

JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS



Switzerland. Refugees get job ready at IKEA Switzerland. © UNHCR/Mark Henley

Facts and Figures

Poverty. The vast majority of refugees live in developing countries struggling with high national poverty rates. This puts economic, social and financial pressure on refugees, host communities and host countries alike, and leaves them vulnerable to shocks.

Many refugees remain in protracted situations for years or even decades, making their right to an adequate standard of living and their needs for development – as well as humanitarian assistance – increasingly important.

Combating poverty and creating prosperity for refugees and nationals is thus a key challenge for the international community in the coming years, as emphasized in both the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Right to Work. The first step in combatting poverty, is enabling refugees and host

community members to engage in sustainable and dignified economic activity.

Although the right to work is at the core of the 1951 Refugee Convention and Human Rights Treaties, the majority of refugees are hosted in countries with either no or limited right to work.

Extending formal rights to work with just and fair conditions of work is therefore a key component in reducing refugee poverty. This includes not only the right to work in all sectors, but also freedom of movement, the right to own land and property, as well as access to finance, education, training, social protection and healthcare.

Allowing refugees to work reduces refugee poverty, and eases pressure and contributes to economic growth in host communities and countries through increased economic activity and reduced assistance need.

Unemployment. In countries where refugees can

legally engage in economic activity, many are restricted by bureaucratic challenges, lack of information and skills, language, networks, discrimination or xenophobia. In most refugee hosting countries, refugee unemployment is significantly higher than among nationals.

Addressing refugee unemployment means first building market relevant skills of refugees. Further, it means expanding available opportunities in the

The Global Compact on Refugees

The **Global Compact on Refugees** aims to transform the way the world responds to mass displacement, by operationalizing the principle of international responsibility-sharing that underpins the protection, assistance and ultimately pursuit of solutions for refugee situations.

It has four key objectives: a) ease pressure on host countries; b) enhance refugee self-reliance; c) expand access to third country solutions; and d) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

In recognizing the development challenges posed by large-scale refugee situations and the need for inclusive development in refugee-hosting areas to build the resilience of both refugees and local refugee communities, the Global Compact

The Global Refugee Forum

The **Global Refugee Forum – on 17 and 18 December 2019** – is an opportunity to mobilize all actors to make **concrete progress** towards the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, including by increasing refugee self-reliance and easing pressure on host communities by targeting poverty, right to work, rights at work and unemployment.

It will also be an opportunity to showcase **good practices** that are making a significant difference in the lives of refugees and their host communities. These approaches and practices can be models to build on and follow.

Contributions and good practices could centre on **supporting legal changes and policies** in host countries that give refugees access to the labour market both legally and in practice. This could include access to work permits, freedom of movement, documentation and ID, recognition of

market to include refugees by engaging private sector entities, governments, employment services and international organizations.

Finally, it calls for achieving economic growth through increased investments in local economic development and innovation to create jobs and livelihoods opportunities for refugees and nationals in host communities alike.

is aligned with the Goals 1 and 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely to end poverty in all its forms and promote decent work and economic growth.

The Global Compact sets out a number of measures that can be taken by the international community to foster inclusive economic growth for host communities and refugees. These efforts advance the self-reliance of refugees, empowering them to meet their needs in a safe, sustainable manner, and preparing them for their future whether they return home, integrate in their country of asylum or resettle in a third country. They are also key in improving socioeconomic outcomes for host communities, including through employment creation, entrepreneurship programmes and private sector investment.

foreign certification or quick issuance of new documentation, access affordable financial services and skills development.

They could also focus on **investment by private sector actors in refugee-hosting countries** to contribute to inclusive economic growth and jobs creation, and a commitment to employ refugees, consider them in supply chains, and offer apprenticeships and training opportunities.

Another priority could be to **invest in the economic development of refugee-hosting countries** by supporting local and national economic development plans, developing specific sectors and value chains, and implementing poverty alleviation programmes using, for example, microfinance and the Graduation Approach.

More examples of contributions and good practices can be found [here](#).