



SUPPORTS



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



TEEING IT UP FOR PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE

UNHCR – LIV Golf Partnership
Year One Progress Summary Report



Countries

- Burkina Faso
- Ecuador
- Indonesia
- Malawi
- Morocco
- Slovakia

Project duration

October 2024 – September 2027

Reporting period

October 2024 – December 2025

Cover photo: Jonathan, a 17-year-old from Venezuela now living in Ecuador, plays golf for the first time
© UNHCR / Santiago Arcos

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



Survival alone
is not enough —
people also need
the opportunity to
heal, connect and
regain hope.

📍 Ecuador

About Teeing It Up For People Forced to Flee

When people are forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, services that keep them safe and protect their rights are essential. But survival alone is not enough — people also need the opportunity to heal, connect and regain hope. This is where sport and golf play an important role.

The evidence is clear — taken together, protection and sport create the right conditions for a lasting impact and enable golf to extend reach and deepen results. Without meeting the basic needs, sport does not take hold. This is why UNHCR and LIV Golf have adopted an **innovative dual investment approach, combining life-saving protection with sport.**

Together, we aim to build resilient enabling communities with improved wellbeing and social cohesion by:

- **Expanding safe spaces** for refugees and host communities through life-saving protection, sport and play-based golf
- **Strengthening local capacity** by equipping young coaches with skills, confidence and knowledge, including training in sport and golf for protection programming
- **Building evidence and networks** by increasing understanding of the role of golf and golf-inspired activities can play in refugee contexts, supported by community-led golfing resources and golf networks
- **Connecting refugee talent to the golf ecosystem**, opening routes to elite/professional play and diversifying the game of golf

Summary

Teeing it up for people forced to flee, a project partnership between UNHCR and LIV Golf, helps to expand access to sport, including golf, and unlock opportunities for and with refugees and host communities in times of crisis.

In just one year, the partnership is nearing the half-way mark towards its ambition of reaching close to one million forcibly displaced people and vulnerable communities—achieving 41% of the direct and 44% of the indirect beneficiary targets.

Participation and interest in sport for protection surpassed expectations. The partnership **directly reached 8,356 refugees and host community members** in six countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. It also **indirectly reached 377,781 refugees and host communities**, as the positive effects of sport extended well beyond the project's activities, from supporters in the stands to families and schools in the community.

This was possible through a **strong network of partners mobilized** under the UNHCR–LIV Golf partnership. Country teams worked closely with communities to secure buy-in and tailor activities to their needs and interests. Particularly in Burkina Faso, Indonesia and Slovakia, **schools became safe hubs for participants to access sport activities** during and outside school hours, which helped extend reach and promote sustainable, scalable impact.

Across all six countries, **communities described sport as more than a game—a space to step away from everyday worries and harm, heal from stress and trauma, connect with others, and simply have fun.** Sport for protection activities, including play-based golf, contributed to creating a safe and enabling space within communities where children and youth not only play but discuss topics that may be off limits at home, learn about their rights and referral services, and develop life skills and knowledge that can be taken beyond the course and transferred into daily life.

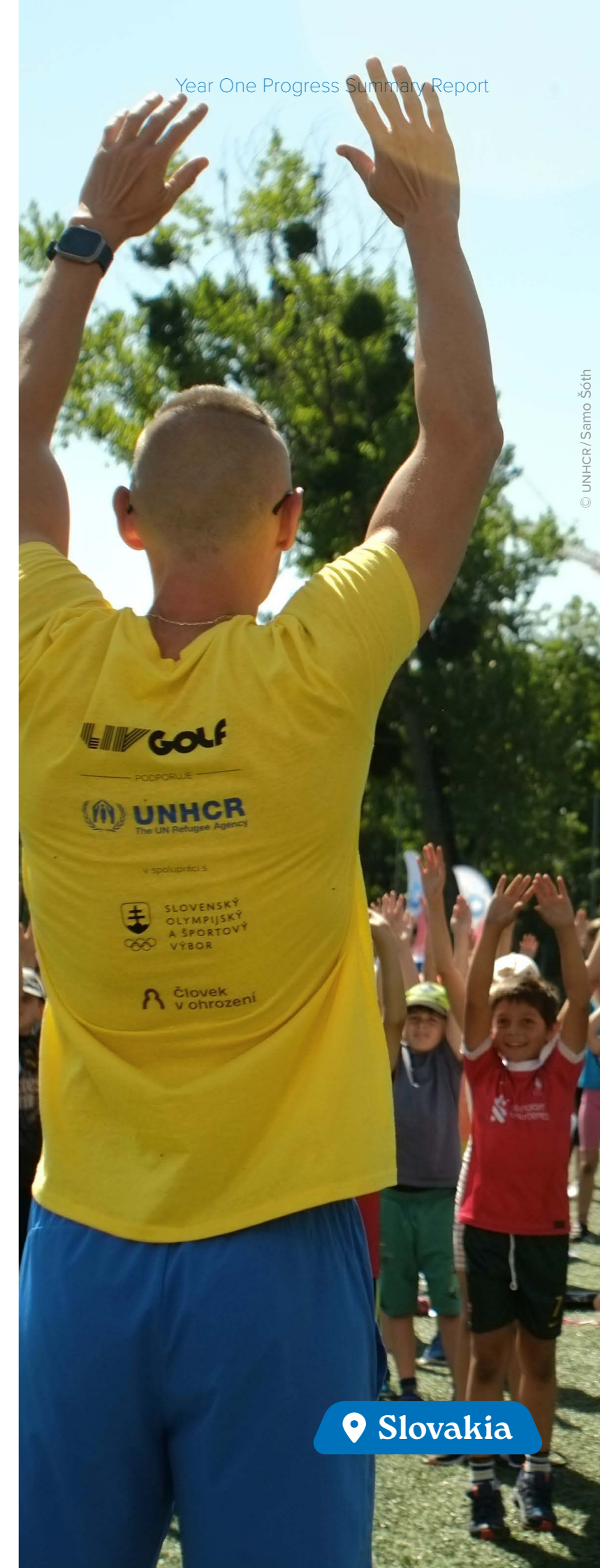
Golf and golf-inspired activities were in full motion, with play-based activities generating enthusiasm and positive engagement from communities.

Community coaches began integrating golf-inspired elements into regular sport sessions, while golf clubs opened their doors and hosted golf summer camps and workshops where refugee youth, alongside their local peers, could learn the basics of the game.

LIV Golf and UNHCR worked with global experts and the golf sector to **develop a first-of-its-kind Golf for Protection toolkit—a pioneering resource that gives partners, coaches and communities a clear, adaptable guide to deliver play-based golf activities in refugee contexts.** In 2026, the final draft of the toolkit will be piloted with communities and local clubs to capture their voices, insights and feedback to ensure it reflects local realities and over time increase reach and impact.

The first implementation year was not without challenges. As global humanitarian funding continued to shrink, financial pressures affected critical services, including cash support for vulnerable families, healthcare, and education. This reduced the scale of assistance at a time when needs were rising, pushing already vulnerable communities closer to the edge. In this context, the UNHCR–LIV Golf partnership played an important role in keeping support going, helping ensure protection services including safe sport activities could continue.

In just one year, the partnership is nearing the halfway mark towards its ambition of reaching close to one million forcibly displaced people and vulnerable communities – achieving 41% of the direct and 44% of the indirect beneficiary targets.



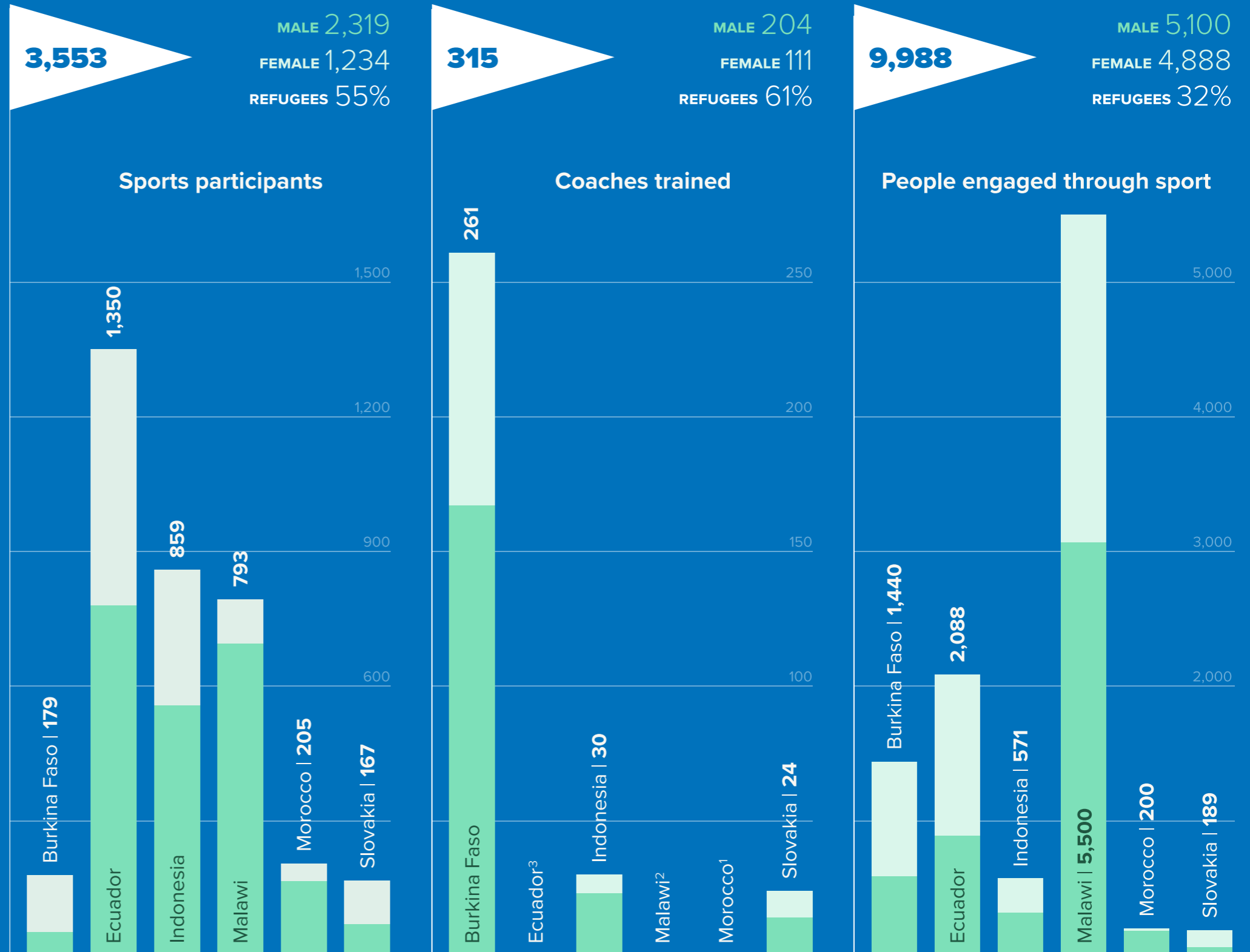
Top achievements

In its first year, the project partnership delivered strong early impact. **3,553 individuals accessed safe, protective sport and golf activities, 315 coaches strengthened their skills and knowledge to design and deliver sport for protection programming, just under 10,000 people (9,988) engaged in awareness raising and sensitization activities on rights and protection** through sport and play.

Participation was inclusive, with **nearly 45% participation from girls and women**. The reach across refugee and host communities was balanced, showing the importance of engaging the whole community to promote resilience together.

Participation was across generations. **Young people (aged 12-24) made up the largest share (67%)**, but activities also engaged younger children (9%), participants over 25 (24%), and even a small number of participants aged 60+.

In addition, **11 sport spaces were upgraded or equipped** in Burkina Faso and Slovakia, with further sites in Malawi already identified for improvements in 2026. Through the UNHCR-LIV Golf partnership, **30+ organizations have been mobilized** in six countries – across sport, golf and beyond – behind a common vision to support refugee inclusion and protection.



¹ Morocco: Coach training was delivered through FIFA Foundation, complementing the LIV Golf project activities.

² Malawi: Coaching activities were not implemented due to delays and reduced capacity after office restructuring caused by funding challenges.

³ Ecuador: Coaching and training sessions were integrated into selected awareness raising activities.

Voices from the field . . .

In Burkina Faso a new collaboration with the Golf Club of Ouagadougou brought golf into summer camp programming.

When Ange first saw golf on television, he never imagined he would one day hold a club himself. Born in Burkina Faso to refugee parents from Togo, Ange is now 21 years old and preparing for his final year of high school. His dream? To become a computer programmer—a passion inspired by Artificial Intelligence pioneer Yoshua Bengio.

But in August, Ange was one of the ten refugee youth who, along with their Burkinabe peers, joined a golf camp in Ouagadougou. “I joined out of curiosity,” Ange recalls with a smile. “I wanted to discover something new and have fun. I learned so much, especially patience and concentration, which are essential in golf and in life. Golf gave me a sense of freedom and connection with nature”. For Ange, the experience was more than just learning a sport. It was about connection. “I loved being with the other participants and the coach was fantastic,” he says. “To me, golf is an art. It didn’t take much—just a bit of my time—to learn the basics. If I get the chance, I’ll keep training.”

Balkissa, another participant, woke up before dawn to cook for her younger siblings, then took the 6 a.m. bus to make sure she arrived on time for the start of the Golf for Protection camp. The pull of trying something new was strong.

Refugees in Burkina Faso often live in overcrowded urban compounds, sharing small spaces with large families. Young people are often feeling stuck because opportunities are so limited. In that environment, a sense of freedom is rare and so are the chances to try something new. This golf experience gave them that space: to calm, concentrate and release. It is proof that despite obvious challenges and barriers, golf has the ability to develop confidence, focus and to heal.

“I wanted to discover something new and have fun. I learned so much, especially patience and concentration, which are essential in golf and in life. Golf gave me a sense of freedom and connection with nature.”

↑ ANGE

📍 Burkina Faso



Voices from the field . . .

Indonesia

“It was my first time trying golf, and I didn’t know it could be this exciting.”

IKRAM

For the first time on World Refugee Day, a mini-golf tournament brought a new kind of energy to Jakarta. Organized at HOLEO Golf & Museum by the seven refugee-led organizations that implement the UNHCR-LIV Golf project, refugee children and youth, together with their local peers, had a chance to try something completely new.

Instructors showed everyone the basics—how to grip the club, aim and keep score—and within minutes, the space transformed. Teams were formed, and every shot brought cheers or laughter. Win or lose, the real victory was having fun.

For many, it was their first time ever holding a golf club. Ikram, a 17-year-old from Somalia, was surprised by how much she enjoyed it. “It was my first time trying golf, and I didn’t know it could be this exciting,” she said. “I usually play futsal, so this felt very different. It was so fun learning how to hold the golf club and figuring out how to hit the ball into the hole”.

Habib, 15, from Afghanistan, felt the same. “Even though I didn’t win,” he said, “I still want to join again and try golfing more.”

Some of the adults and guardians who accompanied the children eventually joined in too, creating a moment of shared joy for all.

© UNHCR/Sugianto



Golf for protection

With golf being introduced for the first time in refugee contexts, a core priority of the UNHCR – LIV Golf partnership is to **equip communities with practical tools to use golf intentionally for protection**. This has led to the development of the Golf for Protection Toolkit, created over six months starting in 2025. Designed collaboratively, the toolkit is grounded in real community needs and refugee realities. It was informed by a desk review, consultations with 40+ stakeholders across 25 discussions, field testing, and validation with LIV Golf, Think Beyond and the UNHCR Sport Team.

The toolkit's trauma-informed approach recognizes that young people affected by displacement often carry stress, uncertainty, disrupted routines, and difficult past experiences. A golf session cannot solve these challenges, but it can offer something powerful: a calm, predictable environment with trusted coaches, consistent routines, and positive feelings of joy and a sense of belonging. **The toolkit equips coaches to recognize signs of distress, create emotionally safe environments, and support spaces where healing, resilience, and connection can emerge.** Golf's slower pace, rhythm, and controlled movements make it uniquely suited for this work, helping players develop emotional regulation, focus, and a sense of progress.

The result is a practical, adaptable resource, a learning journey where each of the four parts of the toolkit prepares coaches for the next: understanding what golf for protection is, learning the golf skills themselves, applying trauma-informed coaching principles, and adapting sessions for delivery in different displacement settings. The toolkit serves dual audiences: community coaches, teachers, and refugee-led organization staff in displacement settings who may have never seen golf before, and golf coaches seeking to integrate protection principles and make traditional club spaces more inclusive to displaced youth. **The toolkit contains 12 life skills sessions, 25 golf-inspired activities adaptable to camps, urban areas, and temporary contexts,**

coaching guidance, disability inclusion protocols, and practical adaptations using locally available materials. Golf for Protection simplifies the game: two clubs (pitching wedge and putter with large heads for easier hitting), soft colourful balls, and homemade or plastic tees. Coaches guide players through foundational skills (grip, aim, stance) before progressing to putting, chipping, and long shots, with no golf course required.

The toolkit is still a live document to allow for inputs from communities, coaches and golf experts in 2026, during which the toolkit will be piloted to support coach development, local adaptation, and consultations on partnerships with golf clubs, schools, and local organizations for sustainable expansion. Findings will inform a designed published version.

A golf session cannot solve these challenges, but it can offer something powerful: a calm, predictable environment with trusted coaches, consistent routines, and a sense of belonging.

📍 Morocco



© UNHCR / Progettomondo Maroc / Nizar Laajali

📍 Malawi



© UNHCR / Plan International Malawi



Ecuador

“The dream is to see them accomplish their goal of becoming someone in life, the dream of feeling a ball at your feet or in your hands, no matter the sport – that’s the dream. **It’s the dream of being seen, whether in sports, in school, or in their community. To be noticed, to feel capable, to feel important.**”

↑ YELITZA

Voices from the field .



It takes the whole community to make positive change. In the outskirts of Quito, young people, parents and grandparents—including families who fled violence and found safety in Ecuador—gather to not just perfect their swing but to learn the basics together. From how to hold a club, the art of putting and chipping, bursting laughs and bright smiles reveal golf has quickly become a favourite.

A prior lack of exposure to golf proved to be no barrier for these children. As soon as they picked up their clubs, they were completely absorbed, focused on every swing, rather than the difficulties faced by all: for some, the trauma of displacement that forced them from their homes, for others the impending risks in their neighborhoods. For all, golf and other sports are offering a safe space to learn, grow and dream of a brighter future. A chance to forget worries and risks that often linger close by.

Here, it is not about traditional golf, but also about teamwork. Two teams face each other, separated by a line of cones. Each player stands in formation, focused and ready. At the whistle, coach Dario begins the countdown—two minutes on the clock. The challenge? Hit as many cones as possible before time runs out. The air quickly fills with laughter and shouts. With every cheer and every swing, the teams grow closer.

Older youth like Marcela lead the way. She keeps the energy alive, encouraging younger participant to try again after a missed shot. For her, it's not about a perfect technique, it is about confidence, joy and the subtle power of connection. "What's important here is that they interact with each other, so no one feels left behind but that we are in this together. It is a safe space where you can come and spend time with us".

Across Ecuador, sport is becoming a safe place for connection, a platform that creates a sense of belonging, builds stronger communities, and sparks laughter that draws in parents, grandparents, and curious neighbours. For all of them, keeping their kids safe is the number one goal.

"The dream is to see them accomplish their goal of becoming someone in life, the dream of feeling a ball at your feet or in your hands, no matter the sport—that's the dream. It's the dream of being seen, of being included—whether in sports, in school, or in their community. To be noticed, to feel capable, to feel important." says Yelitza, one of the participants' grandmother who often joins a quick game in the neighborhood park.

"What's important here is that they interact with each other, so no one feels left behind but that we are in this together."

↑ MARCELA



— SUPPORTS —



© United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees
February 2026

UN City, Marmorvej 51
2100 Copenhagen Ø
Denmark

www.unhcr.org