Somali refugee learning to use a keyboard in Dadaab camp, Kenya.

Encouraging Self-Reliance

Fuelled by a strong desire to improve their lives, most refugees stand ready to take advantage of whatever opportunities are available to increase their self-reliance. At the Nakivale and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda, for instance, where refugees are given plots of land, many grow enough maize to sell their surplus in the capital, Kampala. Congolese refugees in Kampala purchase *bitenge* – a type of brightly-patterned fabric – from local wholesalers and sell it on at a profit to a wide range of customers.

This willingness to adapt to circumstances is critical to enhancing refugees' ability to take care of themselves and ensuring they do not become dependent on assistance. Self-reliant refugees are able to meet their basic needs with dignity. Where refugees do not have a chance to make a living, they face greater risks of economic and sexual exploitation and exposure to child labour. As such, support for livelihoods is an essential element of UNHCR's protection work. ●●●

NEW LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY

UNHCR is moving simultaneously on many fronts to increase the priority it gives to targeted livelihoods programming, be it in emergency, post-emergency or transitional situations. It is improving the quality of its livelihoods and self-reliance work, building partnerships with the private and public sectors to plan and implement solutions, strengthening monitoring, and taking a long-term approach when planning self-reliance programmes. This strategy will strengthen UNHCR's capacity to make refugee self-reliance a fundamental aspect of its protection work.

UNHCR's livelihoods strategy (2014-2018), which will be rolled out over the next five years, will seek to address critical gaps that hamper the organization's livelihoods work. They include a dearth of resources and expert staff and partners, as well as difficulty in aligning longer-term livelihood interventions with the shorter-term humanitarian programme cycle. Inaccurate assessments of labour-market needs have also plagued livelihood projects.

The new livelihood strategy will continue to include the "Graduation Model." Designed in collaboration with the BRAC Development Institute (BDI) and the NGO Trickle Up, the model aims to move people out of extreme poverty by using a carefully sequenced combination of social protection, measures to promote livelihoods and microfinance. Specific interventions will include identify-ing the most economically vulnerable households in a community, providing regular cash allowances to help these households meet basic needs, building savings to support resilience, training in skills and business development, and coaching or mentorship.

The goal is to "graduate" households out of poverty over a period ranging from 18 to 36 months, depending on the context. Preliminary results from pilot schemes suggest positive outcomes in food security and income generation, as well as other areas.

The city of Cairo offers an appropriate opportunity to test the graduation approach in an urban setting among two different populations requiring distinct UNHCR responses: long-staying African refugees and Syrians who have fled the emergency in their country. The project in Cairo will link up with a cash assistance programme already underway, and test the viability of "graduating" some participants off such assistance.

Over the next five years, UNHCR will apply the strategy to selected operations, bringing in new partners from the development world, academia and the private sector. UNHCR will also be testing and validating a number of partners who have expertise in areas such as data collection, economic surveys and business development services, with the aim of introduc-ing global framework agreements that can be applied by operations as needed.

PARTNERSHIPS

Economic interventions are complex and call for partners with suitable skills. Many UNHCR field operations work with relief partners who do not have expertise in economic programming, so developing "non-traditional" partnership arrangements will be important to support self-reliance programming and implementation in the coming years.

UNHCR will also continue to call on development expertise within the UN family. Based on the mixed-method impact evaluations in 2011-12, assessing the contribution of food assistance to durable solutions in protracted refugee situations, WFP and UNHCR agreed at a high-level meeting in January 2013, to develop a strategy for the transition to self-reliance, using a holistic approach and establishing the partnerships necessary to achieve it at the corporate and country levels, including with full engagement of UN Country Teams, development actors, host and donor states. The strategy will be implemented in three countries: Chad, South Sudan and Uganda, using new economic assessment criteria and methodologies to help target interventions.

The Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) based at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford is another important partner. The HIP is examining the role of tech-

ANTICIPATED AREAS OF INTERVENTION IN 2014	EXAMPLES
BASIC NEEDS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES	
Self-reliance and livelihoods	
Apply clear quality standards for livelihood programmes worldwide	■ Socio-economic assessments in 14 countries will measure impact and help direct targeted interventions based on local needs and market opportunities. ■ New training programmes in Pakistan and West Africa will help staff and partners to apply UNHCR standards in livelihoods programming.
Develop a global corporate strategy for livelihoods	■ UNHCR's capacity to promote self-reliance and raise it to a level of prominence in protection work will be enhanced. ■ 5 operations will receive specific support to increase the scope, scale and impact of their livelihoods programming. ■ 4 operations will receive extended support to improve the services available at community technology access (CTA) points and expand their use to ensure increased employment and self-employment opportunities.
Establish multi-year self-reliance strategies in UNHCR operations	■ Multi-year strategic plans will be developed in 12 countries to increase the sustainability and impact of livelihood programmes.
Increase access to financial services	■ Enhanced access to formal and informal financial services (including savings, loans, and insurance) will be facilitated in 30 UNHCR operations.
Increase access to wage-earning employment	■ 16 country operations will provide refugees with greater access to incentives/wages, apprenticeships, labour-market opportunities and job placements.

nology, innovation and the private sector in refugee assistance, focusing on livelihoods. The prime objectives are to understand the nature of the relationships between refugee livelihoods and the private sector, and the role of innovation and technology in refugees' economic activities.

Fieldwork conducted under HIP in Kampala and the Nakivale and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda since February 2013, has revealed that refugee livelihoods are built on connections with many different actors in the Ugandan economy. For example, the surplus of maize produced by refugees in Nakivale and Kyangwali settlements mentioned earlier, is distributed in Kampala by a network of Ugandan traders.

COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

UNHCR plans to shift the focus of its Community Technology Access (CTA) strategy away from simply providing infrastructure (see example in *News and Views*) and will move to adjusting the content of programmes to the requirements of particular refugee populations and local markets. This approach will seek to guide refugees in using both free and paid online learning opportunities. Refugees will also be able to develop and customize the livelihoods-related content of programmes to ensure increased employment and self-employment opportunities.

While taking advantage of the growing availability and diversity of online learning opportunities, UNHCR will give priority to identifying learning models that use technology specifically designed to improve the reach, quality, cost and efficiency of educational programmes. With mobile phones becoming the primary means of access to the internet for a large and growing percentage of the world's population, teaching methods and business models will have to adapt to this reality if they are to deliver learning tools more effectively.

An overview of some of the main areas of intervention anticipated in the coming year, with examples, is provided in the matrix in this chapter. These are extracted from UNHCR's programme plans for the 2014-2015 biennium. ■

In Ecuador, a new learning centre combines garbage and gigabytes

ESMERALDAS, FEBRUARY 2013 | *The UN refugee agency and municipal authorities in this city in northern Ecuador have opened a computer centre and digital library in a building made from concrete and more than 55,000 recycled plastic bottles.*

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story
11 FEBRUARY 2013

Ernesto Estupiñan Quintero, the mayor of Esmeraldas, and UNHCR Representative John Fredrikson opened the Adalberto Ortiz Quiñónez Library – named after a local writer – and said it would promote **peaceful co-**

The UNHCR / A. ESCALANTE

The UNHCR-funded computer centre in northern Ecuador was built using **tens of thousands of recycled plastic bottles**.

existence between refugees in the city, which lies close to the border with Colombia. Government officials, refugees and the local community came together to agree on the modern design and unusual materials for the building. The sand-filled plastic bottles were laid in concrete to create solid walls. The bottles had been collected by schoolchildren, locals and refugees.
UNHCR funded the construction of the library, which lies on land donated by the mayor. It contains books, digital materials, reading areas, meeting rooms and 120 computers that were donated by UNHCR's corporate partner,

Hewlett Packard (HP). The donation has supported the refugee agency's community technology access (CTA) programme, which provides forcibly displaced people and host communities in 22 countries with access to

computers.
Hewlett Packard also donated USD 50,000 to connect the library to four other computer centres in Esmeraldas province, which hosts thousands of refugees who have fled violence or persecution across the border in southern Colombia.

"The library demonstrates what the refugees and local community can achieve," said Fredrikson, who attended the opening ceremony. He explained that the library was also built to provide a valuable resource for the inhabitants of Esmeraldas and to promote recycling.

Mayor Estupiñan added that UNHCR and the municipality "have planned this initiative in a manner that will stimulate the development of the city and peaceful relations between refugees and the local population."
The library's CTA centre, meanwhile, will help users study, set up businesses and find employment. The facility also offers students the opportunity to learn how to repair basic computer equipment. Since 2008, the CTA programme, which provides access to information and communication technologies, has been rolled out to 22 countries, with 32 centres now fully operational. In the coming year, technical training will be provided in the library on web development and e-commerce, with funding provided by the European Union.
The UNHCR office in Esmeraldas monitors refugees while providing assistance to the most vulnerable. The Government estimates that about 1,100 Colombians flee to Esmeraldas every month, but not all of them register with the authorities. Ecuador hosts more than 55,000 registered refugees. ○