

Refugee Livelihoods Network (RLN) June 2005

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Livelihoods after Resettlement

This RLN issue focuses on refugee livelihoods in resettlement countries, looking at what is known about the livelihoods of resettled refugees and what lessons can be drawn from existing programmes in this area. UNHCR realizes that, in order to establish resettlement as a truly durable solution for refugees, the Organisation must be responsive to the subsequent issues arising in the context of integration in resettlement countries. The Integration Initiative, which is a joint initiative by NGOs, host governments and UNHCR, endeavours to encourage the exchange of "best practices" and to mainstream a set of principles endorsed at the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees. The ability to establish sustainable livelihoods after resettlement may not only be of vital importance to resettled refugees and host communities, but may also affect the ability of those in the diaspora to contribute to the livelihoods of friends and relatives in their regions of origin through transnational activities or eventual return.

The next RLN issue will be a compilation of items that were sent in late for previous issues. This double summer issue, appearing in early September, will focus on refugee livelihoods in general; so please send in anything that you had wanted to share with other subscribers earlier but just did not get around to doing. We are very interested to learn about projects aimed at improving refugee livelihoods around the world, or relevant research papers, handbooks etc., preferably available on Internet. Almost 440 practitioners, researchers, policy makers and refugees have subscribed to the newsletter so this is a great way to share information with a group of interested specialists. The RLN moderator invites subscribers to submit papers, reports, descriptions of projects and relevant website links focusing on refugee livelihoods. You can send your contributions to REF.NET@inter.NL.net before 24th of August. If you want to have a look at earlier RLN themes, visit our website below.

[Click here to go to the new link to previous newsletters](#)

Key Publications and Reports:

UNHCR Handbook on Refugee Resettlement:
Building Bridges to Economic Self-sufficiency: Employment and Training

This chapter focuses on strategies to support resettled refugees in securing economic self-sufficiency through employment and training. Economic self-sufficiency is one of the most important factors in successful integration, with earning capacity influencing the ability to 'purchase' many of the other resources required to rebuild life in a new country, including housing, health care and education. Employment is also important for long-term economic stability, especially in times of difficulty or crisis. As well as providing the means for economic stability, employment has a powerful influence on one's capacity to

participate as an equal in the receiving society. Without employment, refugees risk becoming trapped in a cycle of social and economic marginalisation affecting not only them but possibly future generations as well.

[Click here to access this chapter on employment and training](#)

Refugee Opportunities and Barriers in Employment and Training

This 2002 report by Alice Bloch emphasises that getting refugees into employment appropriate to their skills is crucial to the process of integration. The report also stresses that refugees are able to make an important contribution to UK society and the British economy. The data in the report is taken from a survey of 400 refugees participating in the labour market, comprising equal numbers of men and women, as well as from 80 interviews conducted with respondents from the Somali regions, Iraq, Turkey, Kosova and Sri Lanka. The report highlights that tight legislation used to limit the social and economic rights of asylum seekers in the UK ultimately impacts on their long-term social and economic integration prospects. An initial period of unemployment or inactivity, and the consequent deskilling of refugees who arrive with professional qualifications, has a long-term impact on their future participation in the labour market. Refugees tend to experience high rates of unemployment, working when they do in a few low-pay sectors under poor conditions. They experience various barriers to employment, the most common being inadequate knowledge of the English language and lack of UK work experience. Female refugees, the elderly, the young, and those asylum seekers who find themselves dispersed to regional areas are most vulnerable to unemployment. Refugees in employment tend to be fluent in English, young, male with secure immigration status, resident in Britain for five years or more, and with education and/or training from the UK. Some of the barriers to refugee employment call for a revision of local initiatives and resource distribution, while others require a change in government policy.

[Click here to view this report](#)

Refugee Women – from Volunteers to Employees

This 2005 research study on paid and unpaid work in the voluntary sector and volunteering as a pathway into employment was carried out by the Working Lives Research Institute and the Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit, London Metropolitan University. The research report documents the experiences of refugee women as volunteers in a range of organisations, including Refugee Community Organisations, refugee agencies and 'mainstream' or generic voluntary organisations. It identifies the barriers refugee women face in making the transition from voluntary to paid work and the resources they use to overcome them. The report includes examples of good organisational practice in supporting refugee women volunteers, making the best use of their skills and experience and helping them find employment, and it makes a

number of recommendations for voluntary and community organisations regarding how refugee women's concerns could be included in employment and equal opportunities policies and practices.

[Click here to access this research study report](#)

Young Refugees: Setting up Youth Groups for Young Refugees in the UK

This guide is an introduction to setting up groups for young refugees that allow them to: develop a social network and positive identity; access information; acquire skills that will help them to establish a livelihood in the UK; raise their profile; and participate in self-advocacy activities. Many young refugees have had experience of conflict and trauma; they experience new difficulties on arrival in the UK. These difficulties can include: living in poverty and social isolation; poor housing; emotional or mental health related problems; discrimination and racism; difficulties in accessing mainstream services; separation from family and friends; and having to take on adult responsibilities. Despite these many challenges, there is very little support available to them. The guide argues that being part of a group can play a crucial support role for refugees and allow them to achieve change on an individual, as well as a group, level.

[This Save the Children guide can be accessed here](#)

Learning and Good Practice:

The ASSET UK Development Partnership brings together voluntary and educational agencies in order to develop ways of helping those newly arrived asylum seekers who are dispersed into regional areas in their process of social and vocational integration. The partnership is developing and testing initiatives (on a local and national level) that will enable asylum seekers to live as independently and productively as possible in their given circumstances so that they are able to find meaningful employment in the UK once they have received a positive decision on their status. At the same time, the partnership addresses the need for developing quality infrastructures within the dispersal areas in the UK so that professionals and practitioners working with newly dispersed asylum seekers are better equipped to deliver services. By working with key agencies and employers, and providing asylum seekers with a clearer understanding of the UK labour market, the partnership believes it will have a beneficial effect on public opinion in regional areas, helping to prevent additional discrimination and disadvantage commonly experienced by asylum seekers and assist community cohesion. ASSET UK also addresses the need for newly arrived asylum seekers to learn and improve their English language skills.

[Click here to read more on the Asset UK Development Partnership](#)

The Refugee Council

The Refugee Council's Training and Employment Section provides learning, development and employment opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers. The Council has 20 years' experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees to help them overcome barriers they face in accessing education and employment, thereby assisting their successful integration into society. The Council's training centre, based in London, provides a uniquely supportive environment in which students gain the confidence, skills and recognised qualifications they need to achieve their goals. Courses are provided in English language skills, business English and facilitating the access of refugees into UK labour market employment; work placements and job search workshops are also offered.

[Click here to access this website on Refugee Council courses](#)

The Bridges Programme

The Bridges Programme is a specialised agency that helps refugees and asylum seekers living in Glasgow gain meaningful work experience and access relevant courses within their professional field of expertise. The Programme focuses on two main activities: the first is 'Work Placement and Work Shadowing' and the second is 'Overseas Trade Assessment and Reskilling' (OTAR). Asylum seekers are mostly prohibited from working, but they are often accustomed to participating actively in their communities. The Bridges Programme can help organise a work shadow placement that gives asylum seekers a great opportunity to get back into the work environment without breaking the law. Refugees may experience difficulties in getting a job appropriate to their skill level. The Bridges Programme can help organise a suitable work shadow placement in order for them to develop a network of like-minded professionals, to see how their vocation operates in Scotland first-hand and to get some references. OTAR focuses on the obstacles to finding work at a level appropriate to their skill and experience faced by refugee tradespersons when they do not have any form of professional accreditation. The course is designed to fast track refugees through Scottish tests, to enhance their skills where necessary, and finally to send refugees to employers with recognised accreditation and vital knowledge about the working practices of the Scottish construction industry. The course is currently open to those with permission to work who have skills in a trade discipline, such as electricians, joiners/carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, painter/decorators, tilers and welders.

[To learn more about the Bridges Programme, check the new website](#)