

Community Centre for Refugee Women and Children

Livelihoods – Self-reliance – Mental Health

With the support of UNHCR, the Fondation Orient-Occident established a Community Centre for refugee women and children in which they benefit from various services, such as vocational training courses and day care.



UNHCR/M. Fawe

Background

Most of the asylum seekers and refugees in Morocco are from Sub-Saharan Africa. A significant number are unaccompanied minors and single mothers, who are survivors of SGBV. Because of their legal status, language barriers and lack of employment opportunities, refugees usually only find poorly paid temporary jobs in the informal sector and have great difficulty to integrate into the local society. Such a lack of livelihood and integration prospects renders refugees, particularly women and children, vulnerable to exploitation and SGBV.

Location Rabat, Morocco

Time & Duration 2008 - present

Population Groups Refugees and asylum seekers

Actors UNHCR and the Fondation Orient-Occident



Description

In order to improve refugee women's livelihood and social integration opportunities, UNHCR supported the Fondation Orient-Occident in the establishment of the Community Centre for Refugee Women and Children. In this centre, refugee women and children have access to a wide range of services including vocational training courses, psychosocial counseling and day care and kindergarten for babies and children up to seven years old. The kindergarten and day care programmes, as well as the vocational training courses on bakery, hairdressing and tailoring are completely run by refugee women themselves. Courses on IT, Arabic and French are taught by local staff. Moreover, information and awareness-raising sessions on prevention, testing and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/Aids are regularly conducted at the centre. The facilities include a library, an internet room and areas where recreational activities are often held for children.

Steps to Implementation

Activities at the Community Centre have been implemented since 2008.

Refugees themselves take an active part in the running of the center where they can work as teachers, nursery assistants, etc. The project aims at promoting the empowerment and self-sufficiency of refugee women/girls and therefore tackling their vulnerabilities to SGBV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), including HIV, through the establishment of a "centre polyvalent" dedicated especially to women's. Activities in the center go from awareness and peer training programs for the prevention of STI/HIV to sensitization session on mother/child health and hygiene, psychosocial support for the most vulnerable cases, particularly girls and women victims of SGBV, Arabic courses to facilitate integration, vocational training, etc. A nursery has been opened in the center to take care of the children while the mothers are participating in the different activities.

Impact and Results

- Approximately 10 women benefit from weekly counseling session by the psychologist every month, while 20 women come to the social counseling session (Écoute Sociale) to address their needs and request different types of support. 40 women participate in classes and/or vocational training and IGA activities every month.
- 17 boys and girls are enrolled in the centre's day care programs

Refugee women who have benefited from courses and workshops at the FOO were able to learn the basics IGA, such as hairdressing, sewing, aesthetics and knitting. Although they are still unable to access the formal labor market in Morocco because of the absence of a legal status duly recognized by the public authorities, they may benefit from micro-projects (through another IP, AMAPPE) and work in the informal sector. Their active participation in the community center is also a way for them to restore their dignity and self-respect.

Constraints

- Even if properly trained, refugees may find it difficult to find jobs given that Moroccans often prefer nationals over refugee workers, including in the informal sector.

Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

In order to effectively improve refugees' livelihoods and integration prospects, vocational training and empowerment programmes should be complemented with awareness campaigns tackling local communities' discriminatory attitudes towards refugees.

