Central African Republic, Rwanda, and South Sudan. The majority of refugees (75 percent) reside in rural areas, 24 percent in camps or designated sites, and only 2 percent in urban areas. The refugee population in the DRC is young, with 60 percent children, 39 percent aged between 18 and 59, and a mere 1 percent aged 60 and over. As of 2022, women and children comprised 81 percent of the refugee population. Of particular concern is the Faradje area, where two sites have been established to accommodate 31,137 refugees and asylum-seekers from South Sudan. It is crucial to note that these statistics do not encompass those living off-site.
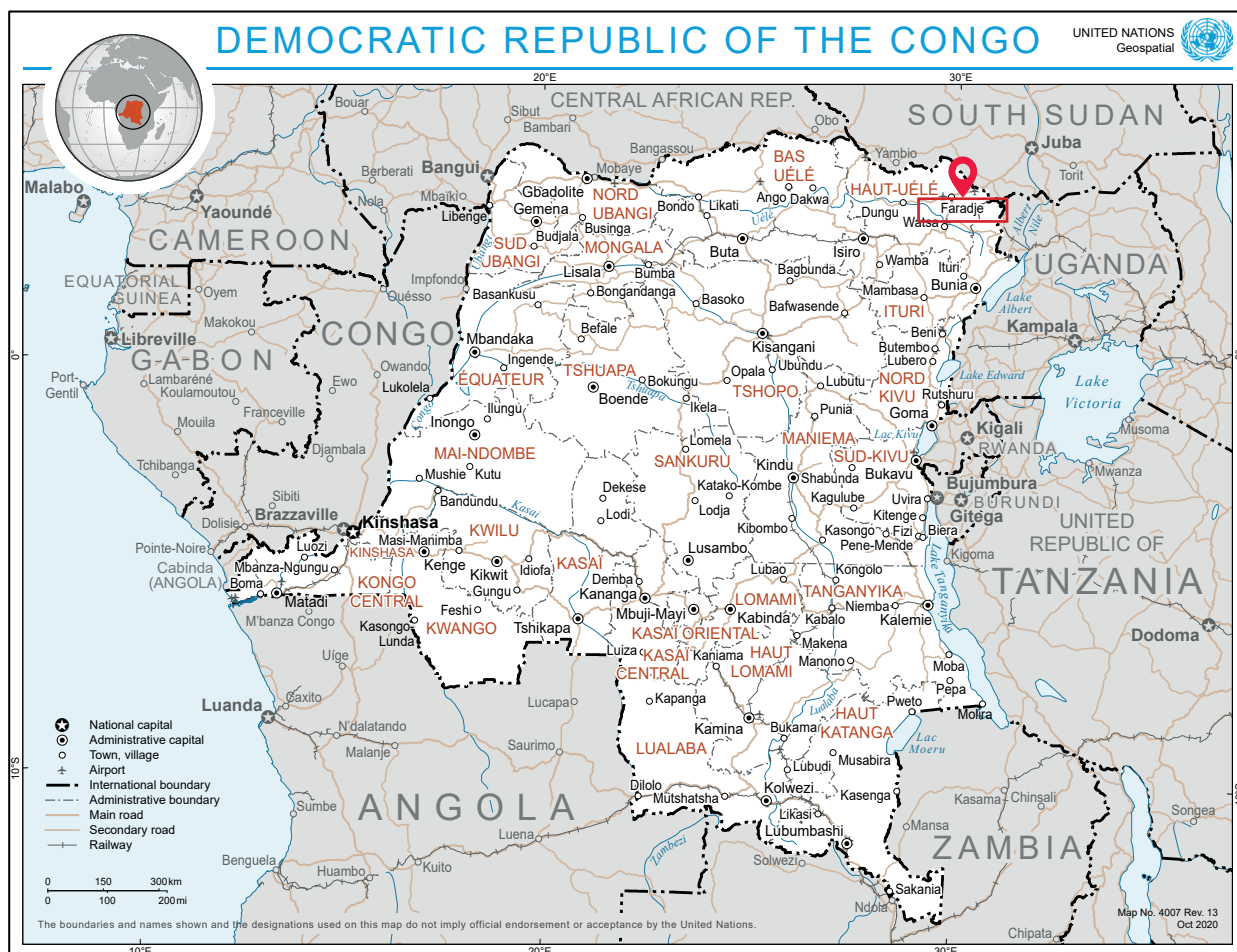
Figure 1: Territory of Faradje

Project Context

The province of Haut-Uélé faces a multitude of challenges, characterized by the multidimensional vulnerability of its population and a fragile security situation marked by the presence of active armed groups and community transhumance. The root causes of poverty extend beyond a scarcity of resources to encompass the illegal and unequal distribution of natural resources, coupled with deficient local governance at the grassroots level. The region experiences a governance deficit, the breakdown of the decentralization and planning process by local authorities, and a weakened state authority, creating a governance void that exacerbates the proliferation of criminal activities. While Haut-Uélé currently experiences relatively stable security, the weakness of security forces along the borders is a notable concern. The presence of FARDC soldiers is limited, and the PNC (DRC National Police) staff lacks proper equipment and training. Agriculture and cattle farming serve as the primary sources of income for most residents. Movement within the territory is hindered by poor road and bridge conditions and a lack of transportation infrastructure.

Communication issues further compound the region's challenges, particularly in connection with refugees from South Sudan as they predominantly speak English and little French; communication is conducted in the local language (Lingala). Additionally, there is a subset that communicates solely in Arabic, highlighting the diversity and linguistic complexities in engaging with the refugee population.

The province serves as a reception area for a considerable number of refugees and returnees and boasts an active civil society. The influx of South Sudanese refugees is primarily concentrated in the Logo Lolia and Kakwa Ima Chiefdoms. While there are also returnees present, the province does not host IDPs within the areas covered by the project. The situation is characterized by the coexistence of the host community and the refugee population, as they share the same villages and live alongside one another. Although minor conflicts arise, predominantly related to the distribution of and access to land, there is an overall sense of harmony. The demographic composition of the geographical area considered consists of approximately 70 percent refugees and 30 percent Congolese nationals.

The Bélé reception site at Logo Lolia, operational since 4 September 2019, distinguishes itself from a traditional camp as it resembles a village where approximately 3,087 South Sudanese refugees and 2,600 members of the host communities coexist; there are no restrictions on movement. Similarly, the Meri reception site in Kakwa Ima, located 18 km from the South Sudanese border, accommodates 24,815 individuals, including members of the host communities and refugees.[9] This site, organized into 19 blocks, each with a designated manager, mirrors the village setting. Both sites are overseen by the National Refugee Commission (CNR), which chairs the Management Committee and has four staff members assigned to each site.

The primary objective of the 'Joint project to support local governance and development in areas hosting refugees and IDPs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo'[10] (2019/2021) was to enhance local governance by building the capacity of local institutions and administrations to deliver essential services to the entire population. This involved fostering inclusive and participatory planning processes. Additionally, the Joint Project sought to strengthen the protection of populations, especially the most vulnerable, by improving relations between security forces and communities, developing inclusive local security governance, and strengthening the penal chain. At its core, the Joint Project aimed to contribute to social cohesion and peacebuilding in targeted areas, facilitating coordination and complementarity of humanitarian, peace, and development interventions.

Since 2019, the Joint Project has been accepted and approved by delegates of Faradje[11] territory; Logo Lolia and Kakwa Ima Chiefdoms, and civil society have supported the project implementation, taking advantage of the tailored approach for refugees, returnees, and host communities. Interviews conducted indicate that the implementation of project activities has played a pivotal role in transforming negative attitudes of the local population towards refugees and of refugees toward local administrations.

Project Actors

At the national level, the **CNR** was involved throughout the project. Although the CNR took part in the field identification mission at the national level, its involvement was limited to providing opinions and approval as the manager of host sites. In the drafting of the project itself, the CNR played a consultative role. At the local level, the CNR did not directly participate in project activities

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9   UNHCR Operational Data Portal, see: https://data.unhcr.org/ar/country/cod (accessed 7 December 2023)

10   Global Compact on Refugees: Forced displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/forced-displacement-democratic-republic-congo (accessed 15 June 2023)

11   In the DRC, a chiefdom is a decentralized territorial entity with legal personality, endowed with the freedom to administer and autonomously manage its human, economic, financial, and technical resources. Typically, it consists of a homogeneous collection of traditional communities organized according to custom and led by a Chief designated by custom, duly recognized, and invested by public authorities. Separately, a Territory is a deconcentrated entity lacking legal personality that operates under the coordination and supervision of the Governor of the Province. Its functions encompass providing impetus, coordination, support, advice, and inspection of the actions of both the central State and the Province. The Administrator of the Territory, under delegation from the Governor of the Province, may exercise supervision over the acts of the decentralized territorial entities within its jurisdiction. This distinction clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Chiefdoms and the Territories within the broader administrative structure.

but had indirect involvement, as its work closely intersected with the community, including with regard to the resolution of small conflicts related to land, advocacy with customary authorities (Chief of Chiefdom, group, locality), declaration of the civil status of children, legal protection, issuance of biometric cards to refugees, documentation of family composition, authorization for movement in commercial activities, monitoring of partners' activities in the site, sensitization of refugees on their rights, administrative protection, and distribution of birth certificates. The scope of the CNR's work at the local level reflects its multifaceted involvement in addressing diverse aspects crucial for the well-being and rights of refugees.

At the local level, the project was executed in the **Chiefdoms of Kakwa Ima and Logo Lolia**, both of which are governed by chiefs.[12]

The primary entity fostering cohesion between the two communities is the **CLPD, the Local Committee for Peace and Development**. Interviews were conducted with representatives from both the Kakwa Ima and Logo Lolia Committees, yielding similar results. Comprising 15 individuals, including two refugees, these committees operate on a voluntary basis to contribute to community development. Due to transportation constraints and considerable distance between the two chiefdoms, the committees meet only occasionally. However, the committees collaborate with chiefdom leaders and actively participated in all project activities. Their involvement extends across various sectors of community life, encompassing education, infrastructure, health, agriculture, social aspects, and logistics. The committees played a pivotal role in needs assessments at the village level, leading to the formulation of Local Development Plans (PDL) that were a primary activity of the Joint Project. While engaged in implementing the PDL, committees encounter challenges related to technical support and financial resources. In

interviews, CLPD representatives noted a need for support to realize the project ideas outlined in the PDL, particularly for the establishment of income-generating activities. Despite these challenges, they remain dedicated to advancing the development goals of their communities.

Ten local residents serve as members of the **Site Management Committee** of the two reception sites: one Committee in Kakwa Ima and another in Bele. The Committee is further subdivided into subcommittees responsible for overseeing various components, such as gender-based violence (GBV) protection, children, and security, among others. Monthly meetings are convened, bringing together committee members, chiefdom leaders, and key stakeholders involved in site-related activities. This collaborative structure facilitates effective management and coordination across different aspects, ensuring a comprehensive approach to the well-being and safety of the community.

The returnees interviewed came back from South Sudan, where they sought refuge due to the violence perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Distinct from the returnees in Kakwa Ima, those in Logo Lolia are returning to a different area than their area of origin. They face challenges in returning to their original villages due to the lack of basic services available in these areas. Engaged in daily work within the agricultural sector, their employment is precarious, making it difficult to enhance their living conditions due to a lack of resources to sustain their families. The returnees do not have a dedicated committee but are integrated into the CLDP. Interviewees noted that the absence of a specific committee for returnees poses a challenge in effectively conveying their needs to provincial authorities. As citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they have access to state services and some have benefited from specific projects, allowing them to reclaim their properties. It is worth noting that, despite their participation in six workshops, interviews conducted with this spe-

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[12] It is essential to note that these chiefs are customary authorities, distinct from the provincial authorities of Haut-Uélé and the territorial authorities of Faradje.

cific group suggest they have retained minimal information, indicating potential gaps in knowledge retention or dissemination.

A **Mixed Committee** has been established in both refugee sites covered by this study. It aims to foster peaceful coexistence between the host and refugee communities by addressing conflicts. It comprises 10 members, including five members of the local community and five refugees. The committee convenes whenever there are issues to be addressed or as summoned by the CNR. Members of the committee strive to maintain neutrality and objectivity in their actions and have the responsibility of identifying potential sources of conflict, monitoring the situation, and implementing preventive measures. Additionally, the committee plays an active role in conducting awareness-raising activities on peace education. The inclusion of respected individuals within the community enhances the effectiveness of mediation, as these figures are highly regarded, often leading to positive engagement and resolution.

Additionally, a local structure known as **'Civil Society'** has been established, uniting representatives from various associations, including churches, moto taxis, schools, youth associations, women's groups, and more. This collective convenes on a monthly basis and actively engages in reporting and calling attention to human rights violations. Furthermore, they deliberate on matters of collective interest during their meetings. Members of the Civil Society actively participated in certain project activities, contributing to a collaborative and community-driven approaches to addressing shared challenges and promoting human rights.

Several NGOs are actively operating in the territory, including **ADSSE, AIRD, INTERSOS**, and **AIDES**. They were made aware of the project through a general meeting of stakeholders convened by project partners in the Faradje territory. The NGOs cover a spectrum of activities, ranging from infrastructure and health to water and sanitation, education, GBV, child and minor support, as well

as assistance to agriculture and trade. However, these NGOs have expressed concerns about the gradual reduction of funding, limiting their ability to effectively address the challenges posed by the situation. While the NGOs did not directly participate in the project activities, particularly the workshops organized by UNDP, the activities they implement are indirectly connected to the project. This connection arises from sharing the same beneficiary population and geographical area of intervention. As the primary donor for local interventions, UNHCR is perceived as the main partner in this joint initiative. While the NGOs acknowledge UNDP's involvement, none of the representatives interviewed had direct interactions with the consultants responsible for the workshops.

UNDP played a central role in project design and managing discussions with UNHCR to secure joint funding. This collaborative process led to the development of the project document. UNDP then crafted the work plan, developed terms of reference for hiring consultants, and oversaw the recruitment process. Consultants appointed by UNDP were tasked with conducting the workshops and resided in the intervention zone for specific periods to facilitate project implementation.

UNHCR, operating through its field offices, was in charge of informing and actively engaging the target population to participate in the project. Additionally, UNHCR provided logistical support for UNDP consultants and the organization of the workshops. Despite the absence of formal meetings at the management level, the collaboration between the two agencies was maintained at the technical level with the involvement of experts. There was no formal steering committee and the MOU served as the primary framework for collaboration between UNDP and UNHCR.

Project Description

The project was designed to enhance synergies and collaboration opportunities between the humanitarian and development interventions of UNHCR and UNDP and specifically sought to enhance coordination in areas accommodating refugees, IDPs, and returnees in the DRC, with a focus on the provinces of Haut-Uélé and Nord Kivu. Its primary objective was to provide an effective and sustainable response to the challenges of local governance, reinforcing the rule of law and security in regions grappling with persistent forced displacement. The project spanned a three-year period (2019-2021), and three separate MOUs were established between UNHCR and UNDP for the entire duration of the project.

The joint programme had two mutually reinforcing objectives:

1. **Strengthening Local Governance:** This involved enhancing the capacities of local governance structures, both deconcentrated and decentralized entities. The aim was to improve access to rights and basic services for all. The defined results include the development of inclusive PDLs, the implementation of participatory budgeting, efficient resource management aligned with roles and responsibilities, and the establishment of mechanisms for accountability and citizen control.

2. **Strengthening Security Governance:** This objective focused on fostering closer collaboration between the population and security forces to promote, respect, and protect human rights. The intended outcomes involve initiatives that enhance the relationship between communities and security forces, contributing to a more secure and rights-respecting environment.

Before the start of the project, a diagnostic assessment was conducted on decentralization, good governance, and local planning processes and capacities in the chiefdoms of Logo Lolia and Kakwa Ima. This preliminary step aimed to understand the existing conditions and challenges in these areas. As part of the initial local activities, two information

and training workshops were organized. These workshops focused on enlightening participants about the decentralization process, clarifying the responsibilities of each entity involved, and introducing the concepts of participatory and inclusive planning. While many participants lacked a comprehensive understanding of decentralization and planning processes, there was a genuine interest in these subjects and a recognition of related challenges. UNHCR and local chiefdoms played pivotal roles in ensuring the participation and inclusion of refugees in these activities.

A comprehensive needs assessment was conducted in nearly all the villages of the two chiefdoms, actively involving the two Local Development and Peace Committees of Kakwa Ima and Logo Lolia. This extensive process, facilitated by volunteer efforts over approximately six months, resulted in the creation of two LDPs. UNDP consultants provided crucial support in shaping these plans, which were subsequently approved by the provincial authority of Haut-Uélé. The LDPs outline a series of project ideas to be presented to the national government and the international community. These ideas cover various sectors of community life, encompassing initiatives related to infrastructure development (roads and schools), access to clean water, healthcare and sanitation, vocational training for youth (covering areas like masonry, carpentry, and agriculture), as well as support for agricultural and trade activities.

Following implementation of the project explored in this study, a joint workshop between UNDP and UNHCR took place on 11-12 April 2023, laying the foundation for an extended and more comprehensive partnership. During this session, a joint concept note for a three-year project was formulated, encompassing four main pillars to initiate activities in early 2024. These pillars include: 1) local governance, 2) access to justice and legal aid for people in forced displacement, 3) crisis management, including early warning mechanisms and support for communities, and 4) inclusion in the national system, reintegration support, and sustainable solutions.

Refugees and host communities in the DRC face poverty driven by resource scarcity, unequal distribution of natural wealth, and weak local governance. © UNHCR/UNDP

Stories

Chiefdom of Kakwa Ima

Chief Lokudu Nyelemabe Doudou Vincent has been leading Kakwa Ima Chiefdom for approximately two years, representing the seventh dynasty of the chiefdom. The Chiefdom, which has oversight of 28 villages, including the Meri site for refugees and the displaced camp for returnees, plays a crucial role in addressing the distinct needs of refugees and returnees.

For returnees, the actual protocol involves restoring their conditions, since they often find nothing of their property upon return. As Congolese citizens, returnees can benefit from state services and specific projects and some have managed to recover their properties. However, this process is still ongoing. The chiefdom's work with refugees involves welcoming them with pleasure as 'African brothers', but their sheer numbers have led to overcrowding, outnumbering the indigenous population. This delicate situation requires active support from the national government and international agencies to manage the influx.

Overcrowding has resulted in challenges such as deforestation due to the need for fuel, impacting the environment and land use. Solutions are sought through peaceful cohabitation and conflicts are referred to territorial and provincial authorities when necessary.

The most crucial aspect of the joint UNDP-UNHCR project or the Kakwa Ima Chiefdom is the LDP, which was viewed as a vital tool for enhancing cohabitation and addressing the impact of the refugee influx. While the community appreciates the effort, funding is urgently needed to implement the plan and finance the included project ideas.

The Local Security Committee has complied with planned activities, although the Chief prioritizes participation in activities related to the LDP over direct participation in activities related to

security. He said that, regarding local police training, officers who received it have left and new sessions are needed to train new officers. As a result, the positive effects of these trainings on crime and GBV prevention have been reduced and undermined. The Chief emphasized the need for continued support to search for sustainable solutions, focusing on income-generating activities and infrastructure rehabilitation and construction, including roads, schools, sanitation, and water supply interventions.

Madame Hélène from Kakwa Ima Local Committee of Peace and Development

Madame Hélène is a South Sudanese refugee, leader of her community, who participates in the Kakwa Ima Local Committee of Peace and Development. She is also the focal point for GBV in her refugee group.

"This marks my second displacement to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My initial encounter was in 1990 at the Rudu camp in the Logo Lolia chiefdom. Following repatriation to Southern Sudan in 2006, I found myself compelled to flee once again in 2016 due to the armed conflict between the government army and rebels. Since 13 October, 2016, my family and I have been residing in the chiefdom of Kakwa Ima. As the head of a family of 10, we endured two days of travel amid bombardments to reach the safety of the DRC.

"In 2016, my journey with UNHCR's partner NGOs in the realm of gender-based violence began. Over the past year, I've collaborated with INTERSOS as a community relay, focusing on raising awareness within the refugee community regarding GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and facilitating referrals to service providers.

"My role as a representative of the refugee community in this project began with the establishment of the Local Committee for Peace and Development (CLPD) following workshops on governance, security, and local public finance. Participation in the CLPD is pivotal for refugees as

it enables us to articulate our concerns and ensures their consideration. Our involvement is a catalyst for socio-economic change and reinforces peaceful cohabitation.

"GBV issues initially didn't directly concern me, but through training courses, I improved my skills, making the fight against GBV part of my daily work. However, challenges persist, including the absence of courts to try alleged perpetrators and the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated with impunity. Advocacy is essential to encourage the Congolese government and development agencies to establish courts in the Faradje territory.

"Development, in my view, is inseparable from the respect for human rights. Therefore, my responsibility includes raising awareness about sexual and gender-based violence and addressing related themes like positive masculinity.

"The public finance needs assessment activities were enlightening, providing insights into drawing up plans and managing income and expenditure for a decentralized entity. Looking ahead, I hope for financial and material support from organizations like UNDP, UNHCR, and FAO to translate our development plan into reality.

"While the Kakwa Ima Chiefdom has received some logistical support, additional assistance is needed for the plan's implementation to bring about tangible change in people's lives.

"As a female head of household responsible for minors, meeting their needs in terms of food, clothing, and education is challenging. Support in income-generating activities would significantly aid in fulfilling my responsibilities. Having spent seven years in the host country, I foresee no lasting alternative solution, and given the ongoing insecurity in my home country, returning is not a viable option at the moment."

Strengthening local governance for host communities and forcibly displaced people in the DRC can enhance access to basic services and improve economic recovery. © UNHCR/UNDP

Conclusions

The LDP encapsulates potential local projects identified by participants during workshops, with participation from chiefdom leaders and based on a comprehensive identification of needs. Thanks to the training provided, leaders now possess the skills to articulate projects effectively, resulting in tangible improvements to the quality of life for beneficiaries. Workshops, covering topics like decentralization, good governance, and participatory development methodologies for the LDP, have left the Chiefdoms of Logo Lolia and Kakwa Ima motivated and mobilized to support entity development. Participants gained a heightened awareness of the local situation, prompting citizens to willingly pay taxes, thereby contributing to increased revenues for their respective entities.

The beneficiaries, comprising both refugees and returnees, jointly participated in the activities. Despite their joint involvement, disparities in treatment from national and local governments were observed. Interviews were conducted with local leaders, primarily representing customary authorities, which hold significant influence in the targeted areas. In contrast, territorial authorities assume a supervisory role within the region. This distinction in roles further underscores the intricate dynamics at play in the studied context.

Overall, the participatory process has fostered a positive attitude among participants towards vulnerable people and minorities. South Sudanese refugees participated actively and with great motivation in the workshops. No conflicts between the local and displaced populations were reported during the project activities.

Local actors expressed the hope to receive support and monitoring for the implementation of the LDP and ongoing activities. They emphasized the importance of continuous skill improvement and advocated for a broader spectrum of workshops, including training on revenue-generating activities, especially for remote areas. Additionally, there is a call for the development of participatory budgets at the provincial level.

Nadiia Zamuraieva, Project Coordinator of NEEKA, UNHCR partner in Zakarpattia Oblast. © UNHCR/UNDP

Case study 2: Ukraine

Introduction

As a result of the full-scale military invasion by Russia on 24 February 2022, in addition to the already existing 1.4 million IDPs, several millions of Ukrainians resident in areas close to the frontline were forced to leave their communities both within and beyond regions of origin. As of October 2023, over 3 million people remain internally displaced, which constitutes a substantial challenge for local communities. Since February 2022, one of the highest rates of IDPs was registered in Zakarpattia Province, where the number of IDPs increased by 43 times.[13] While the social fabric of Ukraine's communities has shown a remarkable degree of resilience despite the hardship caused

by the military operations, anecdotal evidence suggests that cultural differences, the trauma of war, and the burden of population movements in host areas may result in a lack of trust and mutual support between resident and displaced individuals. This can, in turn, create social tension, which can hinder the integration of IDPs in their host communities and the sustainable development of those communities. The project 'Creating space and conditions for social cohesion of civil society from the affected and host communities' aims to bring together different target groups with common interests in one space to facilitate the transition from the humanitarian response phase to sustainable development (in line with the principles of the HDP Nexus). The main space provided by

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13   IOM (2023): Mapping the situation and needs of displaced people in Zakarpattia Oblast, Kiev: https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/UKR_ZAKARPATSKA_March_2023_Report_ENG.pdf International Organization for Migration

Figure 2: Mukachevo Municipality

the project – an Integration Hub – is designed to enable more effective communication between city residents and displaced individuals and organizations, introduce displaced activists and the community, and form new connections around a shared objective of peaceful cohabitation.

Project Context

Zakarpattia is the only region in Ukraine that borders four different countries: Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The population is 80 percent Ukrainian and in descending order, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Slovak, and German. By May 2023, there were about 147,000 IDPs officially registered, while the actual number of IDPs is around 400,000 in the region. Zakarpattia was and continues to be one of the safest places in Ukraine. For this reason, various civil society organizations (CSOs) and activists have relocated and found a temporary haven in this region.

Mukachevo is the second largest city in Zakarpattia, hosting the second largest number of displaced populations in the region. The Mukachevo area, including villages, has a population of about 110,000 and around 35,000 registered IDPs. IDPs are supported by regional authorities and do not fall under the responsibility of municipal authorities. However, IDPs can place a significant burden on the employment system, schools, and kindergartens.

Since 2016, the government has been working on decentralization reforms to strengthen capacities of local self-government bodies. The state has apportioned some national taxes to the local level while responsibilities were also partially transferred or delegated to the local government. Local authorities have decision-making power on how to address the needs of local citizens, but face challenges in understanding what the needs of the community are, how to create a platform for a dialogue, and how to build dialogue with the regional and national levels.

With regard to internal displacement, several legal and institutional reforms have been carried out in Ukraine since 2014 through the adoption of new legislation as well as amendments to existing laws and by-laws. In October 2014, the parliament of Ukraine adopted a comprehensive law 'on ensuring rights and freedoms of internally displaced persons'. This law regulates the scope of rights and protection of IDPs and defines roles and responsibilities of authorities towards IDPs at the central and local levels.[14] The implementation of the law was also operationalized through specific policies and strategies and the system created was further adapted to the new context following the Russian invasion.

The primary mechanism for IDP participation in Ukraine is constituted by local consultative bodies known as IDPs Councils, established at the city, district, and region levels. Each IDP Council includes a combination of IDPs, local officials, and civil society representatives. The Councils facilitate regular and direct engagement between IDPs and local government, both to inform policies and to provide feedback on their implementation. They also aim to foster social cohesion and integration. With support from civil society, the first few IDP Councils were established in 2019; today, there are over 500 IDP Councils across the country. To help set basic standards and guidelines, Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers approved 'Model Regulations' for IDP Councils in August 2023. More recently, in May 2023, the Cabinet of Ministries of Ukraine adopted a Strategy for State Policy on Internal Displacement for the period 2023-2025[15] accompanied by an operational plan for its implementation. The overall purpose of the strategy is to reduce and minimize the negative consequences of internal displacement by introducing comprehensive and effective mechanisms for government response, based on the principles of the rule of law, respect for and protection in condition of internal displacement, etc.

The Integration Hub project aims to create space and conditions for social cohesion between IDPs from frontline areas and host communities through the creation of a multifunctional site for community integration. The activities financed through the project include major renovation of the premises (which belong to the local administration and are allocated free of charge to the project) to meet the requirements for inclusion of Ukraine's 'Barrier-free' agenda;[16] the project includes the creation of a space for joint events, a co-working resource room, rooms for recording podcasts, video lectures and music, a digital library, and a coffee shop.

Project Actors

As of October 2023, over 14 million Ukrainians were in need of psychological assistance,[17] a stark indication of the widespread impact of ongoing events. In response to these urgent needs, **the Ministry of Social Policy**, the national government's focal point for the project, has taken proactive steps to address the social and mental well-being of those affected by the war. The focus is on establishing community centres as integral hubs designed to cater to various needs. The Ministry aims to create platforms where different organizations can come together to provide essential psychological assistance and promote resilience; the Ministry advocated for project implementation and supported the activities. This Integration Hub initiative reflects a deliberate investment in community centres, with a specific emphasis on establishing resilience

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[14]   UNHCR-GPC (2022): Global Report on Law and Policy on Internal Displacement, Geneva: https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/6401d5624.pdf United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

[15]   Council of Europe office in Ukraine, see: https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/the-government-of-ukraine-approved-the-state-policy-strategy-on-internal-displacement-until-2025 (accessed 15 July 2023)

[16]   Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopts National Strategy for a Barrier-Free Environment in Ukraine, see: https://www.undp.org/ukraine/press-releases/cabinet-ministers-ukraine-adopts-national-strategy-barrier-free-environment-ukraine (accessed 15 July 2023)

[17]   Mental health in wartime: how UNDP-supported NGOs are providing psychological aid to Ukrainians, see: https://www.undp.org/ukraine/news/mental-health-wartime-how-undp-supported-ngos-are-providing-psychological-aid-ukrainians (accessed 12 July 2023)

centres. These centres are conceived as catalysts for social cohesion, the coordination of volunteer efforts, the provision of psychological aid, and the facilitation of teamwork. The Ministry envisions a comprehensive mapping of all available services, ensuring that individuals are informed about the support mechanisms at their disposal. This strategic approach not only aims to provide immediate assistance but also fosters a pathway for individuals to integrate into their communities and develop sustainable livelihoods.

The **Mukachevo Municipality** is actively encouraging registered IDPs to enrol their children in local schools and kindergartens, recognizing their entitlement to free meals and support. This proactive approach stems from the understanding that many of these individuals may remain in the local community (or municipality) for an extended period. To further support this initiative, the Deputy Mayor actively participated in the strategic sessions of the project. In addition, **Mukachevo City Council** demonstrated its commitment by agreeing to fund the project and providing the Hub with free use of the premises of the Centre of Public and National Cultures and free utility services to the building. As a token of their commitment to long-term collaboration, an MOU has been signed. This memorandum ensures the continued use of these premises and provides a guarantee for the payment of salaries for staff who manage the Hub. The municipality's robust support serves as a cornerstone, guaranteeing stability and sustainability for this crucial project, while reinforcing its potential to make a lasting impact on the community.

The **Mariupol Youth Union**, one of the key implementers of the project, focuses on vital humanitarian response programmes, including ensuring access to food, distributing hygiene kits, providing psychological and medical support, facilitating education, and generating employment opportunities for citizens, with a specific emphasis on vulnerable groups, including children, women, youth, and the elderly. The organization gave special attention to bolstering the capabilities of various professional groups, including administrative, social, and medical workers, through comprehensive training and development programmes. In response to the current situation, the Mariupol Youth Union, as an implementing partner of UNDP, has shifted its activities from the city of Mariupol to Mukachevo to respond to the significant presence of IDPs. Throughout the project's phases, the Mariupol Youth Union actively engaged in discussions; once the Hub became operational, they not only participated in its activities but also fostered collaboration with other non-governmental organizations based in the Hub.

The NGO **'Zahody'** ('Events'), founded in Mariupol by Yurii and his friends – IDPs from the Donetsk Oblast – continued its dedicated efforts to assist fellow IDPs in western Ukraine. 'Zahody' primarily focuses on youth engagement, establishing a school of activists that has successfully trained approximately 20 individuals from Mukachevo. This initiative aims to empower young people with essential activism skills, enabling them to actively contribute to their community. Many of these trained individuals have transitioned into the workforce and are now implementing their own projects. In collaboration with the NGO 'Women's League of Donechchyna' within the Hub, 'Zahody' conducts training sessions dedicated to the development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly for internally displaced women. These sessions provide valuable insights and practical knowledge to empower women to navigate the business landscape successfully. A third crucial aspect of their work is centred on psycho-emotional and psycho-social support. Engaging with schools and various institutions, 'Zahody' extends assistance to both IDPs and local residents, fostering a supportive environment for mental health and well-being.

For over 20 years, **Nikka NGO** has been a steadfast presence in Mukachevo. They took a pivotal step in establishing the integration hub for IDPs and the broader community. Nikka NGO's extensive experience positioned them as a key player in facilitating the harmonious interaction of NGOs relocated from eastern Ukraine with local NGOs and CSOs. As a trusted implementing partner of UNHCR, Nikka NGO played a central role in overseeing the

procurement of essential equipment, furniture, and the setup of a recording studio within the Hub. Additionally, Nikka NGO assumed a leadership role in creating the local IDP council.

As part of their commitments to work across the HDP Nexus, **UNDP and UNHCR** have undertaken collaborative efforts to assist Ukraine to transition from humanitarian aid and assistance to sustainable development. With a focus on the eastern parts of Ukraine, including the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, both agencies have implemented programmes from the onset of the conflict in 2014. This commitment is underpinned by the Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions[18] with a particular emphasis on four key focus areas: community empowerment and participation, social protection, access to justice, and economic inclusion.

To define the Integration Hub project, an initial workshop was convened in Mukachevo in September 2022. Hosted by UNHCR and UNDP, over 50 participants, including representatives from 30 CSOs, discussed promoting the protection and integration of IDPs in the Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk regions, including IDPs actively in the process and identifying key areas to facilitate their local integration. As a result of the workshop, efforts to launch the Integration Hub project got underway, including planning tendering procedures and repair works in collaboration with implementing partners, the Mariupol Youth Union and Nikka NGO. This strategic alignment of efforts offers a unified approach of all participants to ensure the successful implementation of the Integration Hub project and, more broadly, the transition towards sustainable development in the affected regions.

Project Description

To facilitate the integration of IDPs from conflict-affected areas into the Mukachevo community and its neighbouring settlements, the Integration Hub was envisioned as a space to foster contact, collaboration, and co-creation, providing a platform for displaced individuals and organizations to engage with the local community. The Hub is strategically designed to accommodate a range of activities, including training sessions for adults, youth, and senior citizens, as well as cultural dialogue, roundtables, and conferences.

In addition to these activities, the Hub is a space for a community of displaced public figures and locals to convene and, in turn, to contribute to building a stronger social fabric and to swiftly responding to the current challenges facing Ukraine. Prior to the establishment of the Hub, Mukachevo lacked a central space where individuals could comfortably gather, hold discussions, organize workshops, and address shared concerns. In essence, it aims to create a welcoming and versatile space that appeals to everyone.

Since its inception, a participatory and whole-of-community approach has guided the development of the Hub. The inclusive design and primary workstreams of the Hub were collaboratively shaped through consultations involving IDPs, displaced and local NGOs and CSOs, local authorities, and activists. The first strategic session for project implementation took place in May 2022, leading to a sequence of workshops, meetings, and consultations. Over the course of implementation, from October 2022 to May 2023, the participatory spirit persisted. The ongoing engagement with diverse stakeholders ensured that the Hub's development remained responsive to the evolving needs and perspectives of both displaced and local communities. This inclusive process, marked by collaboration and shared

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[18] UNDP-UNHCR (2022): Global Collaboration Framework for Inclusion and Solutions 2023-2025, New York: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-11/UNDP-UNHCR-Global-Collaboration-Framework-for-Inclusion-and-Solutions-2023-2025.pdf United Nations Development Program-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

decision-making, underscores the commitment to creating a space that authentically represents and serves the interests of all involved parties.

The key aims of the Integration Hub activities were as follows:

1. Creating opportunities for collaborative work in the inclusive space to strengthen social cohesion and coordinated action of the displaced and local CSOs in the Mukachevo community.
2. Strengthening capacities of the community and displaced population through trainings, workshops, educational and cultural events, networking, and awareness-raising.
3. Creating opportunities for economic empowerment of IDPs and the local population, providing support to social entrepreneurship programmes.

The completion of the work was slightly delayed due to persistent challenges, such as prolonged electricity shortages throughout the day and adverse weather conditions. Additionally, during the project, numerous skilled professionals (for welding, electrical work, masonry and so on) were summoned to join the army, creating notable delays.

Before its refurbishment, the Hub premises lacked essential structural elements to ensure inclusiveness. To rectify this, elevators were installed to facilitate access for individuals using wheelchairs and conditions were enhanced to cater to those with visual and hearing impairments. A concerted effort was made to create an inclusive environment that fosters social cohesion, ensuring that the space is welcoming to all. This comprehensive approach reflects a commitment to inclusivity and social integration, transforming the Hub into a space not only of activities but also of shared experiences and collective growth.

Oleksandr Sukhan, Paralympic Champion said, "There are very few facilities adapted for people with physical disabilities and other low-mobility population groups. However, here people can socialize and organise various activities." © UNHCR/UNDP

Stories

IDP Council

Nikka NGO played a critical role in supporting the creation and organization of the IDP Council, which has now obtained official registration with the Mukachevo Municipality. Over the next year, Nikka plans to extend its support by facilitating the establishment of similar IDP councils in other communities within the Zakarpattia region. The IDP Council includes in total 25 representatives from local NGOs and representatives from various local government departments, including Social Protection, Education, Health Care, and others. This inclusive approach ensures the incorporation of all stakeholders related to allowances, support mechanisms, and the overall integration of IDPs into the local environment. Through these coordinated efforts, the IDP Council serves as a comprehensive platform for dialogue, collaboration, and strategic

planning, emphasizing the importance of involving diverse stakeholders to address the complex needs of the displaced population in the Zakarpattia region.

The IDP Council of Mukachevo, convened within the Integration Hub, has conducted two meetings to date. The initial meeting involved a strategic session to identify tasks and priorities, followed by a subsequent session aimed at defining overarching goals collaboratively. The central objective of forming the IDP Council was to ensure that the Mukachevo City Council would provide an effective response to the needs of IDPs, actively incorporating the voices of IDPs and focusing on the protection of their rights within the territorial community. They engage in discussions and collaborative efforts with the municipality to formulate strategies for improving the situation and ensuring the seamless integration of IDPs into the hosting community. The Mukachevo Municipality has demonstrated an active commitment to supporting IDPs and facilitating their integration. Monthly meetings serve as a central platform for these collaborative efforts, providing a structured space for discussions and action planning. Within this framework, four working groups have been organized on areas such as access to education, housing (covering aspects like social housing, temporary housing, and the status of collective centres within the community), and the analysis of legislation with a focus on advocacy.

Furthermore, the IDP Council, utilizing the facilities of the hub, has set a second goal: equipping the displaced population with new professional skills. To this end, close collaboration has been established with Mukachevo State University and employment centres. The IDP Council actively promotes the state programme for vocational training, utilizing available vouchers to facilitate access to training programmes. The aim is to empower individuals to acquire new skills that enhance their employability, facilitating opportunities for finding jobs with appropriate salaries to support their families. By addressing the immediate needs of IDPs and simultaneously focusing on skills development

and vocational training, the IDP Council within the Integration Hub is contributing significantly to the comprehensive and sustainable integration of displaced individuals into the Mukachevo community.

Zahody NGO director stated: "We have observed and greatly appreciate UNDP's contributions, particularly the valuable training sessions conducted on the Hub's premises. The high qualifications of the trainers and the informative content they provided have significantly enhanced the capabilities of NGOs and individuals within our community. NGOs that received capacity-building support from UNDP have not only developed themselves but are also prepared to share their experiences with others. Furthermore, they are adept at managing tensions between hosting communities and IDPs, showcasing the effectiveness of the training provided.

"Through this initiative, we discovered our capacity for self-change. The infusion of new information, approaches, and perspectives has enabled our personal development. Recognizing the need for innovative thinking prompted by the current situation in the country, we have acquired a wealth of new knowledge. This joint project has not only exposed us to international and EU experiences but has empowered us to integrate these insights into our community. Now, we understand the importance of creating our unique Ukrainian experience. By fostering unity and sharing our best practices, we aim to contribute to a collective reservoir of knowledge and experience."

The IDP Council plays a central role in enhancing protection responses and shaping policies at the local level, engaging with active IDPs, IDP NGOs, and CSOs committed to contributing to advocacy activities. This participatory approach strengthens advocacy efforts, making them more representative, informed, and aligned with the actual experiences of the community. The result is a more robust and responsive local protection framework that considers the voices and concerns of those directly impacted by displacement.

Recording studio

The inception of the recording studio was driven by the vision of the Mukachevo Youth Council, reflecting young people's eagerness to acquire skills in content creation, production, and the development of various media products such as blogs, podcasts, and interviews. The sound recording room was carefully planned with a focus on obtaining the best equipment available. To ensure the success of the studio, specialists were consulted during the planning phase. Meetings with film directors and journalists were organized, providing valuable insights and sharing experiences on content creation and sound in the production process.

Vladimir, a 14-year-old from the village of Chelyabinske in Zakarpattia, is a dedicated music school student focusing on vocal training. Over the past six years, he has honed his vocal skills under the guidance of Igor Mikhailovich, a renowned singer, composer, and poet in Ukraine. While aspiring to become a professional singer, Vladimir also has an alternative plan: if a career as a singer does not work out, he plans to study economics in the United States.

Fifteen-year-old Daniela, a local resident, excels as both a singer and a pianist. Alongside her musical pursuits, she maintains a commitment to physical fitness by attending the gym regularly and dedicates time to studying English weekly. While her dream is to pursue a career as a professional singer, Daniela considers furthering her education at Mukachevo State University after completing high school, with the goal of becoming a doctor.

The paths of these two young talents, Daniela and Vladimir, crossed at the recording studio, where they shared a common passion for singing. The studio provides a supportive and secure environment for them to practice and collaborate, fostering a creative space where their musical aspirations can flourish.

The director of the Hub declared: "It's wonderful that the youth in Mukachevo now have the opportunity to practice in the studio. Being able to listen to oneself through headphones and a microphone, akin to professionals, is a crucial experience. Prior to the opening of the Hub, such opportunities were non-existent in Mukachevo; the nearest professional studio was in Uzhhorod, the capital of Zakarpattia. The services provided by the Hub are not only free but also accessible to everyone. The studio offers a pleasant atmosphere, and young users delight in the experience of sitting and recording here. Apart from the excellent equipment, the overall ambiance within the hub is conducive to creativity and enjoyment."

The recording studio at the Integration Hub serves as a dynamic space where music classes are organized, currently accommodating 24 students. These students attend sessions multiple times a week, adjusting their participation based on their school commitments. The studio is well-equipped with various musical instruments, including drums, violin, saxophone, and a MIDI keyboard, providing a versatile environment for creative exploration.

One distinctive feature of the Integration Hub is its role in fostering connections between individuals. Young people from the local community, including Mukachevo and its surrounding neighbourhoods or rural areas, are the primary users of the recording studio. However, the administrators are actively working to integrate young IDPs into these activities, broadening the inclusivity of the space.

The studio also serves as a meeting point for individuals from different backgrounds, including those who have relocated from the east. This creates an opportunity for interaction, allowing individuals to form new friendships. A compelling example is that of four people from diverse settlements in east Ukraine who met at the studio. This encounter led to the establishment of a musical project, with the group evolving into a band, showing the power of the studio as a catalyst for collaboration and creative synergy.

A music teacher working with youth at the Hub states: "They met here, started coming together to the studio, and in just two days, complete strangers played and rehearsed together, giving birth to a new project. Their collaboration will involve creating original songs and singles. The initiation of this project was entirely spontaneous, sparked right here at the Integration Hub recording studio." The availability of the audio recording studio at the Integration Hub holds significant importance for talented youth, providing them with a vital instrument for creative expression. In many cases, sound rooms of this quality and accessibility are typically found only in larger cities, making them less accessible to young people in smaller towns. The provision of such a well-equipped studio in a smaller community like Mukachevo breaks down barriers, offering local youth a valuable resource to nurture and showcase their talents. This democratization of access to high-quality sound facilities contributes to the cultural enrichment of the community and empowers young individuals to explore and develop their artistic potential.

Conclusions

This project serves as a perfect example of an HDP nexus initiative, particularly pertinent for protracted situations involving large-scale displacement. The key success factor was identifying a joint project that could effectively address the primary needs of both the displaced population and hosting communities, coupled with the strong engagement of local authorities to turn the project idea into a reality, and its commitment to continued engagement with the project over the medium term. This heightened level of engagement from both national and local entities reflects a collaborative approach that extends beyond immediate challenges, aiming for enduring positive outcomes.

Simultaneously, the project has facilitated a smooth transition for both UNDP and UNHCR from a humanitarian focus to a developmental one, respecting their distinct mandates. The developments in Mukachevo stand as a testament to the success of this joint project, becoming a model that has forti-

fied the partnership between UNDP and UNHCR throughout Ukraine. The project's outcomes have provided a robust platform for broader expansion at the national level. In recognition of the success in Mukachevo, the two agencies have collaboratively explored additional opportunities, contemplating where similar experiences can be replicated or adapted to meet the specific needs of identified areas across the country. This not only underscores the effectiveness of the Mukachevo project but also showcases the potential for its positive impact to extend beyond its immediate context. The collaborative efforts of UNDP and UNHCR in Mukachevo have not only addressed the urgent needs of the affected populations but have also paved the way for a scalable and adaptable model that can be implemented in diverse settings, aligning with the unique requirements of each identified territory.

The ongoing discussions between UNDP and UNHCR are centred around the concrete implementation of joint programmes, particularly in areas such as housing and employment opportunities. Despite having distinct mandates, there is a recognition of similarities in the approach both agencies take. UNHCR's community-based protection aligns with UNDP's efforts to support communities, enhancing resilience and promoting social cohesion. The collaboration between UNDP and UNHCR has the potential to provide a more comprehensive and holistic solution, especially in the unique context of Ukraine. The country has a robust and functioning government actively seeking added value and support in areas that may be challenging to address due to budget constraints. By working together, UNDP and UNHCR aim to use their complementarities across their respective initiatives, showing that their efforts are interconnected rather than standalone. This collaborative approach emphasizes the synergies between the agencies, offering a unified and more effective response to the multifaceted challenges faced by the communities they serve.

The establishment of the Integration Hub for IDPs and the local population marks a crucial milestone for fostering peaceful coexistence, promoting

The Mukachevo Municipality is encouraging IDPs to enrol their children in local schools and kindergartens. © UNHCR/UNDP

social cohesion, and enhancing collaboration between relocated NGOs from the eastern part of Ukraine and local NGOs and CSOs. The positive outcomes are already evident in the co-creation efforts of activists within the civic sector, achieved through collaborative initiatives with the hosting community and municipalities. Expanding meeting spaces to smaller villages, particularly where there are concentrations of IDPs, holds significant importance. Such spaces not only provide a sense of support to IDPs but also create opportunities for integration and mutual support within these communities.

The training programmes on income-generating activities conducted at the Hub have proven beneficial in enhancing IDPs' revenues by equipping them with valuable knowledge and skills. To further empower individuals involved in these trainings, allocating a budget for mini-grants to kickstart new income-generating activities would significantly increase their chances of success. Moreover, there is a call for greater attention on the private sector, ensuring sustainable

development to address the challenges faced by local businesses. By fostering collaboration and supporting innovative initiatives, the Integration Hub becomes a catalyst for economic growth and resilience within the community, benefiting both displaced and local populations.

According to the Mariupol Youth Union: "Cooperation with UNDP and UNHCR has been at the highest level. We maintained constant communication with both agencies, engaging in joint discussions and arriving at solutions collaboratively. All decisions were made unanimously; there was no top-down decision-making. Even in cases where a decision was pending, ongoing discussions and agreements were made. The channels of communication were always open, and if we had any questions, we consistently had the opportunity to get in touch with them. Their support has been unwavering, and they have consistently worked with us to the best of their abilities."

MOMUCLAA, the Women's Movement of Colonia López Arellano and Surrounding Areas, trains IDPs and works with UNDP and UNHCR to improve living conditions for IDPs. © UNHCR/UNDP

Case study 3: Honduras

Introduction

In Honduras, widespread violence between 2004 and 2018 has led to the internal displacement of more than 247,000 people, 55 percent of whom are women.[19] Additionally, as of July 2023, at least 32,000 Honduran nationals had been deported by air or land from Mexico, the United States, and Guatemala.[20]

The Law for the Prevention, Attention and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, approved in December 2022, has been a historic milestone in Honduras as it is the first specific legal instrument to protect those forced to flee due to violence and human rights violations. The law establishes the National System for Response to Internally Forced Displacement (SINARDEFI), the framework through which national and local bodies design and implement measures to prevent the causes of displacement (such as extortion, forced recruitment, or gender-based violence), assist and protect displaced victims and communities, and promote the achievement of durable solutions. One of these bodies, the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons (CIPPDEF), is already making progress in constructing the law's regulations and securing the allocation of resources in the national budget. The law also provides for the establishment of Municipal Units for the Attention and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (UMAPPDEF).

Projects Context

Choloma is a municipality of 262,186 inhabitants[21] within the department of Cortés and is located a short distance from the Municipality of San Pedro Sula, in an area of the country people are fleeing from and that at the same time, is also receiving people forcibly displaced from other areas. In Choloma, the phenomenon of internal displacement is also observed at municipal level with people moving frequently between the five sectors of the city. Its geographic location is strategic because it is situated along the highway that connects the

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[19]   Comisión Interinstitucional para la protección de las personas desplazadas por la violencia (2021): Characterization of Internal Displacement in Honduras, Tegucigalpa: https://www.jips.org/uploads/2018/11/Honduras-ProfilingReport-InternalDisplacement-2015-EN.pdf. Since January to October 2024, 38,542 Honduran nationals had been deported by air or land from Mexico, the United States, and Guatemala. Of the Hondurans who have been returned, 11% report having left their country of origin due to insecurity, and 1.75% due to domestic violence, see ODS/SEDESOL, Gobierno de Honduras. Base SIAMIR updated on 15 October 2024.

[20]   Instituto Nacional de migración: estadísticas migratorias, see https://inm.gob.hn/estadisticas.html (accessed 7 August 2023)

[21]   Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas: Choloma, Cortés información general 2018, see: https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/imag-doc/2019/07/choloma_cortes.pdf (accessed 8 August 2023)

Figure 3: Choloma Municipality

second most important city in the country, San Pedro Sula, with the most important port, Puerto Cortés. Since the 1990s, Choloma has been the location of duty and tariff-free textile factories (or *maquilas*), which attracted foreign investment in the region, and created many job opportunities. This caused many people from the interior of the country and rural areas to move to Choloma in search of employment, taking advantage of the massive hiring of labour. However, in recent years, many factories have closed or laid off workers, generating a high unemployment rate in the city.

Generalized violence in Choloma is characterized by the social and territorial control exercised by criminal structures, such as *maras* (local gangs), which result in illicit activities such as drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and contract killings. Their activity generates complex dynamics of violence such as the forced recruitment of children, adolescents, and young people; extortion of businesses, transport workers and teach-

ers; gender-based violence against women, girls and LGTBIQ+ persons; as well as murders, robberies, assaults, threats, and restrictions on the freedom and mobility of entire communities. These dynamics can lead to the forced displacement of families and the weakening of the social fabric of the community.

The activities under consideration are part of a joint initiative between UNDP, UNHCR and IOM, entitled 'Trinational Response for a Dignified, Peaceful and Inclusive Human Mobility in Northern Central America', which aims to strengthen the capacities of governments and civil society in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to better address the challenges to peace present in the phenomenon of human mobility in the subregion. In Honduras, the project focuses on the municipalities most affected by forced displacement and those that have the highest rates of violence and homicides.

Projects Actors

The Ministry for Human Rights (SEDH) is the focal point of the national response to internal forced displacement due to violence. It has a legal mandate to coordinate all municipal responses regarding the protection of IDPs. Since 2022, the Ministry, with the support of UNHCR, has strengthened the capacities of public officials on protection issues in six municipalities that experience high rates of violence and a subsequent risk of displacement, including Choloma.

The General Directorate for the Protection of Honduran Migrants, through the Office of Assistance to Returned Migrants within the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**, seeks to articulate a response that addresses the protection needs of the returnee population, as well as organizational support projects. It also seeks to support the Honduran population abroad that does not want to return for security reasons through legal support. The office manages three Centres for Assistance to Returned Honduran Migrants (CAMR) in the department of Cortés where UNHCR has a presence, with technical liaison that support the identification of returnees in need of protection.

The Municipal Unit for Assistance to Returned Migrants and Displaced Persons (UMAM-RD) has been active in the Municipality of Choloma since the beginning of 2023. The Unit first provides psychological assistance to returned migrants, then a case file is manually filled with personal data and stored in a folder. The Unit refers specific cases to other municipal offices, CSOs, or NGOs for direct assistance. It does not currently have the budget through which to finance its activities, but the Unit is developing a 2024 Plan of Action that will allow the allocation of funds from the national government. The Unit currently has only one full-time employee and is receiving external assistance from the Municipal Women's Office and Social Development Office to assist referred cases of returned Honduran migrants. Activities to raise awareness and publicize the work of the Unit among various communities were conducted by the municipality. The Unit also receives cases from the Centres for Attention to Returned Migrants (CAMRs) run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and participates in the Returned Migrant Roundtable, a platform at the local level whose official name is 'Municipal Council for Citizen Security and Coexistence', which involves relevant local institutions, the municipality, and civil society.

The Municipal Women's Office works on six issues: social participation, promotion of women's rights, health, education, economic rights, and the environment. It provides legal advice, receives complaints of domestic violence, promotes entrepreneurship for women, and refers cases of women in need of protection due to displacement.

Since its establishment, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Choloma (CCICH) has aimed to assist vulnerable populations, underpinned by a commitment to fostering economic development. With a focus on autonomy and empowerment, CCICH actively engages in the establishment of a robust business infrastructure, thereby catalysing social development within the region. For nearly three years, the Chamber has worked with the migrant population and specifically with women to provide trainings and the creation of a support network.

MOMUCLAA (Women's Movement of Colonia López Arellano and Surrounding Areas) is a community-based organization that has been active in Choloma for 33 years and is highly recognized in the municipality, by the municipality itself and a multiplicity of other actors. Today, it has a membership of 1,700 women and is organized in 64 communities with collectives of 25 to 30 women, where activities are organized to strengthen and accompany them. They receive referrals from women from different regions of the country who are at risk of or are survivors of GBV, including sexual violence, trauma, and/or different mental or physical health afflictions due to the violence suffered. The organization has a psychosocial

support area and a legal counselling area.

UNHCR works together with the Human Rights Ministry to provide training to municipal officials on the design and implementation of forced displacement response mechanisms. Further, UNHCR works directly with community-based organizations through activities that include strengthening organizational capacities to identify, mitigate, and respond to forced displacement risks. UNHCR has been active in equipping spaces for case management, supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs, and facilitating dialogue among relevant actors (including in its interagency role of Protection Cluster lead).

UNDP supports comprehensive medium- and long-term solutions to forced displacement and has financed training courses in collaboration with CSOs, the Municipal Unit for Assistance to Returned Migrants and Displaced Persons and the Choloma Chamber of Commerce. UNDP provided the seed capital that was distributed for the training of participants to set up or renew their income-generating activity.

Project Description

The aim of the project was to address the need for a comprehensive response to the issue of human mobility, including irregular migration and forced displacement, which are related to structural factors such as inequality, poverty, and the impact of violence.

The state has the primary responsibility to prevent and address internal displacement, which is shared across all its levels; in line with the 2023 IDP law, UMAPPDEF are to be established through funding by municipalities, which will be responsible for developing and implementing local strategic plans to respond to the needs of the affected populations. Prior to the adoption of the IDP law, several municipalities including Choloma had already taken the initiative to create municipal units for the assistance of returned migrants and displaced persons in collaboration with the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, which has co-financed them and oversees their establishment and operation.

Across the country, efforts now focus on the joint goal of strengthening the institutional response to the internally displaced and returning populations, taking advantage of the contribution of international institutions under the framework of the project 'Trinational Response for a Dignified, Peaceful and Inclusive Human Mobility in Northern Central America'. In Choloma, UNDP and UNHCR are stepping up efforts related to their mandate and plan to extend the duration of the project to strengthen the res-ponse capacity of the Municipality of Choloma – specifically, the Municipal Unit for Assistance to Returned Migrants and Displaced Persons.

UNHCR, in collaboration with the Ministry for Human Rights, is providing training to sensitize Choloma municipal officials and strengthen their capacities in relation to the prevention, assistance, and protection of IDPs; the process aims to establish a response plan at the local level. UNHCR also directly supports local organizations such as MOMUCLAA, which provides daily accompaniment and guidance to women survivors and those displaced by violence, while also developing community activities to mitigate risks of violence in the Choloma Municipality.

In a complementary initiative in Choloma, UNDP, in collaboration with the UMAPPDEF, financed training and seed capital for 56 displaced women. In six half-day training sessions given by the Choloma Chamber of Commerce, the women worked on the topics of psychosocial support, preparation of a business plan, and business leadership for entrepreneurship. From October to December 2022, seed capital and kits of utensils for the women trainees to establish or improve their businesses were delivered.

This project shows the positive trajectory of individuals, particularly women, who have participated in the programme, becoming interconnected and empowered through their engagement with local, national, and international

Patricia Cortés, a returnee and local entrepreneur, received seed funding to start her catering business in Choloma, Honduras. © UNHCR/UNDP

institutions. The initiative not only aligns with the protective measures advocated by UNHCR through the Human Rights Ministry but also extends its impact to encompass social cohesion, economic empowerment, and peacebuilding initiatives supported by UNDP.

Stories

Patricia Cortés, Project beneficiary

Ms. Patricia participated in the training organized in collaboration between the Mayor's Office and the Chamber of Commerce of Choloma, with funding from UNDP Honduras. One of her friends had accompanied her to the UMAPPDEF and this is how she was able to participate in the project. The Office of Attention to Returned and Displaced Migrants and the Women's Office of the Mayor's Office of Choloma had identified her as a woman who needed help to improve her business and called her when there was an opportunity to participate

in this initiative.

Ms. Patricia is from Choloma and tried three times (in 2013, 2015, and 2021) to reach the United States irregularly. The second attempt was her most successful, as she reached Guadalajara, Mexico, before authorities sent her back to Honduras after more than two months of travel. Honduran authorities labelled her as a returned migrant, a label she also identifies with.

She and her husband were evangelical pastors in the suburbs of the city of Choloma and were victims of extortion and kidnapping for a few days. Their lives were at risk and, because of this, they tried several times to flee to the United States in search of a better life. In all three attempts, they had to leave their children with their families.

Since 2013, she has had a small food stand in the city that she has had to leave every time she tried to flee. After her last return in 2021, she received psychological support from the Red Cross and

decided that she would no longer attempt to move to the United States, but would seek to improve her living conditions in her country and in her city.

This is how she decided to participate in a gastronomy training organized by a local institution, where she was able to improve her knowledge of food preparation. By participating in the entrepreneurship training organized by the Chamber of Commerce, she was able to legalize her sole proprietorship and receive a kit with a stove, displays, and various utensils as seed capital financed by UNDP. The process of training and delivery of the kit was very fast and, in two months, she had everything organized. She currently has a well-organized food stand in the city centre, where she prepares lunches for workers in the area. Her specialties are yucca, chicharrón, chicken, and pig's trotters. In the evening, she prepares the same dishes in smaller quantities at home and sells them to her neighbours, helping to improve her finances.

Since her last return, Patricia has been part of the 'Red de migrantes, desplazados y retornados de Choloma' (Network of migrants, displaced persons, and returnees of Choloma), a grassroots organization that is active in helping migrants and is seeking to expand its scope of action to help more people. The members asked her to participate in the board of directors, but she was unable to for lack of time. With the association, she participated in the last meeting with representatives of the United Nations System in Choloma under the auspices of UNHCR.

Patricia states: "During my journey trying to reach the United States, I suffered a lot of fear and pain. I witnessed rapes, homicides, and a lot of violence that I will never forget. Now I would not recommend anyone to undertake this journey, I consider that it's worth to fight for my country and do my bit so that things can continue to improve."

MOMUCLAA, in the words of Melania Reyes, President of MOMUCLAA.

The organization does not have its own funds, we work out of conviction, out of love; we work because we feel it, we have a commitment, we are women, and we want change.

What we have always longed for is to have a training and education centre here in our town of Choloma and to have a shelter where all those women who are victims of violence can have a place to stay, because the situation here is very difficult. We also dream that one day we will have our own *maquila*, because there are many women who come from a situation of risk and need to work to feed their children.

We provide trainings in the schools, in the colleges, we are going to organize the boys and girls to stop violence, we work in the streets, we even work in the stadiums; we go to the stadiums because sometimes there are fights between young people, we are going to stop violence so that they are not fighting, that soccer is about friendship and not fighting.

When women arrive in the communities, we train them to know their rights regarding sexual and reproductive health, rural savings, entrepreneurship, political advocacy, gender issues and displacement. We visit communities to give away popcorn, water, and soft drinks and to motivate women. We organize women's soccer teams so that they can have an impact. We recover spaces where women have been dismembered, where their heads have been blown off, where young women's bodies have been recovered.

We go to the hills; we walk in the sun, or under water. Violence has no time or day; they call us at one o'clock in the morning that there is a family that we must take out because they are at risk, and we must go. An organization donated us a car, before we had to walk and use public transportation.

I have a bachelor's degree in humanities, and I was pursuing a degree in legal sciences to become a lawyer, but due to economic circumstances I could not finish my studies. To earn money I sell jewellery, necklaces, earrings, this work gives me food.

I am 46 years old and have been in the organization for 30 years. I joined because my mother was the founder. Here in the '80s, they killed women like they killed animals. So, she saw the need to set up an organization to defend women's rights, so that we would be seen as human beings and have the right to protest and demand better conditions.

In 2009, on the Day of Nonviolence, I faced a life-threatening situation when six soldiers and four policemen raided my home while I was tending to my bean field. Opting not to attend the mobilization due to its strategic nature given my leadership role, I remained at home, discreetly analysing the unfolding events. The police intended to forcibly remove me for execution. It was then that I realized the strength of friendship and community support. My son's words, 'Mommy, they are going to kill us,' fuelled my determination. Clutching the gate, I asserted that I wouldn't leave, stating that if they intended to kill me, it would happen right there. The community rallied around us, vehemently opposing my removal, and ensuring our safety.

With time I learned certainty, wisdom and then to be a leader: to have conviction and social conscience in oneself, to know that one can give everything that over time is built from the needs; with the example of the women who have suffered, because I also suffered, I come from poverty, from the needs, from enduring hunger, from watching over a plate of food, from knowing what poverty is.

Conclusions

Overall, the different complimentary initiatives proved to be successful and all the stakeholders involved at the national level hope it will be possible to replicate this approach in other municipalities facilitating dialogue between local government, the private sector, civil society, and the community.

At the local level, only 15 out of the 56 women who received training and seed capital also received adequate follow-up due to the lack of resources available to the UMAPPDEF to follow up on the beneficiaries. The municipal administration has not been able to verify that the entirety of the business plans developed during the training course has actually been put into practice and the seed capital implemented has been used as intended. Providing adequate follow-up will be necessary for similar projects in the future.

Thanks to the funding received, the NGO, MOMUCLAA, has been able to expand its reach in GBV activities, but laments not having had enough slots in the training course for women entrepreneurs.

UMAM-RD integrators and employees of other municipal offices capitalized on the trainings received during the project by improving their skills in assisting refugees and IDPs, but, in order to achieve good performance, they will need adequate funding and IT tools to handle the high flow of people with protection needs.

Enhancing the capacities of municipal officials to effectively coordinate the implementation of projects funded by international cooperation, particularly those addressing forced return and displacement in their municipalities, can facilitate the alignment of interventions with the recently approved and enacted legal framework, namely, the 'Law for the Prevention, Attention, and Protection of Internally Displaced Persons'. This strategic approach aims to synergize project activities with the provisions set forth in the legislation.

The Integration Hub Music Group in Mukachevo, Ukraine, provides a supportive and safe environment, fostering a creative space where musical aspirations can flourish. © UNHCR/UNDP

Conclusion

The case studies presented above – although with widely distinct contexts and project implementation modalities – can help UNDP and UNHCR to distil lessons for future effective implementation of activities at the local level. This includes considerations pertaining to the strategic placement of joint initiatives, the extent of collaboration with national and local authorities, and the targeted assistance for distinct forcibly displaced populations. These considerations are invaluable for informed and strategic planning in the pursuit of sustainable and impactful responses.

In Mukachevo, needs were addressed comprehensively, ranging from the integration of IDPs to their personal development across cultural, civic, and economic dimensions. The diversity of activities implemented facilitated a holistic approach to addressing the multifaceted requirements of the community.

Similarly, in Choloma, the complementarity of activities played a critical role in fostering community engagement with local institutions to address protection needs. Additionally, the stimulation of productivity was realized through the establishment of micro-enterprises and the engagement of the private sector, providing sustainable livelihoods for families.

In Haut-Uélé province, the collaborative efforts of both agencies facilitated the extension of specific UNDP activities into hard-to-reach territories where the organization lacked a local presence. This was made possible through UNHCR's logistical operation, expansive network of contacts, and the credibility earned over years of local presence and activity. The synergy between the agencies demonstrated a capacity to overcome logistical challenges and effectively reach areas previously underserved.

Adapting to project context

Although the projects and locations selected for this study are situated in vastly distinct operational contexts, it is useful to understand the adaptability of different types of collaboration between UNDP and UNHCR.

Two of the initiatives were implemented in urban contexts – specifically, in Ukraine and Honduras. Despite notable distinctions in local administrative structures between Central America and Eastern Europe, certain similarities emerged in the extent of engagement and participation among local constituents, such as better organization and accountability of local governments, easier communication and information exchange with national authorities and main stakeholders, and a favourable environment lacking the constraints in terms of free movement and security concerns sometimes affecting remote regions, such as Haut-Uélé in the DRC.

In the case of the DRC, the initiative unfolded within a rural setting, where the environmental conditions, cultural factors, and a dearth of basic resources posed considerable challenges. Nevertheless, the active involvement of specific population groups who dedicated their time to undertake activities that accrue tangible benefits for their community was noticeable.

However, a common thread emerges in the active engagement of specific population groups dedicated to enhancing their communities. This comparative analysis underscores the importance of tailored approaches that address the unique demands of urban and rural environments, recognizing both the shared principles of community involvement and the specific challenges intrinsic to each setting.

Flexibility of project set-up

As an initial consideration for this analysis, it is evident that the mere signing of an MOU between UNDP and UNHCR, delineating the responsibilities and competencies of each agency, does not inherently guarantee the success of a collaborative initiative. While possessing a framework to guide and structure the implementation of activities proves highly advantageous for logistical purposes, the project in Ukraine, that achieved the highest success, stands out as the sole instance not reliant on formal agreements between the two agencies. Instead, it is emblematic of a collaboration established on an *ad hoc* basis.

Avoiding formal agreement gives more flexibility in ongoing actions, especially in a small project with a limited margin of error. In this case, the lack of a structured collaboration provides the two agencies with the space to adjust to the specificities of all the relevant groups. Conversely, this somewhat unstructured collaboration may raise reporting and accountability issues in the medium to long term. The financial implications of a large-scale project to replicate such successful experience could raise concerns of resource allocation without a formal agreement spelling out precise responsibilities for both agencies and their partners.

The significance of transparent information exchanges and the clear articulation of intentions between the two agencies throughout the entire lifecycle of a joint initiative are also crucial. This practice is fundamental to preventing obstacles that might impede the seamless and expeditious execution of activities. Furthermore, fostering ongoing dialogue is imperative, as it is instrumental in promptly identifying and implementing solutions to any challenges that may arise during implementation.

The necessity of multi-level government engagement

It is evident that the engagement with national governments during the planning phase of activities is highly desirable. Their proactive involvement is essential to garner the necessary support, thereby ensuring conditions conducive to success. Particularly in developing countries, where decision-making is often centralized, extending the involvement of central authorities to local activities can enhance the decisive participation of local governments, as in the case of Honduras and Ukraine.

In Ukraine, the government played a pivotal role throughout the entire duration of the 'Integration Hub' project and intends to replicate its success in other regions of the country. Similarly, in Honduras, the central government directly participated in project activities, notwithstanding the early stages of implementation of IDPs laws. On the other end, in the DRC, the national government's participation has been limited, extending primarily to a soft supervisory role during certain stages of activity implementation.

Given that the analysed cases primarily represent local initiatives, the role played by regional and municipal governments cannot be overstated in ensuring the success of these projects. The direct involvement of local governments stands out as a decisive factor that contributes significantly to the initiative's success and longer-term sustainability.

In Choloma, the Municipal Unit for Assistance to Returned Migrants and Displaced Persons assumed a dual role as implementer and beneficiary of project activities, thereby ensuring a comprehensive engagement that bolstered their institutional capacity and response capabilities in emergency situations. Meanwhile, in Mukachevo, the city government demonstrated commitment by facilitating the sustainability of the integration centre. This commitment extended to providing premises for its establishment and ensuring financial support for services and salaries required by the management team.

By contrast, in the DRC, while Chiefs of Chiefdoms participated in project activities, the precarious conditions and structural limitations within their areas hindered the full utilization of the skills offered by the initiative. These challenges underscore the importance of addressing contextual constraints to optimize the impact of the project in such regions.

Strategic involvement of local NGOs, CSOs and local communities

The case studies also provide evidence on the beneficial impact of the robust involvement of NGOs and civil society entities operating within the analysed territories in discussions and decision-making processes regarding initiative development. These organizations serve as primary conduits for contact and the exchange of perspectives within the community.

Initiatives that incorporated a more profound engagement of NGOs and civil society, such as in the Ukraine case study, saw the most favourable outcomes, underscoring the value of a whole-of-society approach at the local level. This not only enriches the decision-making process but also increases the likelihood of success, emphasizing the integral role played by these organizations in facilitating effective communication and collaboration within the community.

The positive impact of the 'Integration Hub' project on the community was attributed to the direct consultation with IDPs, providing a model that aligned with their specific needs. The inclusion of beneficiaries in the design phase, particularly in cases involving forcibly displaced populations, ensures that their primary needs are taken into account and fosters greater engagement in planned activities.

However, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the awareness of beneficiaries about impending activities was communicated only weeks before their commencement. This delayed communication resulted in uneven participation in workshops and variable involvement across different target groups. Interviews with beneficiaries in Choloma revealed a perceived sense of exclusion among certain organized groups, indicating that information about the joint initiative did not circulate as anticipated among the various segments of the population. This underscores the importance of timely and comprehensive communication to ensure inclusive participation and mitigate any feelings of exclusion within the targeted community.

The narratives gleaned from the three case studies underscore the profound impact that coordinated and complementary efforts by UNDP and UNHCR can exert on various stakeholders involved in the analysed projects. It becomes evident that, at times, joint actions may not be uniformly perceived as such by local participants. Addressing this perception gap emerges as an area for improvement. However, one should not underestimate the potential of activities collaboratively organized by both agencies to resonate with a broader spectrum of the community, encompassing both beneficiaries and local partners. The synergistic effect of these joint initiatives holds the promise of fostering a more inclusive and impactful engagement within the community at large.

In conclusion, the examination of these case studies highlights the intricate dynamics inherent in the collaborative initiatives undertaken by UNDP and UNHCR when addressing forced displacement at the local level. The success of these endeavours is contingent upon a range of factors such as transparent information exchange between agencies and with local and multi-level actors, robust engagement with local and national governments, and the strategic involvement of NGOs and civil society entities. The 'Integration Hub' project in Ukraine and similar endeavours underscore the transformative potential of direct consultations with beneficiaries, ensuring initiatives are tailored to meet the specific needs of the communities they serve. While challenges persist, particularly in disseminating information comprehensively and ensuring uniform participation, the positive outcomes witnessed in Mukachevo, Choloma, and Haut-Uélé province show the impact that coordinated efforts can have on diverse stakeholder groups. These initiatives not only address immediate needs but also contribute to the long-term development and resilience of communities, emphasizing the importance of sustained collaboration and adaptability in navigating complex humanitarian and development landscapes.

Annex

GUIDANCE MATERIAL FOR COLLABORATIVE UNHCR AND UNDP PROGRAMME DESIGN

Yuliia Prudnikova, Head of Council of Women of Donechchyna, Member of the Internally Displaced People Council of Mukachevo. © UNHCR/UNDP

Introduction:

This guidance material distils key insights and recommendations from the document 'Local Action on Forced Displacement: Lessons and Stories from Subnational Programmes and Partnerships'.

The document presents case studies from subnational-level programming in Ukraine, Honduras, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, emphasizing collaborative efforts between UNDP and UNHCR at the local level.

Based on analysis from the three country case studies mentioned above, this reference document identifies several key issues to be considered in the design of individual and collaborative agency programming with subnational actors in situations of forced displacement. For each area, guiding questions are provided to suggest a 'checklist'

for project teams to consider when setting up and rolling out projects on local action for forced displacement.

Strategic Collaboration - Formal Collaboration Agreements:

- Lesson from case studies: While formal MOUs are beneficial, successful collaboration can also be achieved on an *ad hoc* basis. Flexibility is crucial, but transparency and accountability should be maintained.

- Design questions/checklist:
  • Is the project's size such that it would be more advantageous to formalize the

collaboration through an MOU?

- What is the historial track record of interagency MOUs in the country under consideration, particularly in terms of timing and logistics?
- Are available funds already set and non-renewable, or does the collaboration have the potential for a multi-year renewal? (In the case of a one-shot collaboration, an MOU could be unnecessary; if the collaboration is renewable, it could be useful to set specific conditions through the signing of an MOU).

Inclusive Communication:

- Lesson from case studies: Ensure timely and comprehensive communication between agencies and adopt participatory approaches with beneficiaries and local communities. Effective consultation and communication in the design phase safeguard against overlooking needs and foster greater engagement.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Have focal points been assigned by each agency to directly oversee the flow of information during the project design phase?
  - Is there a designated liaison figure to engage with the government at both the national and local levels?
  - Has an *ad hoc* communication mechanism been developed for the project?

Transparent Information Exchange:

- Lesson from case studies: Establish a robust system for information exchange between agencies and with local actors. Ongoing dialogue is vital for identifying and addressing challenges promptly.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Is there a plan to establish a joint committee at the national level to support ongoing project activities and address urgent needs?
  - Is there a plan to establish a local forum for sharing insights from the ongoing project and incorporating suggestions from local partners?

Multi-Level Government Engagement:

Involvement of National Governments:

- Lesson from case studies: Engage national governments, especially during the planning phase, to ensure necessary support. Their involvement is crucial for success, as seen in Honduras and Ukraine.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Have ministries and, if applicable, the relevant central-level government departments engaged in the project been sufficiently briefed on the project, including its objectives and planned activities?
  - Is the project aligned with the objectives of national (or subnational) legal and policy frameworks relevant to forced displacement (e.g., IDP-specific frameworks such as laws, policies, or strategies for the protection and assistance of IDPs or durable solutions, or others that may explicitly include relevant objectives on forcibly displaced/stateless persons, e.g., national development plans, economic inclusion, etc.)?
  - Has a presentation been arranged to introduce the project, its objectives, and planned activities to the directors or ministries overseeing the offices that will be involved?

- Were they provided with the opportunity to submit comments or propose changes to the project document?

- Have we ensured that the central government possesses all the essential information required for effective project planning?

Local Government Empowerment:

- Lessons from case studies: Empower local governments to assume dual roles as implementers and beneficiaries. This enhances institutional capacity and ensures a comprehensive response to displacement.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Is there direct communication with the local governments involved, or is it entirely delegated to the central government?
  - Is it advisable for a representative from the local government to be involved in the national presentation of the project from the outset to ensure early inclusion of local perspectives?
  - Would a component of local government capacity-building among the project activities support the sustainability of the project?
  - Does the project contribute to strengthening the role of local governments as decision-makers?
  - Would broader UN activities for local government capacity and mandates regarding displaced persons (e.g., fiscal resources, legislative frameworks) support the results/sustainability of the project?

Involvement of NGOs, CSOs and Local Communities:

NGO and CSO Engagement:

- Lesson from case studies: Actively involve NGOs and CSOs in initiative development. Their engagement enriches decision-making processes and increases the likelihood of success.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Are there NGOs addressing the issues encompassed by the project at the national level?
  - If such NGOs exist, are they presently and actively collaborating with the central and/or local government?
  - Could they potentially contribute to the design phase, enriching the project document with their expertise? Can/should the project be designed to align with or directly collaborate with existing NGO/CSO activities and beneficiary groups at the local level? If so, should implementation be delivered alongside NGOs/CSOs or by them?
  - Have NGOs operating at the local level been directly notified about the initiation of a new project in their operational areas?
  - In collaboration with NGOs, identify CSOs operating in the project area to apprise them of the initiative.
  - Should local NGOs/CSOs play a role in monitoring the project?

Involvement of Local (displaced and host) Communities:

- Lesson from case studies: Engage forcibly displaced, stateless, and host community members and the organizations they lead in all programme phases – from planning to design and evaluation – to better understand their needs and ensure that they are represented in the project document.

- **Design Questions/Checklist:**
  - Have representatives at the local level and/or community-based organizations and other organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons been identified for participation? The initial level of participation would be a direct exchange of information, followed by consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering at the highest level of participation.
  - Have we reached all age, gender, and diverse community groups, including marginalized groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ persons) that may not have access to community workshops, etc.?
  - Have we taken the necessary steps to ensure that this project reflects the community's priorities and to incorporate their suggestions and recommendations into the project document?
  - Have we included a plan and a mechanism for local communities to play a role in the monitoring and evaluation of the project?

- Lesson from case studies: One way to engage the community where we work is to organize workshops and/or inclusive meetings to establish direct communication with the involved community before the project starts, to be built over time.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Conduct at least one workshop or inclusive meeting before the commencement of the project to share the project's goals, timeline, etc., make space for the community to share their priorities and suggestions, and address any questions
  - Examine the reasons presented by opponents and carefully consider the potential negative impact that may emerge during discussions with the community.

Lessons for Future Initiatives – Informing Project Design:

Addressing Contextual Constraints:

– Lesson from case studies: identify contextual constraints in each region to optimise the impact of projects. Understand the unique challenges faced in rural and urban settings.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Has a comprehensive analysis (including political economy) of the specific local context, including how it affects community members of different age, gender, and diversity groups and its impact on addressing forced displacement and conflict, been conducted to identify specific opportunities offered by the local context and to mitigate unforeseen contingencies during the implementation phase?
  - Are there specific logistical or other arrangements to consider enhancing the efficiency of the implementation phase, to ensure that the project reaches community members of all age, gender, and diversity groups?
  - Have measures been put in place to ensure the sustainability of the project so that the community could eventually take ownership of it?

Complementary Initiatives:

- Lesson from case studies: Design initiatives that complement each other, fostering community engagement and addressing multifaceted requirements. The synergy between UNDP and UNHCR initiatives can lead to more inclusive and impactful outcomes.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Have the ongoing projects or initiatives in the area been accurately identified by both agencies or by other stakeholders, such as the government, NGOs, and CSOs?

- Has there been an examination of the potential synergies of a collaborative project at both the national and local levels?

- Has a comprehensive analysis been conducted to determine the division of labour between the two agencies during the implementation of activities?

Sustainable Development:

- Lesson from case studies: Collaborative initiatives should not only address immediate needs but also contribute to long-term development and resilience within communities.

- Design questions/checklist:
  - Does the design of the project consider broader long-term development issues for local communities that can address drivers and consequences of forced displacement?

- Are regular assessments and other data collection activities planned to collect information from the local community about emerging needs during project implementation?

- Do project activities link to i) other UN agency activities for local development and/or ii) local and national development plans?

- Will the outputs from the project's activities be immediately beneficial to local actors without requiring additional initiatives and support from the two agencies?

- Do local actors possess the capacity to fully leverage the project without requiring additional support?

MOMUCLAA's Office in the López Arellano neighbourhood. © UNHCR/UNDP

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