



LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

COVID-19: Emerging Practices

The COVID-19 pandemic is upending millions of people's lives and have devastating health and socio-economic consequences on humans and societies. The restriction on movement, the slowdown or even the halt in economic activity are having a severe impact on refugees' abilities to work and generate income. Many refugees have seen the business they run or work for, often as day workers, forced to close. UNHCR is advocating for the inclusion of refugees in social protection responses, providing cash as emergency response to ensure vital livelihoods are not depleted and facilitating the employment of refugees and refugees' production of essential items.

This document is a snapshot of emerging practices on livelihoods and economic inclusion to respond to the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Refugee health workers hired to combat virus

Around the world, refugees are using their skills to help the communities where they live during the coronavirus crisis. In several countries, governments have put in place special measures to authorize the hiring of foreign-qualified health professions and technicians, including those awaiting licensing or whose certification is yet to be validated by host countries.

In the Americas, [Peru](#), [Argentina](#), [Chile](#), [Cuba](#), [Columbia](#) and [Mexico](#) have put in place measures to authorize the hiring of foreign-qualified health workers. In [Cuba](#), refugee students in their third year of medical school or above are now also able to join the emergency response. In [Mexico](#), UNHCR is working with federal authorities to establish an expedited mechanism for the recognition of qualified and experienced refugee and asylum seeker health workers to join the country's emergency recruitment pool. In [Colombia](#), the Ministry of Health is working with the Association of Health Professionals to draw in [Venezuelan health workers](#) into the national health system.

Also in [France](#), [Germany](#), [UK](#), [USA](#), [Australia](#), [Austria](#), [Denmark](#), [Ireland](#), [Spain](#) and [Iran](#),

refugees are lending their expertise and stepping up to fill shortage of medical workers. The Council of Europe and UNHCR support Member States in bringing refugee health workers into the COVID-19 response through the [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#) (EQPR).

In [Mozambique](#), refugees with a relevant background will be able to apply as community health workers. The posts will be initially offered for three months.

In [Kenya](#), UNHCR have hired a refugee under the Community Services Unit to work on youth activities. The refugee colleague was able to obtain an Internship Pass which is issued to foreigners and refugees seeking internships/attachments. She is also a graduate nurse from a local university and is currently juggling between undertaking her nursing attachment at a National Hospital vis a vis working at UNHCR

Thanks to UNHCR'S community-based approach and refugee registration database, UNHCR is aware of thousands of forcibly displaced health workers who have expressed their willingness to work alongside

their peers in the COVID-19 response. Where national approaches permit, our teams are connecting qualified and

experienced refugee medics and nurses with hospitals and clinics in need of additional staff to confront the health crisis.

MADE51: Adapting to new realities in the retail sector

The artisan sector has been hit on two levels by the pandemic. On one hand, the retail industry is in a tailspin and buyers have stopped placing orders, and in many cases have cancelled orders that were already placed. MADE51 local social enterprise partners (LSEs), particularly those that sell wholesale, have seen traditional income streams grind to a near-halt.

On the other hand, refugee producers tend to work in groups in common spaces – this has meant that production processes have to be revised. In some cases, this means new workplace practices, in others, this means artisans are only able to work from home, if at all. In general, MADE51 LSEs have responded quickly and flexibly to changing norms.

In **Tanzania**, MADE51 partner WomenCraft reacted decisively as soon as the first official cases were reported, with artisans took a

lead role in developing and implementing safety measures. They decided to shut down production centers to limit exposure and distributed pamphlets about the Coronavirus and best safety practices to all artisan members. Artisans now weave at home, drop off finished products at agreed-upon locations for collection and use what's app to stay connected. WomenCraft is opening an online shop to stimulate direct sales to customers.

In **Jordan**, MADE51 partner SEP's workshops have been closed down since March 18th due to national restrictions on non-essential work. As artisans take up working from home, the social enterprise has simultaneously worked to drive online sales, creating a 'Stay at home, shop online' campaign where 20USD from every sale is spent on hand sanitisers and disinfectants for Jerash camp.



**STAY AT HOME
SHOP ONLINE**

THE SEP ARTISTS CONTINUE TO WORK
FOR YOU FROM THEIR HOMES AND
WISH YOU HEALTH AND PEACE, IN
THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

SEP
JORDAN

Refugee production of masks and soap

Across the world, refugees are producing masks and soaps to avoid and minimize spread of the virus in host communities.

In addition to MADE51 LSEs in [Kenya](#), [India](#), [Malaysia](#), [Egypt](#), [Turkey](#), and [Thailand](#), refugee production of fabric masks has been observed in other UNHCR locations, including [DRC](#), [Malawi](#), [Mozambique](#), [Zambia](#), [Zimbabwe](#), [Niger](#), [Ukraine](#), [Iran](#). MADE51 is promoting a new best practice to ensure best possible outcomes of these initiatives.

In [Cameroon](#), UNHCR has concluded an agreement with the government for the provision of 200,000 masks to be produced by 100 refugees in 10 refugee sites across the North, Adamaoua and East regions. The masks will be used for preventive purposes by the local population and refugees. The first 37,000 masks were produced over the reporting period.

Refugees making products for public good can create positive public exposure and build social cohesion. However, there can

be risks in refugees producing masks related to ensuring quality and good manufacturing practices. In an effort to mitigate these risks, the UNHCR livelihoods team produced a [guidance note](#) and a webinar on supporting refugee mask production using the MADE51 model.

Using this approach can ensure compliance with Fair Trade operating principles for refugee producers while leveraging expertise of local social businesses to increase market access, improve technical standards, and support distribution. The guidance includes a checklist for getting started, technical guidance on mask design and good workplace practices, how to find a production partner/market actor, tools for production partners, and case study examples.

In order to maximize impact for refugees, UNHCR offices are encouraged to source masks from refugee producers. This has already been observed, notably in [India](#), [Malawi](#), [Zambia](#) and [Ukraine](#).



Digitalizing and adapting the Graduation Approach

UNHCR's partners and co-members of the **Poverty Alleviation Coalition** are adapting their graduation programme to the preventive measures put in place due to COVID-19. Updates from HIAS, Village Enterprise and Concern Worldwide show how the central elements of the graduation approach are being digitalized for the continuation of the 18-36 months programme.

The communication with beneficiaries, trainings, counselling and psychosocial support have been digitalized through use of online e-training platforms, videoconference and social media. Much of the distribution of cash has been digitalized. However, where this is not possible, detailed guidance have been developed for door-to-door distributions.

To undertake coaching, coaches/social promoters are in constant contact with the families through virtual media. Coaches assess the family needs and orientate them in current realities and laws imposed by the local governments to make sure that families understand the new realities. Coaches use a video call with the whole family (when

possible) to create a plan with the family in these difficult times but also to assess any protection risk that might be increased due to the COVID-19 (e.g. GBV).

HIAS has created a whole platform to assist families with any requirements in the psychosocial. Moreover, every day HIAS creates a video that is distributed to all the families in order to help them cope the results of the confinement. If any member of the family needs individual assistant a private teleconference with a specialized psychologist is carried out.

Concern Worldwide is also adapting activities to ensure that they are safe to do, such as adapting delivery mechanisms and reducing physical contact, livelihoods diversification and innovation (using market information) and supporting market-based solutions. Village Enterprise are creating a digital package to provide as much of the programme as possible despite restrictions. They decided to further support through in-kind livelihoods provision, mainly focus on in-kind consumption support, during the first months to compensate the lack of incomes from businesses.

Agriculture as an opportunity amid COVID-19 pandemic

In **Liberia**, UNHCR adapted the livelihoods intervention to the new environment characterized by limited mobility, closure of businesses and markets, limited supply of food and non-food items. Focused on the strengths and opportunities in this new context, which the Covid-19 just emphasized, UNHCR increased the efforts in agriculture sector especially in farming activities.

Farming being one of the activities less affected by the regulations put in place by the Government, an increasing number of refugees decided to quickly get involved in farming activities after experiencing the deterioration of their regular business.

An integrated response was quickly deployed. A rapid appraisal was conducted by the implementing partner to identify those

refugees who were suffering business erosion and were interested in farming. Government secured additional land and UNHCR procured additional inputs on top of those already planned for the regular intervention to reduce the risk of losing productive assets. UNHCR and partner increased their target for agriculture of around 50% of the 2020 planned one. UNHCR also decided to support through in-kind livelihoods provision, mainly focus on in-kind consumption support, during the first months to compensate the lack of incomes from businesses.



Re-thinking loans and mitigating job losses

In **Kenya**, one of the MFIs that started to extend loans to refugees last year is restructuring loan repayment and allowing flexible payments, whereby clients pay what/when they can after catering for their essential needs. Refugee business clients have also benefited from the MFI making the deliberate choice to continue issuing loans to those who have successfully repaid in the past.

In **South Africa**, following UNHCR's request for intervention from the Banking Association of South Africa, all banks in the country will refrain from freezing accounts belonging to refugees whose permits expire during the lockdown period. Feedback mechanism through calls and SMS was also put in place in collaboration with partners. Apart from issues related to cash assistance, refugees can also report back price increases. UNHCR is also planning for a new cash grant in urban settings to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 on urban refugees.

In **Uganda**, MFIs serving refugees as part of the SIDA, Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation and UNHCR partnership have

also taken specific measures including pausing the on-boarding of new clients, careful loan disbursements, and putting on hold both loan disbursements and collection for some clients until further notice.

Costa Rica launched the platform "Bono Proteger" to provide monthly transfers to citizens recently laid off or independent workers, both nationals and residents. Persons of concern with work permits are also included in this.

UNHCR partners also provide technical support to refugees to adapt their businesses under the COVID-19 situation, with an emphasis on using digital platforms to sell their products.

40 new cash transfer programs to mitigate socio-economic impact have been introduced, like for example in **Bolivia, India, Iran and Peru**. A universal, one-off cash payment to all citizens will occur in **Hong-Kong and Singapore**. New in-kind schemes have also been launched, such as food vouchers in **Taiwan and Seattle** in the **United States**. Many countries provide cash benefits

to crisis-affected self-employed workers (e.g., [Ireland](#), [Portugal](#), [New Zealand](#)) and those in the informal sector ([India](#)). Please find more

emerging practices in the publication on [UNHCR cash assistance and COVID-19](#).



Inclusion of refugees in social protection responses

In [Uruguay](#), the Government announced the Social Development Ministry would receive \$22 million to reinforce social programs, such as building refugee centres and extending transfers on the Social Uruguay Card, a government-funded resource for the most disadvantaged to access food.

In [South Africa](#), recognized refugees can apply for the unemployment benefit “Social Relief of Distress Grant.” The Ministry for Small Business Development confirmed that 30 per cent of the planned financial support for small convenience shop owners and general dealers will go to foreign-owned

businesses, including those owned by refugees.

In [Armenia](#) the government in collaboration with the Armenian Red Cross will provide food and hygiene packages mainly to elderly people living alone and people with disabilities, including Syrian-Armenian refugees and people in social housing.

In [Slovakia](#), an NGO, (Mareena) developed a leaflet in English on labour code changes and financial aid for employers and the self-employed, salary compensations for employees. The leaflet can be found [here](#).

In **Czech Republic**, UNHCR partner (OPU) developed an information brochure for PoC on the current situation at the local labour market, associated rights, opportunities, extra benefits and compensations in order to limit a negative economic impact of the crisis on the PoC. The information brochure was translated into Russian, English and Arabic. The information note is available [here](#).

In **Republic of Congo**, refugees are included in a socio-economic response program to be funded by the World Bank. In view of the emergency, the World Bank decided to start providing assistance to urban households. Through its close contact with refugee communities, UNHCR is informing vulnerable refugees of the operation and how they can

register for support. Cash distribution will be channelled through the Lisungi Safety Nets System Project. Households who were already benefiting from the project received cash in response to COVID-19. The government is also targeting new households and surveys are ongoing.

The Ministry of Social Affairs provides in-kind assistance to vulnerable people (oil, salt, rice, dirty fish, etc.) and have already taken into account 90 vulnerable elderly refugees in Brazzaville. The distributions started the 15th of May with the participation of the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNHCR, our social partner AARREC and a representative of the urban refugees.

Facilitating access to online learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented situation whereby schooling has been disrupted for almost 1.6 billion children and youth as governments enforce total or partial closures of schools in efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

Like millions of others, refugees are making use of available online training and learning platforms to continuing building their skills and knowledge. Coursera for Refugees, which was launched in 2016 and serves over

40,000 refugee learners, has experienced a surge on enrolment and courses completion rates during the COVID-19 crisis. In the past 28 days, Coursera for Refugees experienced more than 2,289 enrolments and 6,765 lessons taking.

UNHCR has also consolidated a list of digital education resources and tools that can be used to provide continuous learning during the COVID-19 response. The list is available [here](#).



+2,289 enrollments
in the past 28 days



+7,979 hours
in the past 28 days



+6,765 lessons taken
in the past 28 days

Promoting backyard gardening as a means for alternative livelihood for refugees during Covid-19

In **Nigeria**, the government have decided to take measure to curtail the spread of the covid-19 pandemic. Most economic activities have been disrupted following the restriction imposed on movement and socioeconomic activities. To this end, livelihood activities that could be carried out within the neighbourhood and at household level has become an attractive means of survival. In addition, the most important need identified during this period is to ensure that households, especially refugees have food to eat while coping with government measures across the entire nation.

Between 23 - 28 April 2020, UNHCR, Ogoja sub Office responded to address the need of refugees by providing agricultural inputs that will enable livelihood activities that could be carried out within the neighbourhood and at household level - backyard gardening. The support is a continuation of 2019 livelihood

intervention design for refugees in both settlement and host communities.

The intervention was done in partnership with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Prior to the covid-19 challenge, a total of 322 households have been supported on micro-gardening activities. However, in order to cushion the effect of the pandemic on livelihood activities of refugees, the intervention was extended to refugees in other Local Government Areas (LGAs) like Boki, Obanliku and Etung.

The support will enable refugees to stay at home and stay safe. Further the support, households can cultivate different micro-gardening crops and harvest within 3-4 weeks after planting. The practice will ensure food security as well as promoting nutrition among the refugees.

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