

**Refugees in Ecuador**  
receive advice on cacao  
harvesting.



# Encouraging Self-Reliance

**Self-reliance** is the social and economic ability of an individual, household or community to meet its basic needs and enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable and dignified manner. Displaced people who are self-reliant lead active and productive lives, and weave strong social, economic and cultural ties with their host communities. UNHCR's livelihood interventions enable refugees to become self-reliant and reduce or remove long-term dependency on humanitarian or external assistance. Support for livelihoods starts with an understanding that, even when they are displaced, people possess many skills and assets. Enabling them to use and rebuild these assets can therefore help them to make a living in a new environment and be better prepared for return or resettlement.

UNHCR has established self-reliance as an important objective in order to improve the dignity, resilience and food security of refugees and other displaced people. It has developed a clear, structured approach to livelihood programming that has resulted in an increasing number of its operations implementing comprehensive two- to three-year strategies promoting access to livelihood skills, productive assets and economic opportunities for people of concern.

Indeed, the scale of livelihood efforts across UNHCR operations has seen a tremendous surge in recent years. The global budget for planned livelihoods activities leaped by more than 25 per cent between 2011 and 2012; another 15 per cent increase is anticipated in 2013. In 2013, livelihoods interventions will be conducted in 87 operations, up from 79 in 2012, primarily for the benefit of refugees (62%), followed by IDPs (22%) and returnees (13%).

This chapter illustrates why supporting self-reliance (and moving

beyond lifesaving activities) is an important component of UNHCR's overall responsibilities towards displaced people.

## STRATEGIES TO BOOST CAPACITY AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS

UNHCR is building technical capacity and knowledge among its staff and partners. In 2013, new technical and programming guidelines released in 2011 (see [www.unhcr.org/livelihoods](http://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods)), based on lessons learned by UNHCR and its partners in implementing livelihood interventions in various operations, will strengthen livelihood programmes. In addition, quality standards will be applied to programmes in line with the minimum economic recovery standards ([www.seepnetwork.org](http://www.seepnetwork.org)), a companion guide to the SPHERE standards on humanitarian response. The new guidelines present UNHCR's approach to livelihood programming, key elements of the livelihood programming cycle, examples of innovative partnership options, and an overview of relevant livelihood interventions.

A new training programme to help integrate this guidance into project activities has been piloted in Lebanon and Uganda, while an e-learning module for urban situations is under development. A database of 70 experts in livelihood and food security assessment, planning and project management has been streamlined, so that UNHCR can rapidly source relevant expertise for short- and longer-term field deployments.

### PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES

IN THE **East and Horn of Africa**, UNHCR teamed up with the Danish Refugee Council in Kenya and commissioned the Food Economy Group to conduct a household economy assessment among urban refugees and asylum-seekers in the Eastleigh, Kayole and Kitengela areas of Nairobi. The income, expenditure and food consumption patterns of refugees in the three suburbs were quantified. The analysis revealed different levels of wealth and access to livelihood assets among the urban refugee populations. The results of the assessment will form the basis of a comprehensive programme for the next three years, including measures to expand access to entrepreneurship opportunities and the labour market for working youth and adults, as well as establish social safety nets and basic skills training for the most vulnerable. To ensure the effective implementation of this programme, UNHCR is reinforcing its urban protection team in Kenya with specialists in livelihood programming.

Promoting livelihood opportunities is also a core priority of UNHCR's new strategy for camps hosting Somali refugees in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. A multi-sectoral mission to Dollo Ado in early 2012 aimed to define a course of action for the next three years. The programme would be funded by a substantial financial donation from the IKEA Foundation. This three-year funding commitment will allow UNHCR to pilot innovative livelihood interventions using value-chain approaches and poverty-reduction strategies.

The Graduation Model is an approach that has been implemented by the World Bank Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (C-GAP) in a dozen countries worldwide. It aims to "graduate" people in rural or urban areas out of poverty

through a sequenced combination of interventions that include grants, capacity building and microfinance. This model will be adapted to suit the Dollo Ado camps with the help of a national NGO experienced in rolling out this approach. The ILO will help to boost the capacity of implementing partners to deliver quality entrepreneurship training to youths and adults, and help ensure that the labour market drives skills-training efforts. Private enterprise and cooperatives, rather than relief NGOs, will be encouraged and sponsored to provide goods and services for refugees and host communities.

In **West Africa**, for several years UNHCR has been working to increase the self-reliance of refugees. Following the cessation of refugee status for large numbers of Liberian and Angolan refugees in 2012, more than 11,600 Liberian refugees chose to stay in the country that gave them refuge. Liberian refugees who integrated locally in rural areas of Guinea and Sierra Leone have been aided for years by UNHCR-sponsored self-reliance projects in agriculture, soap making, dyeing and tailoring, and many have received vocational and skills training. Thanks to well-established procedures followed by all UNHCR partners, integrated refugees have gained access to health insurance, education, plots of land, homes and opportunities for economic activity. Liberians residing in Guinea, who are no longer considered refugees, now have title deeds for their agricultural plots and property papers for their homes.

In urban areas, where livelihood opportunities are challenged by high rental and transport costs, some refugees have been able to develop businesses with the support of UNHCR and partners. A combination of measures and close monitoring, as well as strong individual motivation and past business experience, have been key to success. For example, in the urban areas of Accra, Bamako Banjul, Conakry, Dakar and Lagos, Liberian refugees who chose to integrate locally have attended technical or professional schools, participated in entrepreneurship training and set up small businesses with the help of in-kind start-up kits, soft loans, technical support and cash transfers.

Access to microfinance – both savings and loans schemes – has improved and will continue to be emphasized. Self-employment has proved to be a viable solution for urban youth in a context of widespread unemployment. In Lagos, a group of Liberian refugees has successfully set up an international import/export business that covers the region. A Liberian tailor who owns a business, "Diamond Stitches," now has four local employees. Another Liberian woman now prepares fruit juices for an entire army barracks.

In Chad, a strategy to promote self-reliance among refugees from the Central African Republic and their host communities in the Nya department aims to ease the sustainable socio-economic integration of the refugees into their host communities. The strategy rests on three complementary goals: to increase food security and self-reliance through agriculture, livestock reproduction and microenterprise opportunities; to enable refugees and local communities to gain access to basic and secondary health care; and to make sure that refugee and local children have access to basic education.

Activities undertaken as part of the strategy include allowing refugees to acquire additional arable land and training them in cost-efficient agricultural techniques, such as seedling production and soil management. In addition, sensitization campaigns teach refugees and local people to benefit from rural savings and credit cooperatives.

In **Latin America**, the Mexico Plan of Action remains the framework for strengthening self-reliance among people of concern in the region. Access to employment and sustainable housing are the biggest challenges faced by urban refugees wishing to integrate into local communities. In recent years, alliances with national and municipal authorities have helped to promote access for refugees to public services and housing.

Field operations in Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador are undertaking socio-economic assessments in order to refine their work plans. UNHCR continues to promote the inclusion of refugees in the labour market through partnerships with the private sector. In Brazil, refugees have obtained employment through a partnership with a job placement company. In Costa

Rica, a job placement firm has helped some 20 refugees to find employment.

UNHCR has established many vocational training projects in the **Middle East and North Africa** region, and is currently developing its livelihoods strategy and a comprehensive programme for asylum-seekers and refugees living in Cairo. Throughout the process, UNHCR will explore possibilities for partnership with other UN agencies, national NGOs and private-sector institutions. These will aim to provide economic opportunities to refugees as well as poor Egyptians living in the same neighbourhood. Livelihood interventions will consist of four integrated components: economic assessment and follow-up for individuals and households; capacity-building and vocational training; employment and apprenticeship services for skilled and unskilled workers; and financial services for potential entrepreneurs.

#### GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

AMONG UNHCR'S LIVELIHOOD interventions is the Community Technology Access (CTA) programme, which teaches computer skills to school children, youths and adults from refugee and host communities. CTA facilities can be used for educational, employment, business and personal purposes. By the start of 2013, the CTA programme will be operating in Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, the Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, Ukraine and Yemen. A recent evaluation of the

programme in five operations (Armenia, Georgia, Kenya, Rwanda and Yemen), has provided recommendations on ways to increase the impact of CTA facilities.

A strategy for the second phase of the CTA programme, to be rolled out in 2013-2014, will introduce measurable indicators to track programme results over time. The emphasis will be on enhancing the livelihood-enabling benefits of CTAs, including through distance learning.

#### STRATEGIC ALLIANCES FOR ENCOURAGING SELF-RELIANCE

UNHCR WILL WORK ON AN agreement with the NGO Trickle Up and the BRAC Development Institute to assist in piloting the Graduation Model in refugee operations. This new collaboration will be well underway in 2013-2014. Trickle Up has worked with C-GAP to implement this model in India and has solid experience in poverty-reduction programming.

UNHCR will continue to call on the ILO's expertise in the fields of microfinance, skills, enterprise development and other sectors to provide field operations with the necessary technical expertise and connect them to networks of local partners. Collaboration with UNDP on livelihoods will continue under the framework of the Transitional Solutions Initiative in eastern Sudan and Colombia. UNHCR will also count on partners such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Norwegian and Danish Refugee Councils to support the timely deployment of experienced staff and to implement effective comprehensive strategic plans for livelihoods support. ■

SUPPORTING SELF-RELIANCE AND MOVING BEYOND LIFESAVING ACTIVITIES IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF UNHCR'S OVERALL RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS DISPLACED PEOPLE

# Objectives of Livelihood Programming

UNHCR's livelihood programming model proposes a comprehensive range of interventions with short-, medium- and longer-term objectives, as follows:

**1. Livelihood provision interventions** which are designed to **meet basic needs and minimize expenditure** by providing cash or in-kind goods such as food, and providing basic services either free of charge or via cash or vouchers.

**2. Livelihood protection interventions** which aim to assist people of concern to increase or diversify their sources of income, and prevent them from adopting negative coping strategies, such as turning to crime or prostitution.

The objectives of these interventions are to assist in:

- **recovering or protecting livelihood assets** through production subsidies, cash or vouchers for work, community contracting, conditional grants for micro-business development, and the development of savings schemes;
- **adapting to new environments** through training in local languages and life skills, help in obtaining documentation, and the provision of legal and employment counselling; and
- **building or improving livelihood assets and strategies** for the medium-term through, for instance, targeted training in vocational and technical skills, instruction in agricultural production, construction work and crafts, and training in entrepreneurship.

**3. Livelihood promotion interventions**, whose objectives are to:

- **promote favourable policies**, such as the right to work, and
- **improve access** to key institutions, markets and services, such as training institutions, production infrastructure, financial services, trade cooperatives and community-based organizations. A critical part of these efforts is the provision of information on services, entitlements and rights.