



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



GENDER EQUALITY PROMISING AND EMERGING PRACTICES

FROM INSPIRATION TO IMPLEMENTATION



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Cover photo: Afghanistan refugees at a World Refugee Day 2023 event at a UNHCR community center in Damascus, Syria.

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ACRONYMS AND OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL

AAP	Accountability to affected people
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity Policy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)
GBV	Gender-based violence
MCO	Multi-country office
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WLOs	Women-led organizations

PROMISING PRACTICES

Argentina

ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation

Colombia

CORPRODINCO	Corporación de Profesionales para el Desarrollo Integral Comunitario
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
NSAGs	Non-state armed groups

Democratic Republic of the Congo (the)

AFDD	Associations de Femmes Dynamique pour le Développement de Rushayo
BMT	Baraza Maman Tusimami
MRN	Maman Reveillons Nous
PSS	Psychosocial support
RAVEC	Reseau des Associations Villageoise d’Epargne et de Crédit
REGED	Reseau Genre et Développement

Djibouti

ADDs	Agence Djiboutienne pour le Développement Social
CPEC	Caisse Populaire d’Epargne et de Crédit
GEA	Groupe d’Entraide et d’Affinité des Femmes Réfugiées du Camp d’Ali-Addeh
IGAs	Income-generating activities
PAER	Refugee Entrepreneurship Support Project
PPA	Project Partnership Agreement

Malawi

EMIS	Monthly Education Management Information Systems
FGDs	Focus group discussions
GPI	Gender Parity Index
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
NAWEZA	The Naweza Girls' Education and Empowerment Project
SMC	School Management Committee

EMERGING PRACTICES

Croatia

EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
RLO	Refugee-led Organization

Guatemala

ALA	Asociación La Alianza Guatemala
AoR	Area of responsibility
CBP	Community-based protection
COCODES	Community Development Councils
FUTEC	Field Unit Tecun Uman
JxC	Jóvenes por el Cambio

Syrian Arab Republic (the)

CCs	Community centres
CLIs	Community-led initiatives
ICDL	International Computer Driving Licence
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
SSSD	Syrian Society for Social Development

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. UNHCR works in more than 135 countries around the world to provide international protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons and seeks permanent solutions for them. UNHCR recognizes that displacement affects individuals differently, depending on their age, gender and other diversity characteristics and promotes gender equality as an integral part of its protection mandate.

Gender equality is a fundamental aspect of the rights-based approach in UNHCR's protection mandate, which is aligned with the new results-based management approach [COMPASS](#) and the renewed [Global Strategic Directions \(2022-2026\)](#). These guide UNHCR's efforts to achieve a sustainable impact on the lives of forcibly displaced and stateless people. UNHCR's commitment to gender equality is further guided by the 2018 [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\)](#), UNHCR's community-based approach as well as associated tools and guidance, including UNHCR's [Gender Equality Toolkit](#) and the [Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People \(AAP\)](#). These resources, along with promising practices previously documented in the field, are essential in advancing and informing gender-responsive programming and addressing gender inequalities.

Gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) programming are complementary. Gender equality programming is essential for long-term efforts to address GBV, and gender equality is cross-cutting in every aspect of GBV programming. Efforts to address GBV through gender equality practices should follow GBV principles, including the survivor-centered approach, and align with [UNHCR's Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence](#).

This report aims to promote gender equality by documenting promising and emerging practices that have proved effective or are showing potential for positive results in advancing gender equality across UNHCR operations. By sharing these gender-transformative interventions, this report aims to inspire others to apply and replicate these practices in different contexts, with a focus on promoting gender equality and driving positive change.

For the purpose of this exercise, a promising practice should be understood as a practice that works well in a specific context, produces positive impacts on the lives of individuals or communities, and has the potential to be replicated in other contexts. An emerging practice is a practice that shows early indications of producing positive results to transform lives of individuals or communities”.

The practices documented in this report emanate from initial consultations with all seven of UNHCR's regional bureaux. They reflect initiatives that challenge discriminatory gender norms, foster the meaningful participation and representation of women and girls in leadership and decision-making structures, enhance capacities for self-protection, and work with women-led organizations (WLOs) and organizations led by refugee women to increase women's agency in areas that are traditionally male-dominated. The report also includes practices that adopt an intersectional approach to address gender inequalities, remove structural barriers and empower women and girls.



RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this report is to facilitate knowledge-exchange among UNHCR field operations, headquarters, regional bureaux and partners, and identify emerging and replicable lessons from the implementation of UNHCR's Policy on AGD. It also aims to support UNHCR's operational capacity to capture, reflect and demonstrate innovative AGD practices.¹

To systematically document these practices, the UNHCR Methodology on Collecting Practices and Case Studies, developed by the Division of International Protection for collecting practices in gender equality, gender-based violence, community-based protection and child protection, was used as a basis.

The data collection process involved a desk review of primary sources, including operational reports, UNHCR project documents, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks and reports. Additionally, online semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with relevant stakeholders, including headquarter units, regional bureaux, and field operations, ensured broad participation in the screening, selection and documentation of practices.

In total, five promising practices and three emerging practices were documented in Argentina, Colombia, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Guatemala, Malawi and the Syrian Arab Republic, which all showed evidence of effectiveness and have the potential for replication in diverse contexts, exemplifying UNHCR's commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.

¹ UNHCR, "ES/2022/02 Longitudinal evaluation of the Implementation of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity policy Year 1 Report" (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/media/es-2022-02-longitudinal-evaluation-implementation-unhcrs-age-gender-and-diversity-policy-year.

PROMISING PRACTICES

ARGENTINA – DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT OF REFUGEE WOMEN



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PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Buenos Aires, Argentina (online training sessions and outreach included Córdoba, Mendoza and Salta provinces)

Implementation period: April 2021 to May 2023

Population group(s): Forcibly displaced women between the ages of 18 and 60 residing in Argentina, with a focus on women from Venezuela and other nations including Colombia, Haiti, Peru, Cuba and the Syrian Arab Republic

Objective: To enhance refugee and migrant women's employability, enable access to decent work opportunities and foster economic independence

Partners:

Public sector: General Directorate of Collectivities of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

Private sector: L'Oreal Foundation, Accenture, MindHub and Digital House Coding School, Numen Academy

Thematic focus: Livelihoods and economic inclusion

THE ISSUE

As of August 2023, more than 7.7 million refugees and migrants were from Venezuela, with over 6.5 million of them being hosted in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.² The COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on the refugee population compared to the host population. The economic turmoil caused by the pandemic further compounded the long-standing fragility of Argentina’s labour-market.³ The slow and uneven post-pandemic recovery has additionally limited livelihood opportunities for refugees and migrant women.⁴ Amid increasing regional urbanization, a large number of forcibly displaced and migrant women also face new dimensions and levels of marginalization and discrimination.⁵

Refugees from Venezuela face high rates of unemployment of up to 25 per cent in most host countries in the region, including Argentina. According to the Joint Needs Assessment conducted by the R4V Platform, employment emerged as the top priority need reported by surveyed Venezuelan individuals in Argentina (35 per cent). On average, Venezuelan women have higher educational levels than Venezuelan men, and 70 per cent are estimated to have work experience,⁶ yet Venezuelan women are disproportionately affected by unemployment and informal labour, with the unemployment rate for women being twice as high as that of men (12 per cent). An additional challenge faced by Venezuelan refugees and displaced persons in Argentina is the complexity and high cost associated with validating their academic credentials, which hinders their professional employment prospects.

Within households, the displacement experience tends to reinforce, reproduce and increase the differences in the distribution of care work and other unpaid tasks between women and men. The lack of childcare support particularly limits access to income-generating opportunities for women. Digitalization is rapidly changing the character of work around the world, and the information and communications technology (ICT) sector has a high workforce demand and growth potential.⁷ The implications of this digital transformation in the world of work for refugees are far-reaching but remain poorly understood. While there is growing willingness among the business community to support refugees, perceptions among potential remote employers indicate a number of barriers to the employment of refugees as remote workers. Some employers cite concerns about refugees’ permissions to work, lack of access to the internet and information and communications technology skills and tools.

2 The Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) www.r4v.info/en/home

3 International Labour Organization (ILO), “Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the labour market in Argentina. The challenge of fighting the pandemic and its socio-economic impact at a time of severe difficulty”, (2020). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_754689.pdf.

4 Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), “Plan de Respuesta a Refugiados y Migrantes (RMRP)”, (2022). Available from www.r4v.info/es/document/rmrp-2022-espanol.

5 UNHCR, “Respuesta para la recuperación socioeconómica de las personas refugiadas, solicitantes de asilo y otras personas de interés del ACNUR en las fases de emergencia y post emergencia COVID-19”, (2020). Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/details/78117>.

6 ILO and United Nations Development Programme, “Migration from Venezuela: opportunities for Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional socio-economic integration strategy”, (2021). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_775183.pdf.

7 “Digital Refugee Livelihoods and Decent Work – Towards inclusion in a fairer digital economy”, (2021). Available from www.ilo.org/global/programmes-and-projects/prospects/about/WCMS_779522/lang--en/index.htm.

PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

Step 1: Identifying gaps and needs through consultations

In 2020, the UNHCR Argentina Multi-Country Office (MCO) conducted virtual consultations on employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for refugees and migrants during the COVID-19 emergency and post-acute emergency phases in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Mendoza and Salta – locations with high concentrations of refugees and displaced persons. These consultations revealed that refugee and migrant women in Argentina have difficulties in accessing digital technologies. These difficulties arise from either the absence of suitable equipment or inadequate internet access, primarily caused by the high service costs and poor living conditions.

Step 2: Conceptualizing the Nosotras Conectadas Project

In 2020, consultations with refugee and forcibly displaced women and the General Directorate of Collectivities of the government of the city of Buenos Aires were organized. The General Directorate's mission is to promote integration and respect for the cultural diversity that refugees contribute.⁸ The General Directorate collaborated with UNHCR in designing and implementing the Nosotras Conectadas project in 2021, which was designed to provide professional training in the ICT sector. The training courses were run by two specialized companies⁹ with extensive experience in ICT training and a wide network of clientele. The existence of a technology district in Buenos Aires and in other major urban areas, such as Córdoba and Mendoza, where many companies are dedicated to innovation, provided relevant expertise and post-training employment opportunities.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the first edition of the project was entirely conducted in a virtual format. Over time, the project transitioned into a hybrid format comprised of virtual and in-person trainings.

Step 3: Engaging with refugee women to design the project and implementation

Refugee women were actively engaged in the design phase of the project through a consultative process carried out by the government of the city of Buenos Aires. During the initial phase, an assessment was conducted to pinpoint specific needs and challenges. Additionally, feedback from participating women was sought through dialogues and focus group discussions.

Step 4: Tailoring the training programme to the needs

In response to the local labor market's needs, two distinct training programs were designed. The first was Digital Marketing, which emphasized equipping the participants with specific tools for crafting digital marketing strategies. The second was Full Stack, which provided specific programming skills, including JavaScript, Node.js and Git. To complement technical skills, the training module of the project also included a component on soft skills to help the participants with job search strategies and methodologies that favoured their labour insertion in the local market¹⁰

8 See <https://buenosaires.gob.ar/subsecretaria-de-derechos-humanos-y-pluralismo-cultural/direccion-general-de-colectividades>.

9 See [MindHub](#) and [Digital House Coding School](#)

10 General Directorate of Collectives, "Formación en herramientas digitales y búsqueda de empleo para mujeres refugiadas", (2021). Available from <http://buenosaires.gob.ar/vicejefatura/derechoshumanos/noticias/formacion-en-herramientas-digitales-y-busqueda-de-empleo-para>

Step 4: Supporting professional transition and employability

The training component sought to equip women with the necessary skills to build on their professional experiences and to pursue new opportunities in the digital sector. The city of Buenos Aires supported the development of business plans for 100 women and provided scholarships to establish their own digital enterprises. Additionally, UNHCR, supported by funds from the L’Oreal Foundation, supplied 35 notebooks as work tools to the participants.

Step 5: Awareness-raising and dissemination

The awareness-raising and dissemination initiatives had a dual purpose: first, to highlight the project’s influence and empower women within the digital sector, and second, to engage with strategic partners collaborating with UNHCR in Argentina, the project’s sponsors, and the broader public.



RESULTS

The Nosotras Conectadas project stands as an innovative and pioneering initiative. While the documentation of the final project results is ongoing, interim reports show positive results on participation, accountability and access to economic opportunities. These results have been validated by project participants, partners and UNHCR.

- **Overcoming gender and social barriers to economic empowerment:** The acquisition of specialized ICT skills enabled the participants to compete for jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. Labour insertion, with an emphasis on self-employment and remote work, has yielded significant benefits for refugee women, particularly single heads of households with caregiving responsibilities. Through remote work and self-employment, these women can now combine their income-generating activities (IGAs) with caregiving roles.
- **Bridging the digital gender divide:** Through digital training scholarships, capacity building and the provision of necessary ICT resources such as notebooks, the project contributed to increase women’s inclusion in the digital sector.
- A total of 260 women have graduated from two training cohorts, and some have been hired by ICT companies or started working as freelancers in the sector. The first cohort provided digital training scholarships to 200 women in the first level of specialization courses including, testing, web development, database administration, programming techniques and software development. Thirty participants attended specialized training sessions delivered by MindHub, while 105 received scholarships. The online training sessions extended beyond the city of Buenos Aires to women in Córdoba, Mendoza and Salta provinces. The second cohort of 130 new participants joined the first level of specialization courses on programming and systems. Sixty graduates from this first cohort progressed to the second phase of advanced specialization focusing on project management, scrum, and advanced digital marketing, providing participants with highly specialized skills to advance further in their digital and ICT knowledge and employability.

ENABLING FACTORS

- ✓ **Collaboration with local authorities:** The project's success was significantly influenced by its collaborative approach, which involved establishing strong partnerships with key government entities.
- ✓ **Strong private sector engagement:** Engaging diverse private sector stakeholders from the outset ensured comprehensive support, expertise, resources and funds, contributing to the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

**TIPS FOR REPLICATION**

This promising practice offers valuable insights for replication and scaling up in other contexts:

- Conduct a labour market assessment and design training programmes that align with the specific opportunities and local labour-market requirements to ensure refugee women acquire skills that are in high demand thereby increasing their employability and economic prospects.
- Seek collaborative partnerships with the private sector to bring in technical expertise, resources and networking opportunities.
- Explore diverse funding opportunities and innovative financing mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability, expansion and impact.
- Encourage an inclusive approach that involves diverse refugee women in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

**MORE INFORMATION AND KEY RESOURCES**

UNHCR Argentina MCO site: www.unhcr.org/countries/argentina

Videos

- Argentina: Un programa de capacitación en desarrollo web acerca la tecnología a mujeres refugiadas (2023): www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJW54ZQrcNA
- En Argentina el cambio ya está en marcha: www.youtube.com/watch?v=abo4BQDTZCQ
- Snyre, la mujer a la que la programación le cambió la vida: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqe_ApM6g08

COLOMBIA – NEW MASCULINITIES



PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Cúcuta, Colombia

Implementation period: August 2022 – ongoing

Population group(s): Internally displaced men and adolescent boys and host community members between the ages of 13 and 59 years

Objective: To achieve gender equality through the prevention of gender-based violence by transforming relationships and the understanding of masculinity

Partners: Corporación de Profesionales para el Desarrollo Integral Comunitario (Corprodinco)

Thematic focus: Protection

THE ISSUE

Colombia has more than 8.3 million IDPs, with approximately 861,000 displaced since the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016,¹¹ with IDPs representing 88 per cent of the total number of victims of the armed conflict in the country. Colombia hosts the largest number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, totaling 2.9 million people, in addition to around 845,000 Colombians who have returned from Venezuela. In Norte Santander there have been more than 125,000 internally displaced Colombians since 2016 and 250,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela.¹²

11 UNHCR, “UNHCR in Colombia: who we are”. Available from www.acnur.org/pais/colombia

12 UNHCR Operational Data Portal, “Colombia”. Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/country/col>

As in other areas with the presence of non-state armed groups, the civilian population in Cúcuta is exposed to various forms of violence, including restrictions on mobility and communication outside the territories where communities reside.¹³ Despite efforts and the mobilization of women’s human rights organizations, discriminatory cultural patterns persist and are socially and intergenerationally reproduced.¹⁴ Participatory assessments, conversations and interviews with the community revealed various challenges which strongly highlighted the need to work with men and boys in redefining gender roles, preventing GBV, promoting healthy relationships, equitably participating at home and in the community, addressing gender discrimination and promoting gender equal partnerships.



PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

The New Masculinities project is implemented in communities where UNHCR and its partners have a presence and experience working with communities and local stakeholders. The project aims to help men and boys to recognize the diverse ways to express their masculinity and take action towards achieving gender equality. It explores how social construction influences the way in which men exercise their masculinity and gender roles in daily life. The approach used in the project combines theoretical elements of gender equality with participatory approaches and psycho-educational exercises aimed at equipping participants with tools for positive behaviour change. Through a participatory approach, men and boys are encouraged to consider new ways of expressing their masculinity that are more inclusive and support gender equality. The insights gained are supplemented with theoretical elements to shape discussions on the concept of hegemonic masculinity and explore how positive masculinity can benefit all.

Step 1: Community engagement and identifying participants

Outreach activities to foster engagement with community members, including women and men from diverse age groups with a focus on elderly men, adult men and boys were conducted. General calls were made through community leaders to raise awareness and encourage participation in the project. The leaders played a crucial role in facilitating communication and ensuring the involvement of the community.

Step 2: Preparation of tools and materials

Corprodinco, the partner in charge of implementing the project developed a comprehensive training booklet *“Promoting Positive Masculinities: Pedagogical Tools with a Gender Approach for the Prevention of GBV Community Component”* tailored to the audience. The training booklet covers key gender concepts and masculinity, violence, social skills, self-care and emotional management.

Step 3: Workshops

Workshops are designed, and methodologies adapted to the different age groups of the participants. In each session, participants reflect on their experiences, perceptions and behaviors in relation to gender. A variety of audiovisual tools, participatory dialogues are incorporated in the interactive approaches to encourage reflection, foster connections and build empathy.

13 UNHCR, “Monitoreo de Protección | Colombia: un lugar de cruce de movilidad humana forzada enero – mayo 2023”, (2023). Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101496>

14 Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, Consejera Presidencial para la Equidad and UN-Women, “Mujeres y Hombres: Brechas de Género en Colombia”, (2020). Available from www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/genero/publicaciones/mujeres-y-hombre-brechas-de-genero-colombia-informe.pdf



RESULTS

“I say it should be equal, everything should be equal. That is, if you both work, you should do the chores together ... take care of the children if they are small together – all that is nice to share with your partner.”

“New Masculinities” participant

“... you get it off your chest, but for a man, it is even more difficult because they are men and they say ‘men don’t cry’ but they also have emotions, and they have to take into account that the same rights that we have, they also have.”

“New Masculinities” participant

Three New Masculinities groups were established; and thirty men completed the training programmes through 12 workshops. UNHCR and its partners conducted a qualitative assessment which provided the following indicative results of the project’s transformative impact:

- **Redefinition of gender roles:** The project has redefined and transformed the participants’ perceptions of men and boys of gender roles. This shift has led to more equitable changes in responsibilities within families and the community. A significant change has been observed in the distribution of household and childcare responsibilities, and an increase in awareness of their significant role in GBV prevention.
- **Greater awareness of rights and gender equality:** Men and boys have heightened awareness of gender norms and now recognize that men and women possess the same rights and should enjoy the same opportunities.
- **Increased awareness of impact of harmful gender norms:** Participants have developed a deeper understanding of the protection risks (on both men and women) associated with negative and harmful gender norms including gender-based violence. They recognize that these norms hinder women and girls’ rights, protection, inclusion and opportunities to fully participate in all spheres of life.
- **Equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in leadership and community life:** The assessment revealed that community representation is no longer limited to men, which is exemplified in how community members are now actively seeking out each other, regardless of gender, to initiate activities and discussions.



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- Engage community leaders from the outset to amplify buy-in of the project, overcome resistance and foster trust.
- Increase focus on systematically scaling up work with men and boys in gender equality programming to ensure transformative impact.
- Frame the messaging around the positive aspects of masculinities rather than the negative and highlight how gender equality benefits all members of the household, community and society more broadly.
- Normative change can take time. Patience, respect and sustained effort are key to the deconstruction of harmful beliefs and practices.



MORE INFORMATION

UNHCR Colombia Operation site: www.unhcr.org/countries/colombia

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY MECHANISMS FOR THE PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO GBV



PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Implementation period: 2020 – ongoing

Population group(s): Women and girls at risk of gender-based violence

Objective: Community engagement for GBV prevention, and responding to survivors needs through psychological support and legal counselling in North Kivu

Partners: AIDPROFEN (Actions et Initiatives de Développement pour la Protection de la Femme et de l'Enfant) and SAFDEF which collaborate with community-based women's organizations, namely: Baraza Maman Tusimami (BMT), Réseau des Associations Villageoise d'Épargne et de Crédit (RAVEC), Associations de Femmes Dynamique pour le Développement de Rushayo (AFDD), Katala Women's Forum and Women's Association for Social Change, Union des femmes paysannes du Nord Kivu (Uwaki), Maman Reveillons Nous (MRN), Réseau Genre et Développement (REGED), Wamamaamkeni (Maman Reveillez-Vous), Coalition pour la Promotion de la Femme Africaine, Mamaamka (Femme Reveille-Toi) and the Bureau Central des Associations Féminines Kaniabayonga

Thematic focus: Protection

THE ISSUE

The DRC hosts over 200,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (54 per cent female and 46 per cent male).¹⁵ Over 160,000 refugees reside in North Kivu.¹⁶ Since the start of 2023, fighting between armed groups in the North Kivu province has escalated, displacing around 600,000 people, increasing the total number of IDPs to over 2.3 million. Reports on continued violence and human rights violations by non-state armed groups indicate an increase in killings, abductions and extortion. Women and girls are exposed to GBV, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as physical threats.¹⁷

Forced population displacement and extreme poverty reinforce unequal power dynamics that result in inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities between men and women, and between those in positions of power and marginalized groups, such as refugees and IDPs. GBV remains a grave risk, with common incidents including abuse, threats, physical, sexual, emotional and psychological coercion. UNHCR and AIDPROFEN found that women and girl survivors make up 90 per cent of reported GBV cases.

A limited number of Congolese women have access to safe income generating activities to meet their needs. Further, women and girls tend to have lower rates of literacy due to less access to education compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, in the North Kivu communities, women’s representation in decision-making bodies remains limited. Deeply rooted discriminatory gender and social norms hinder women’s potential, the respect for their human rights and the efforts to address the causes of GBV. Predominantly due to fear of retaliation or social stigma, survivors of gender-based violence are often reluctant to seek support and are unable to fully exercise their rights, including meaningful participation in decision-making and accessing services.¹⁸

PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

UNHCR established partnerships with two local women’s organizations, namely AIDPROFEN in the Masisi Territory, and SAFDEF in Beni and Lubero Territories, each of which collaborate with a network of community-based women’s organizations in the Petit Nord region and in Greater North Kivu. The project “Renforcement des mécanismes communautaires pour la prévention et la réponse aux VBG” (Strengthening community mechanisms for the prevention of and response to GBV) is ongoing and has five main components:

- 1. Women’s leadership:** This is supported through a rights and community-based approach that aims to strengthen the agency and voices of women in community structures by improving leadership skills and support to local initiatives.

15 UNHCR Operational Portal, “République Démocratique du Congo – Statistiques mensuelles des réfugiés et des demandeurs d’asile par type de population – 31 Juillet 2023” (2023). Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102809>

16 UNHCR Operational Data Portal, “Refugees in the DRC”, (2023). Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/es/country/cod>

17 UNHCR, “UNHCR deeply concerned by renewed violence displacing thousands in North Kivu, DR Congo”, (2022). Available from www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-deeply-concerned-renewed-violence-displacing-thousands-north-kivu-dr.

18 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “République démocratique du Congo: Aperçu des besoins humanitaires”, (2023). Available from <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/republique-democratique-du-congo-apercu-des-besoins-humanitaires-2023-janvier-2023>.

2. **Positive masculinity:** Men are involved in addressing discriminatory norms and unequal power relations as the root causes of GBV and gender inequality. Male positive masculinity ambassadors are trained and thereafter supported to engage other men and boys in the community to promote gender equality. The positive masculinity approach has been scaled up and expanded to more territories.
3. **Psychosocial support (PSS):** The women’s organizations are supported to create safe spaces, and women from the community are trained as psychosocial assistants to provide support and work alongside trained psychologists. These spaces have proved invaluable for survivors of gender-based violence, offering PSS care, referral to and information on legal, health and other support services. This community-level PSS approach has resulted in increased access and awareness of available GBV services and is instrumental in delivering effective and culturally relevant support.
4. **Cash assistance:** The provision of cash assistance is linked to the GBV response and risk mitigation needs. Project participants are identified through GBV services in collaboration with multiple partners, and secure methods of payment have been established.
5. **Legal assistance and advocacy:** In locations with trained legal personnel, the project offers legal services, counseling and judicial support for women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence. The project facilitators advocated with authorities for the documentation of IDPs who had lost documents to enable freedom of movement, registration and tracing of missing children, access to essential services, property and restitution claims.



RESULTS

An evaluation was conducted by the University of Goma in 2022 and highlighted the following:

- **Increased participation of women in leadership and decision-making:** The representation of women in committees and decision-making structures has increased from 0 to 35 per cent. A total of 180 women and girls have been trained on leadership and rights, enhancing their understanding and ability to exercise their rights. The increased representation of women¹⁹ is a positive step. However, there is an ongoing need to further support women in these committees to reach gender parity and to strengthen their influence in decision-making processes. Women and girls are now more engaged in community matters, sharing ideas and offering mutual support to one another.
- **Enhanced awareness of and access to GBV prevention and response services:** 12,973 people have been reached through GBV awareness-raising activities, providing knowledge about GBV types, consequences, and how to seek assistance (2,220 men, 7,425 women, 1,220 boys, 2,128 girls). 180 women have been trained in providing psychosocial aid for survivors, and all survivors of gender-based violence who were reached by the project, have been referred to medical and psychosocial care. Additionally, project participants designed strategies aimed at preventing and



19 Ibid.

responding to GBV in their communities, to promote women’s empowerment and to challenge harmful social norms.

- **Men and boys engaged in the promotion of gender equality:** 302 male ambassadors were trained, and sessions on harmful norms perpetuating GBV reached 10,818 men and boys. Awareness initiatives led by the male positive masculinity ambassadors also resulted in a change in attitudes, as reflected this participant’s testimony:

“The various sensitizations on positive masculinity have helped me understand that men and women are equal in terms of rights. My wife has the right to access various family resources, such as owning land, engaging in trade and working”

- **Cash assistance has improved the protection of women and girls:** 400 women and girls received multipurpose cash, enabling access to hygiene kits, educational reintegration and economic vocation and 22 projects were financially supported for community empowerment and GBV prevention and response. Cash assistance also contributed to the reduction of potentially harmful and adverse coping mechanisms such as exchanging and/or selling sex to meet their basic needs.²⁰

ENABLING FACTOR

Recognizing the role of men and boys as gender equality allies and engaging local organizations led by displaced women results in more effective responses and sustainable solutions.



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- Address the root causes of gender inequality in GBV programmes, practices and interventions, by supporting initiatives that contribute to the empowerment of women and girls, fostering their agency, meaningful participation and leadership.
- Explore partnerships between national women organizations, including those led by displaced women, that can support and mentor smaller organizations.
- Ensure an effective monitoring and evaluation strategy is in place so that the various gender equality and empowerment results of the programme are effectively monitored, evaluated and reported on.
- When working on positive masculinity programmes ensure feedback is regularly sought from women in the community so that the work with men and boys addresses the needs and priorities of women and girls and adheres to the principle of “do no harm”.



MORE INFORMATION AND KEY RESOURCES

UNHCR DRC website: www.unhcr.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo.

UNHCR DRC emergency page: www.unhcr.org/emergencies/dr-congo-emergency

²⁰ Ibid.

DJIBOUTI – REFUGEE WOMEN'S SELF-HELP AND AFFINITY GROUPS IN THE ALI-ADDEH CAMP



PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Ali-Addeh camp, Djibouti (expanded to Holl-Holl, Obock, and Djibouti ville)

Implementation period: Since October 2021 – ongoing

Population group(s): Refugee female-headed households, other refugee women and girls-at-risk

Objective: To improve livelihoods and protection from discrimination and gender-based violence

Thematic focus: Livelihoods and protection

THE ISSUE

Djibouti has become a refuge for those escaping conflict and instability in the Horn of Africa. The country hosts 21,621 refugees and 9,130 asylum-seekers²¹ across Ali-Addeh (49 per cent), Holl-Holl (23 per cent), Djibouti city (20 per cent) and Markazi (8 per cent). Predominantly originating from Somalia (43.4 per cent), Ethiopia (41.2 per cent), Yemen (10.7 per cent) and Eritrea (4.6 per cent) as well as other forcibly displaced persons from the DRC, Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and others. approximately 68 per cent of the refugees are women and children.²² UNHCR operates in Djibouti through field offices including in Ali-Sabieh, covering the Ali-Addeh and Holl-Holl refugee camps, where the majority of refugees (49 per cent) reside.

21 UNHCR, "Factsheet: Djibouti, April – June 2023 (Q2)", (2023). Available from <https://reporting.unhcr.org/djibouti-factsheet-5278>

22 UNHCR, "Djibouti". Available from www.unhcr.org/countries/djibouti

In the Ali-Addeh camp, unmarried women and girls with children are particularly vulnerable and often face social stigma and discrimination due to harmful gender norms which can result in their exclusion from various opportunities. The harsh desert environment makes livelihoods challenging. Insufficient resources create malnutrition in the camp, and around 20-40 per cent of the population face acute food insecurity.²³ As access to employment is extremely limited in Djibouti, refugees have little to no work or income generating activities, which can expose them to protection risks. The unemployment rates of women in the country reached 37.9 per cent in 2022.²⁴ Further, many young refugees who leave the camps in search of work are often at risk of exploitation and trafficking.

UNHCR and ADDS launched the Refugee Entrepreneurship Support Project (PAER) partnership in 2020.²⁵ This collaboration aimed to provide support for entrepreneurship among refugees, recognizing the need for economic empowerment.



PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

The project, Groupe d'entraide et d'affinité des femmes réfugiées du camp d'Ali-Addeh (GEA), is implemented by UNHCR through its partner, ADDS, a public institution which provides the necessary resources for the implementation of the Refugee Entrepreneurship Support Project (PAER), as part of its Urban Poverty Reduction initiative. Activities are monitored by UNHCR's livelihoods staff. As part of its efforts to strengthen the activities of the GEAs, ADDS supported the signing of an agreement between them and Caisse Populaire d'Épargne et de Crédit (CPEC), a microfinance institution in the legal form of a cooperative society. As a result, each GEA has opened a savings and credit account with CPEC. This agreement gave each GEA member the possibility of opening an individual bank account. Having their own bank account in a refugee context has enabled women to feel empowered, as traditionally women have deferred to men in the family to manage their finances. As some women have lower rates of literacy, the ADDS assists the groups with managing bank accounts and carrying out transactions with CPEC in compliance with the established rules. ADDS also provides capacity-building for GEA members, particularly in the areas of simplified accounting and resource management.

The GEA methodology

The GEA methodology was inspired and adapted from the MYRADA's Self-Help Affinity Groups.²⁶ The MYRADA "Self-Help Affinity Groups" emerged in [Myrada](#), India, in 1984.²⁷ The approach is participatory and encourages the formation of groups based on strong feelings of "affinity" as an enabler to link the members of the groups together, facilitating mutual aid and reducing their vulnerability.²⁸ This concept focuses on the empowerment of vulnerable groups through the enhancement of their skills, the

23 ACAPS, "Djibouti Drought", (2023). Available from www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20230310_acaps_briefing_note_drought_in_djibouti_0.pdf

24 World Bank Open Data, "Unemployment, female (% of female labor force) – Djibouti", 2022. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.FE.ZS>

25 Agence Djiboutienne de Développement Social (ADDS), "ADDS / UNHCR: A partnership agreement to better protect refugees living in our country", (2020). Available from www.adds.dj/en/adds-unhcr-a-partnership-agreement-to-better-protect-refugees-living-in-our-country

26 ADDS, "Les GEA – Groupes d'Entraide et d'Affinité", (2020). Available from www.adds.dj/les-gea-groupes-dentraide-et-daffinite

27 MYRADA, "Self-help Affinity Groups (SAGS): Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Financial Sector Development", (2005). Available from <https://myrada.org/self-help-affinity-groups-sags-their-role-in-poverty-reduction-and-financial-sector-development>

28 ADDS, "Les GEA – Groupes d'Entraide et d'Affinité", (2020). Available from www.adds.dj/les-gea-groupes-dentraide-et-daffinite

consolidation or creation of income generation activities and the improvement of their living conditions. These groups are anchored on the assumption that developing governance systems by the members would in turn foster the attitudes and skills required for sustained management and would build the ability to mobilize resources to establish linkages and initiate change. Together, these features form the basis of empowerment. Several impact studies have confirmed that this assumption is valid.²⁹

How does a GEA work in practice?

Each GEA consists of 15–20 members. The group uses the savings it generates, the credit it provides and the social commitment it entails as instruments for empowering and enhancing the supported populations, especially women with lower educational levels.

For a GEA to obtain support from ADDS, it must meet the following conditions:

- Hold regular weekly meetings;
- Make savings and invest the money saved by each member in a common fund (the amount of savings to be paid is set by the group);
- Grant interest-free internal loans to group members;
- Repay loans granted to members on time;
- Undertake and participate in community activities such as cleaning mosques, distributing clothes to orphans, etc.; and
- Keep registers to track subscriptions, attendance at meetings, internal loans to the group, as well as the recording of minutes of meetings, photos of community activities and more.

Step 1: Refugee women discover the GEA practice and seek support to replicate it

ADDS was implementing the GEA practice for some time within the host community in Ali-Addeh. As refugees and the host community reside in the same area, a group of Somali refugee women in the camp discovered the GEA concept's success in the local community and approached ADDS for support. This project was first introduced in the camp by 15 Somali refugee women and girls without any external support. The women then established a livelihoods project, which mirrored the GEA model that was used in the host community and later approached ADDS for financial support.

Step 2: Transferring the practice from the host community to the Ali-Addeh camp and beyond

These new GEA groups have been established with guidance and advice from the first GEA members themselves, and all groups receive regular capacity-building sessions on accounting and entrepreneurship.



RESULTS

The GEA for refugee women is demonstrating positive results in empowering refugee women and girls in the Ali-Addeh camp and beyond.

²⁹ MYRADA, "Self-help Affinity Groups (SAGS): Their Role in Poverty Reduction and Financial Sector Development", (2005). Available from <https://myrada.org/self-help-affinity-groups-sags-their-role-in-poverty-reduction-and-financial-sector-development>

- **Women and girls participate equally and meaningfully in decision-making and determining appropriate response:** Within the GEA groups, women play leadership roles in managing the collective fund and deciding on which project should be financially supported. The establishment of a committee comprising three members, including a chairwoman and two treasurers, reflects the GEA's commitment to women's representation and leadership.
- **Improved livelihoods and self-reliance opportunities:** The GEA groups provide a platform for members to access financial resources to establish income generation projects, such as restaurants and shops, thus gaining economic independence, which has resulted in investment in their families' education, food security and health. Women benefit from the GEA's interest-free loans and improved lending terms, helping them establish and sustain IGAs. The contributions of the GEA members to a collective fund improve the GEA's financial self-sustainability.
- **Enhanced inclusion through a community-based approach:** The GEA groups designed and implemented a community self-protection mechanism for women who often face marginalization and isolation. As these groups continue to grow and replicate, their collective voice gained strength, allowing them to advocate for their rights, challenge harmful norms.
- **Scaling up the GEA and integrating it into broader poverty reduction programmes:** The GEA had emerged as an opportunity for economic recovery and household empowerment and is now integrated as a sustainable approach to entrepreneurship.

2022 results, in numbers:

- **Entrepreneurship training:** 180 participants
- **Creation of IGAs:** 107 IGAs established
- **Participants of IGAs:** 321 individuals
- **Formalization (business registration):** 220 IGAs formalized
- **Assistance funds:** 128 IGAs received financial assistance
- **Training on the affinity grouping concept:** 75 women
- **5 groups established**



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- Promote peer learning and mentorship so that experienced women-led structures can guide and support newly formed ones, build solidarity, empower and advocate for gender equality and equal opportunities.
- If resources are limited, explore women-led community-based solutions, such as forming affinity-based groups to target specific marginalized or vulnerable populations.
- Explore partnerships with local financial institutions that can provide flexible funding support to refugee women initiatives.



MORE INFORMATION

UNHCR Djibouti website: www.unhcr.org/countries/djibouti

MALAWI – EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS IN MALAWI



PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi

Implementation period: 2019 – ongoing

Population group(s): Refugee adolescent girls and boys, teachers and parents

Objective: To increase refugee girls' access to and retention in primary and secondary education

Partners: Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in collaboration with OXFAM, Plan and the Ministry of Homeland Security

Thematic focus: Education

THE ISSUE

As of August 2023, there were 51,483 refugees and asylum-seekers (47 per cent female) in Malawi, from diverse countries of origin, including the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.³⁰ Many of these refugees live in the Dzaleka camp, which was initially designed to accommodate 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers. An estimated 67 per cent of the refugee population is under 24 years.

³⁰ UNHCR Operational Data Portal, "Refugee Situations", (2023). Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/mwi>

The protection risks faced by refugee women and girls are compounded by poverty, patriarchal norms and harmful practices. Additionally, an in-depth baseline survey conducted by the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) in 2019, identified several barriers to refugee girls' education in the Dzaleka camp including: overpopulation, interruptions in education when forced to flee conflict and inability to meet the school age requirements in Malawi, inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities, negative attitudes towards girls' education, child marriage and the burden of domestic chores. The survey also found that refugee girls felt unsafe in schools and that there was a lack of female teachers to serve as role models. Prior to the project, the primary and secondary schools in Dzaleka camp experienced higher dropout and repetition rates among girls compared to boys. Girls' retention in grade 8 (the final class of primary school) was low, with a gender parity index of less than 0.7.³¹



PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

JRS developed and initiated the Naweza Project to empower refugee girls, increase their access to quality education, physical safety and improve their overall well-being.³² The Parent Teacher Association and School Management Committee in Dzaleka identified girls in primary school who were most in-need and awarded them scholarships. This motivated the girls to remain in school and increase their academic efforts, resulting in a 1.0 increase in the gender parity index (GPI) by 2022. While the project was originally designed for girls, it has gradually evolved to include boys through the creation of a boys' club.

The Naweza project uses a holistic approach to support girls' education in the Dzaleka camp. It places a strong focus on community engagement activities to raise awareness and increase buy-in for girls' education. It also provides menstrual and hygiene supplies, sanitation facilities and coordinates a merit-based scholarship programme, encouraging girls to attend boarding school outside the camp and then enroll in Malawian universities.³³

The survey from 2019, conducted by JRS, gathered findings from the first year of implementation, extracted conclusions and set a baseline for the two subsequent phases that followed in 2019 and 2022. The second phase of the project built on the lessons learned and findings of the baseline study while the third phase aims to support the secondary and tertiary education scholarship recipients.

Community leaders are engaged in identifying the prevalent gender barriers, and are consulted in designing solutions, participate in meetings alongside the Parent Teacher Association and the School Management Committee. The leaders also work with the project implementers to sensitize the community to highlight the importance of girls' education and champion broader community support in dismantling harmful gender norms and stereotypes. The project actively works with fathers to create greater awareness and advocacy on gender equality.

Frequent dialogue, feedback and communication with girls, boys, mothers' groups, fathers and community leaders ensures buy-in and effective collaboration. Periodic reviews are conducted at all levels of the project implementation and are aligned with JRS's monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems, and the findings used to adapt the project during the project implementation.

Through the Naweza Clubs, the refugee girls acquire self-advocacy skills and access to safe and supportive spaces that foster camaraderie and a diverse set of leadership and life skills. Additionally, the

³¹ Monthly Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) submissions for Dzaleka schools.

³² Jesuit Refugee Service, "Malawi: refugee girls invest in their education through scholarships". (2019). Available from <https://jrs.net/en/story/malawi-scholarship-for-refugee-girls>.

³³ Ibid.

Naweza mothers' group play an important advocacy role, as they participate in community awareness campaigns, and provide material and financial support to vulnerable girls and their families.³⁴



RESULTS

“When I knew [about the scholarship] after two years passed since finishing high school, I thought, ‘My future is back.’ [Before] I had no hope; at one moment I thought, ‘Ok, the next step is just to get married,’ so it was like my future was back.”³⁵

Naweza club participant.

The project resulted in several positive outcomes: In the first phase of the project, 93.6 per cent of girls were aware of the project, with 88 per cent acknowledging its positive impact.

In the second phase, 74.3 per cent of household heads reported having information on the Naweza project. Further, 50.3 per cent of the interviewed parents viewed the Naweza project as pivotal in guiding and counselling boys, girls and the youth. Additionally, the project entailed the provision of comprehensive protection and material support including personal hygiene items, scholastic materials, mentorship, a variety of life skill trainings and scholarships.



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- When working on girls' education, adopt a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequality in the community and in learning institutions, that exclude and prevent girls from staying in school.
- Ensure a framework is in place for broad community involvement, including leaders, fathers and mothers, at all stages of the project. Community sensitization is key in ensuring support, legitimacy and the sustainability of the project. It is possible to change the narrative for refugee girls even in challenging settings, but broad buy-in from the community is key.
- Ensure gender equality in schools by ensuring a safe, supportive and gender-inclusive learning environment and curriculum.
- Conduct gender analysis to gain a thorough understanding of the specific barriers and challenges faced by girls and use the findings to design an effective and multifaceted approach that addresses inequalities from several angles.



MORE INFORMATION

UNHCR Malawi website: www.unhcr.org/countries/malawi

³⁴ GlobalGiving, “Transformative Education for Refugee Girls”. Available from www.globalgiving.org/projects/naweza/reports

³⁵ Dzaleka.com, “‘My future is back’: post-secondary education builds hope for refugee girls in Malawi, (2023). Available from www.dzaleka.com/2023/03/my-future-is-back-post-secondary.html.

EMERGING PRACTICES

CROATIA – SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN REFUGEE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET



PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Croatia

Implementation period: October 2022 – ongoing

Population group(s): Refugee women from Ukraine in Croatia seeking employment or self-employment

Objective: Support the economic inclusion and empowerment of refugee women

Partners: The Svoja Association (Refugee-led organization)

Thematic focus: Livelihoods

THE ISSUE

Croatia has ensured unhindered access to its territory for Ukrainian refugees in line with the European Union Temporary Protection Directive. As of August 2023, 24,054 Ukrainian refugees had crossed the border, with women and children making up more than 80 per cent of the recorded arrivals.³⁶

³⁶ Available from the UNHCR Operational Data Portal: Ukraine Refugee Situation <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location>

Preliminary findings from an intention survey conducted by UNHCR indicate that 50 per cent of Ukrainian refugees in Croatia are more likely to be working compared with 40 per cent on average in other countries in the region. Many Ukrainian refugees have university degrees, however, a significant number of them lack IT skills, do not speak English or Croatian, and are faced with lengthy procedures to gain diploma recognition in the medical, teaching and care sectors.³⁷ Further, there is a high level of uncertainty in employment prospects due to the seasonality of jobs in hospitality and construction. The challenges are further compounded by the limited availability of privately owned housing units under the housing scheme for Ukrainian refugees.

Although there is a high demand for employees in the IT sector, the number of women working in this area is limited, due to gender stereotypes, discriminatory norms and lack of opportunities and skills. UNHCR's partner, the Svoja Association (hereafter referred to as the Association), seeks to address these challenges by promoting the economic inclusion and empowerment of refugees and complementing efforts by authorities such as the Croatian Employment Service and the private sector. The Association was established in July 2022 as the first Ukrainian refugee and women-led organization in Croatia.



PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

In 2022, UNHCR and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) supported the launch of the Association. UNHCR signed the first of four grant agreements while EBRD provided funding to further the participation of refugees in the labour-market, with a focus on the private sector.³⁸ UNHCR supported the Association's collaboration with various partners and stakeholders, including government entities, financial institutions and NGOs.

The Association uses a multi-faceted approach by providing employment advice, assistance with CV preparation, recognition of Ukrainian diplomas and qualifications, as well as free Croatian language courses and online webinars. An [online platform](#) enables refugees to access job vacancies and upload their resumes. The Association collaborates with national and local authorities and civil society organizations in several joint initiatives, including the establishment of referral pathways and capacity-building for its own personnel. Feedback is sought through regular online surveys to inform the design of the project interventions.



INDICATIVE RESULTS

The Association's support to Ukrainian refugees in Croatia has demonstrated positive results:

- A network of over 1,200 refugees established through numerous events, online webinars and other activities. One of the most sought-after training courses was provided through the Women in Tech programme by the Slovakian NGO, Female Algorithm.³⁹

37 Institute for Development and International Relations – IRMO, “Foreign Workers in Croatia: Challenges and Opportunities for Economic and Social Development”, (2022). Available from <https://irmo.hr/publications/foreign-workers-in-croatia-challenges-and-opportunities-for-economic-and-social-development/>

38 For more information, see www.ebrd.com/news/2023/ebd-partners-with-croatian-ngos-on-employment-for-ukrainian-refugees.html.

39 For more information, see www.ebrd.com/news/2023/ebd-partners-with-croatian-ngos-on-employment-for-ukrainian-refugees.html

- 18,000 people were reached through in-person and online conferences focusing on employment and access to the labour market.⁴⁰
- Facilitation of employment for 400 individuals with support from various partners (86 per cent were women) and 22 employers now share their job vacancies on the Association's online platform and networks.
- Provision of scholarships to Ukrainian refugee students to participate in youth business camps and universities.



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- ✓ Build capacities amongst refugee women in areas with high employability and demand early in the crisis, and ensure refugee women are adequately equipped with relevant information and skills to navigate and access the labour market to foster self-reliance.
- ✓ Empower and collaborate with women-led refugee organization as equal partners. Provide technical support, capacity-building, flexible funding and facilitate access to humanitarian coordination mechanisms.
- ✓ Support forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls' access to digital tools, digital services and opportunities and co-create interventions with them.
- ✓ Explore multistakeholder collaboration with public and private sector actors to find innovative and context specific solutions to refugee women's economic inclusion and empowerment.



MORE INFORMATION

UNHCR Croatia website: www.unhcr.org/countries/croatia/.

⁴⁰ For more information on the conference, see <https://svoja.eu/category/conference/>

GUATEMALA – STRENGTHENING EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Tecun Uman, San Marcos and Quetzaltenango

Implementation period: July 2022 – ongoing

Population group(s): Forcibly displaced persons and host community

Objective: Promoting the meaningful participation of women and girls

Partners: Asociación La Alianza Guatemala, along with protection networks in the Quetzaltenango and San Marcos departments

Thematic focus: Protection

THE ISSUE

Guatemala has a dynamic context of mixed movements as it is a country of origin, transit and destination of people with different profiles and protection needs. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region has intensified due to the large number of people moving towards⁴¹ the United States of America (68

41 UNHCR, “Guatemala – Monitoreo de Movimientos Mixtos: Perfil y necesidades de protección de las personas en movimientos mixtos en Guatemala: Enero-Junio 2023”, (2023). Available from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102637>

per cent men and 32 per cent women)⁴² San Marcos and Quetzaltenango are among the Guatemalan territories with highest rates of mixed migration. In 2022, Tecun Uman in San Marcos on the Mexican border, which is the official location for returnees, saw an influx of at least 37,000 people.

Analyses conducted by UNHCR in Quetzaltenango and San Marcos highlight the persistent lack of adequate basic services, gender and intersectional inequalities, women's limited representation in decision-making spaces and prevalence of GBV,⁴³ which compound the protection risks faced by forcibly displaced and indigenous populations.



PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

UNHCR in Tecun Uman addresses the identified protection risks and needs of vulnerable population groups by mapping community structures, strengthening the relationship between UNHCR and the communities and through capacity building.

UNHCR partnered with Asociación La Alianza Guatemala, a local NGO that works to prevent and respond to GBV, targeting three specific age groups namely, young Guatemalans refugees (Jóvenes Por el Cambio), adult refugee women (Mujeres Organizadas de Tecun Uman), and older Guatemalan women-at-risk (Mujeres Magnolias).

In the first phase, the participants were engaged in determining a baseline for the project's design, implementation and monitoring. A participatory methodology was developed to identify the protection gaps, risks and opportunities and all relevant stakeholders including local authorities, Community Development Councils (COCODES), women's, children's, and youth offices, NGOs and community members collaborated in the mapping. The findings shaped the subsequent phases of the project, and the assessment findings were presented in a visually engaging format, that enabled participants to fully understand the complex data and validate the results and plan.⁴⁴

During the second phase, action plans were developed and tailored training sessions were organized. The training content is carefully designed for each group, based on their strengths and needs. The use of creative facilitation approaches such as art and sport encouraged the active engagement of youth and knowledge exchange between local authorities and participants facilitated open dialogue. The provision of regular and comprehensive updates was key in fostering active engagement and empowered the participants to further self-mobilize.

The third and final phase focuses on continuous evaluation and adaptation, including assessing the effectiveness of interventions and identifying areas for improvement. Feedback is continuously collected through various channels and methods and informs the needed project adaptations. Flexibility allows for interventions to evolve and respond to changing needs.



INDICATIVE RESULTS

- Through community outreach, displaced women who are hard to reach or who previously were reluctant to seek protection including survivors of gender-based violence, are now increasingly approaching the local authorities, partners and UNHCR.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Guatemala: Monitoreo de Movimientos Mixtos. Enero-Junio 2023, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102637>

⁴⁴ Iconoclasistas, "Manual de Mapeo Colectivo: Recursos cartográficos críticos para procesos territoriales de creación colaborativa", (2020). Available from <https://iconoclasistas.net/4322-2>

- Youth have emerged as powerful agents of change against race and gender-based discrimination and play an instrumental role in highlighting the detrimental effects of early pregnancies among displaced and indigenous girls.
- The Magnolias Women’s Group has seen a growth in membership. Over 1,000 community members were reached through the group’s activities. There has been an increase of women and girls in male-dominated spaces. For example, the refurbishment of a community football field resulted in a more gender-inclusive facility for girls and the provision of gender-sensitive sports kits has encouraged more girls to participate in sports. Further, the women’s group has emerged as a strong voice and advocate for increased awareness of the gendered consequences of forced displacement.



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- ✓ When complex results, analyses and ideas are presented in visually engaging ways, the broader community is more likely to understand the findings, engage meaningfully, and provide valuable feedback to shape programmes.
- ✓ Acknowledge the valuable contextual knowledge and expertise that forcibly displaced and stateless women of all ages and diverse characteristics offer and enhance their meaningful participation in all stages of programming. An intersectional approach is essential to ensure sustainable protection outcomes that reflect the diverse capacities and needs of the community.



MORE INFORMATION

UNHCR Guatemala website: www.unhcr.org/countries/guatemala

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC – WOMEN'S COMMITTEES



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PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Location: Damascus and Rural Damascus Governorates, Syria

Implementation period: 2016 – ongoing

Population group(s): Women of diverse ages and backgrounds residing in urban settings, including from IDP and host communities

Objective: Promote women's empowerment, leadership and participation in decision-making structures, while addressing GBV

Partners: Syrian Arab Red Crescent, Al Nada, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, Syria Trust and Syrian Society for Social Development

Thematic focus: Protection

THE ISSUE

The ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has resulted in one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of our time. As of April 2023, there were 15.3 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance; approximately 6,754,237 internally displaced persons and 115,505 returnees. Further, as of August 2023, there were 18,512 asylum seekers and refugees. Rural Damascus and Damascus the capital city host approximately 1.7 million IDPs half of whom are women and girls.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ UNHCR Operational Data Portal, "Refugee Situations" (2023). Available from <https://data.unhcr.org/es/country/syr>.

Child marriage and domestic violence, as well as other forms of GBV, are prevalent and underreported. Divorced and widowed women, adolescent girls, women and girls with disabilities, older women, and refugee and displaced women and girls, particularly women of colour⁴⁶ are at risk of intersecting forms of discrimination and social exclusion. The Syrian women's committees in Damascus and Rurak Damascus were established by UNHCR and partners in 2016 in response to the complex challenges exacerbated by the crisis.⁴⁷



PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

The idea was developed by displaced women from the community centers in collaboration with UNHCR and its partners.⁴⁸ Standard operating procedures were introduced to guide the work of the communities. Displaced women who wish to represent their community on the committees, are eligible to become committee members. The selection process ensures a fair representation of women from diverse ages and diversities. All members receive a comprehensive package of various trainings, including child protection, GBV prevention and response, the code of conduct and communication skills. The members may request additional skills training depending on their tasks and needs.

Meetings to review progress, share information and the programme are held regularly. Feedback on services provided at the community or satellite centres is often collected through a variety of mechanisms available in each centre. The issues are addressed during the meetings to inform decision-making, corrective measures and planning.

Women's committees play a central role in GBV awareness-raising and community mobilization, and work to strengthen the participation of women in decision-making in the communities, engage in sensitization through awareness-raising on gender equality and GBV prevention and response, women's legal rights and available services. The committees also coordinate with UNHCR to assist vulnerable women to find work.



INDICATIVE RESULTS

- The committees play a pivotal role in elevating women's voices, priorities and views, and ensuring these are incorporated throughout the humanitarian programming, including in GBV programming, education and livelihoods.
- The committees influence and catalyze positive change and have become stronger advocates for gender equality owing to their enhanced knowledge and skills on GBV prevention and response.
- The committees organized basic literacy and numeracy courses for 144 displaced women and girls in 2022. Further, they advocate for women's access to digital skills and innovative technologies to enhance self-reliance.
- The committees have evolved into safe environments for their members to openly share their experiences. This has nurtured a sense of trust and solidarity.

46 OCHA, "Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic", (2022). Available from <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022-enar>.

47 UNHCR, "UNHCR Syria / Damascus FO: End of year 2017 / Factsheet", (2018). Available from www.unhcr.org/sy/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/02/04-Damascus-FO-Factsheet-2017.pdf.

48 UNHCR, "Enhancing Resilience and Self-reliance in Communities: End of Year Report 2017", (2018). Available from www.unhcr.org/sy/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/06/UNHCR-Syrias-End-of-Year-Report-2017.pdf

“Being a member of this committee has given me the opportunity to support other women suffering from the impact of the earthquake and help them survive this devastating incident”

Quote from a member of the women’s committee in Jaramana Community Centre

- The women’s committee at Al Moadmiyeh Community Centre organized an open bazaar, for 42 female-headed households to sell their handmade goods which other communities are now replicating. Future plans with partner Syria Trust include marketing training to enhance women’s product promotion skills.
- Owing to the success of the women’s committees, UNHCR and its partners will pilot the integration of the “Engaging Men through Accountable Practices” (EMAP) programme in Damascus and Rural Damascus in 2024, by establishing four men’s committees. These committees will work in tandem with the women’s committees to actively engage men in advancing gender equality.



TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- Include women’s committees in decision-making, coordination structures and other key spaces and allow their recommendations and priorities to shape the humanitarian response, for example in community-led initiatives.
- Invest in the capacity of the women’s committees and allocate sufficient funding to support their initiatives.
- To ensure the sustainability of the women’s committees, comprehensive plans should be in place outlining key actions to guarantee the continuity of the committees’ functions and activities in the event of a crisis.



MORE INFORMATION

UNHCR Syria website: www.unhcr.org/sy



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