

UNHCR High-Level Officials Meeting: International Trade Centre Statement

High Commissioner, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

The International Trade Centre works to deliver a trade-led and market-based approach that builds economic opportunities for displacement affected communities. We aim to connect these populations to economic opportunities through strengthening micro, small and medium sized enterprises and linking them to new markets.

During the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, ITC pledged to connect refugees, returnees and hosts to markets and job opportunities, fostering self-reliance and economic growth in the targeted countries. This is being done by building technical and business capacities, carefully linked to market demands, and developing linkages to new markets.

Through our joint pledge with the Norwegian Refugee Council, ITC has continued to deliver the Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (RESI) in Kenya, focusing on providing market-based skills and digital entrepreneurship development to over 300 refugee and local youth and supporting them to work as online freelancers in digital marketplaces. During this project, we were also able to adapt the ITC entrepreneurship ecosystem mapping methodology to be relevant for a humanitarian context. We then implemented this mapping in Garissa County to further the conversation on enabling business and entrepreneurship ecosystems for refugee and host communities.

ITC also pledged to expand our footprint in contexts of displacement. To this end, we have delivered support focused on digital livelihoods in Somalia, funded by the Government of Japan. Following a similar model as the work done in Kenya, we are enabling over 200 internally displaced persons and local Somalis to build market-oriented skills and connect to online work platforms. The results are still forthcoming, but positive progress has been reported.

We have also developed a project concept to support refugee women artisans in Uganda, in cooperation with a local design company, and are looking forward to sharing the findings from this endeavour at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

Over the past two years, we have been fortunate to collaborate with different types of partners. Like many actors present today, we coordinate with UNHCR and align to their strategic priorities. We have also engaged with the Smart Communities Coalition, focused on Uganda and Kenya, to deliver the Digital Agents pilot project to support last mile distribution in the Kakuma camps, alongside Mastercard, Total Energy Solutions and NRC.

Another collaboration we look forward to growing further is our partnership with the Amahoro Coalition, a network of private sector actors across East Africa that support refugee inclusion. This partnership demonstrates the increasing role that the private sector can play in supporting displaced communities to connect to markets and work opportunities. Moving forward, we need to continue to identify and develop complementary partnerships to further engage the private sector in our efforts.

That being said, we remain open to all types of collaboration across the private and public sectors and would welcome new partnerships or ideas related to delivering sustainable livelihoods for displacement affected communities.

Thank you very much for your time.