

Refugee Recyclers

Self-reliance – Local Integration

UNHCR and IOM fund a recycling centre employ refugees for the collection of recyclables from the municipality's garbage dump and the recycling itself at the centre.



UNHCR/Omar Hernández

Background

Under Venezuelan law, refugees have the right to work. However, a significant percentage of adult refugees have difficulties in finding employment, particularly in urban areas. Moreover, those who have access to employment opportunities are either underpaid or are unable to work in their area of expertise as they have lost their professional certificates or these are not recognized. The lack of documentation also hinders refugees' access to services of commercial banks as most financial institutions require proper documentation to provide micro-credits. Consequently, they cannot start their own business. This general lack of livelihood opportunities renders refugees, particularly women and girls –who may resort to survival sex-, vulnerable to exploitation and SGBV. This led UNHCR to think of income-generating activities, which could be performed by both refugee women and men in the absence of proper recognition of their qualifications.

Location Comunidad Las Minas,
Vía La Cope Municipio
Torbes, Táchira -
Venezuela

Time & Duration November 2010 - present

Population Groups Refugees

Actors UNHCR, IOM



Description

To increase the participation of refugees in activities benefiting both them and their host community, and increase their income, UNHCR and IOM encourage waste management companies to employ refugee women and men on an equal basis for recycling tasks at the municipality's garbage dump. In doing this work, refugees help the municipality reduce CO2 emissions to the atmosphere, which results in better air quality for the region's population. This is so given that the amount of plastic items being incinerated with the rest of the garbage is substantially reduced, as refugees collect them and dispose of them differently. These items are washed, then dried and finally triturated at the recycling centre.

Constraints

Limited jobs to offer.

Steps to Implementation

- UNHCR informs refugees of the employment opportunities at the garbage dump and the recycling centre.
- Refugees apply for the job.
- Once the applicants have been selected for the job, they are given training for their tasks.

Impact and Results

- 10 refugees are directly employed at the recycling centre.
- 90 refugees are indirectly employed.
- The municipality's air quality is improved as CO2 emissions to the atmosphere are reduced.

Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

Engaging refugees in activities benefiting the local community may improve their prospects of proper local integration.

