



Decentralized Evaluation of UNHCR's Livelihoods Programme in Malaysia (2015-2018)

EVALUATION REPORT
DECEMBER 2019

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UNHCR Evaluation Service

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Published by UNHCR

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Acknowledgements

The TANGO International evaluation team (Bruce Ravesloot and Maryada Vallet) would like to acknowledge the assistance received from colleagues at UNHCR Malaysia, in particular Letchimi Doraisamy, Livelihoods Head of Unit, whose time and thoughtful reflections helped make this evaluation possible. The Livelihoods Unit Team facilitated the interviews and field visits, providing crucial support for which TANGO is very grateful. We would also like to thank the valuable input received from many other UNHCR Malaysia staff and leadership, and stakeholders in implementing partner organisations, external stakeholders from non-profit humanitarian groups, academia and private sector, UN agencies, and others operating in Malaysia. We would like to acknowledge the assistance and facilitation provided by UNHCR Geneva: from Henri van den Idsert, Senior Evaluation Officer, who provided valuable feedback and insights, and from Jenny Beth Bistoyong and Ellen Lee of the Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Unit, for their support and input. The evaluation report also benefited from inputs by Mary Ngugi, (TANGO Research Assistant). We would especially like to thank the generous communities and beneficiaries who provided the evaluation team insight into their experiences in Malaysia.

Evaluation information at a glance	
Title of the evaluation:	Decentralised Evaluation of UNHCR's livelihood Programme in Malaysia
Timeframe covered:	2015-2018
Expected duration:	June 2019 – February 2020
Type of evaluation:	Decentralised evaluation of country livelihood operations (developmental)
Countries covered:	Malaysia
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Commissioned by [UNHCR Evaluation Service](#)

Evaluation Quality Assurance provided by [UNHCR Evaluation Service](#)

Executive Summary

Introduction

Purpose and objectives: This independent evaluation of UNHCR's livelihoods and economic inclusion activities in Malaysia (2015-2018) is part of a multi-country evaluation commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service and conducted by TANGO International. The purpose of the evaluation is two-fold:

- ✓ To contribute evidence to inform UNHCR's global strategy development and implementation in the selected country operations (Djibouti, Malaysia, Mauritania, Senegal and South Sudan); and
- ✓ To provide recommendations that will lead to enhanced economic inclusion of persons of concern (PoC) globally, by assisting the organisation to develop further guidance on the approach to livelihoods, self-reliance, and economic inclusion for refugees.

The evaluation assesses results using a resilience framework and with respect to the global objectives stated in the *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note* and the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy. These documents are designed to guide UNHCR's articulation of its comparative advantages in refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion, particularly regarding advocacy, partnership and implementation. The exercise supports UNHCR in defining its place in light of the new Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which highlight the need for taking on a whole-of-society approach engaging a range of stakeholders to support refugees in achieving self-reliance.

The primary audiences are UNHCR country and regional offices and the Division of Resilience and Solutions in Geneva. UNHCR's implementing and operational partners, including government, humanitarian and development actors, comprise a secondary audience.

Evaluation design: The evaluation employed a mixed-methods methodology that involved desk review and collection of primary qualitative data. The evaluation team (ET) assessed two key evaluation questions (KEQ):

- **KEQ 1** - What **changes/results** have emerged from UNHCR-funded livelihoods interventions on employment/business opportunities, and household well-being for targeted persons of concern (PoC) in each country? What **factors** contribute to desirable results in terms of economic inclusion, household well-being, and self-reliance/resilience of refugees and other PoC?
- **KEQ 2** - How can UNHCR **better position** its approach to and role in refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what are the current opportunities for enhancing **sustainability** and phasing out of direct implementation of livelihood programme activities?

Country-specific evaluation inquiries: The Malaysia Country Operation (CO) livelihoods unit provided areas of key consideration related to their ongoing strategic planning:

- UNHCR Malaysia is moving towards building social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.
- UNHCR is engaged in advocacy efforts with Government and private sector to improve the enabling environment.
- UNHCR Malaysia plans to overhaul this relatively small scale and low impact livelihood programme and move away from direct implementation to partner implementation and coordination.
- This evaluation has been undertaken in the context of broader CO reorganisation and change management processes. CO leadership clearly indicated their plan to wait for these evaluation results before finalising reorganisation decisions.

Primary data collection took place 18-28 June 2019 in Kuala Lumpur and the surrounding area, and brief visits to Ipoh and Taiping on the way to Penang (island and mainland). The ET conducted focus groups with 174 PoC (108 females, 66 males, conducted separately), both livelihood programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. In addition, the team conducted 63 key informant interviews with programme stakeholders including UNHCR staff, partners, academia, and private sector.

Programme background: Malaysia represents a context with the complete absence of a policy framework for refugee protection, and an economy that is large and growing and that can easily absorb the refugee workforce. Malaysia has received a large increase in refugees and asylum-seekers. The majority of PoC are from Myanmar (Rohingya and other ethnic groups), Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, among others. As of June 2019, the CO reported 175,760 registered refugees and asylum-seekers.

The livelihoods unit (LU), which was initially a community-based grant intervention called Social Protection Fund, has significantly evolved over the past five years. Livelihood activities are implemented directly and through partners, including: vocational training, artisanal skills, entrepreneurship development, bank account facilitation, employment counselling, community self-reliance projects, livelihood sector network development, and multi-purpose cash assistance. The livelihood strategy includes the following five objectives:

- 1) Advocacy for the right to work (implemented by Durable Solutions Unit, DSU)
- 2) Refugee-based organisation capacity building for social protection (most LU activities)
- 3) Livelihood stakeholder network development
- 4) Financial assistance and psycho-social support for the most vulnerable
- 5) Self-reliance monitoring and project quality control

Findings by evaluation question

KEQ 1: Key findings – Results and factors affecting results

DSU work rights portfolio (Objective 1): While the work rights portfolio of the DSU was not included in the terms of this evaluation, **this work is highly aligned with the new global livelihood strategy.** Advocacy should continue to be the main focus of LEI work in country. The ET finds the work to expand work pilots and worker/employer readiness needs to shift to a larger-scale model with the focused attention of a programmes/technical team.

LU portfolio of activities (all other objectives of the livelihood strategy): Overall, the LU activities do not result in adequate and consistent income and livelihood opportunities for refugees. The ET did not collect evidence that the livelihood activities led to sustained livelihoods for most participants; this was confirmed through beneficiary and partner interviews and project documents. Some beneficiaries earned supplementary and sporadic income for their households as a result of their participation. Targeting is such that the project participants would likely have excelled on their own. Some activities have continued without an assessment of their real impact, sustainability, or their potential to 'do harm' in the current context. The main programme benefits reported by refugees, partners, and UNHCR relate to the improved confidence and social connections gained by beneficiaries.

Factors affecting livelihood results:

Internal factors: The partnership approach did not foster effective projects, but the main constraining issue is in the design. The use of service contracts instead of partnership agreements, highly prescriptive proposal requests to partners with very small budgets, the lack of a multi-year strategy with partners, and occasionally the wrong partners selected for the work have all contributed to ineffective projects. Yet, the main issue limiting the results is the design of activities given the current context of no legal framework for refugees, i.e., with limited budget and short-term investments, the activities could only reach a small number of refugees in the absence of an enabling environment, and thus, were destined to result in weak livelihood outcomes.

Generally, LU staff commitment is an enabling factor, but internal CO dynamics have constrained the programme. LU staff dedication and genuine care for PoC have contributed to positive experiences for PoC and partners involved in the projects. Internal CO dynamics related to isolated work streams and other units viewing the LU as the place for emergency referrals has disconnected, even distracted, the livelihood programme from the relevant work around LEI and from the larger advocacy goals.

External factors: The restrictive political environment for refugees, low partner capacity in some cases, and the changing PoC profile are some of the key external factors affecting results. The absence of a refugee legal framework is the most important constraining factor for UNHCR's LEI work in Malaysia. UNHCR has struggled to find partners with the capacity and expertise to work with PoC. In addition, the changing profile of PoC (e.g., significant increase of Rohingya with high vulnerability, low literacy/education, etc.) affects the employment readiness of some segments of the PoC population.

KEQ 2: Key findings – UNHCR's strategic positioning to enhance scale and sustainability

Policy change is the priority. All activities across the operation should be reoriented to support the advocacy strategy led by senior management. In addition, reorganisation of LEI activities is critical. All current activities of the LU should phase out and/or remain paused until further review of CO strategy. The work rights/work pilots should shift to the LU under programmes to focus on employment readiness and scale. UNHCR should continue to work toward widespread access to financial services in the future.

Coordination across the operation in identifying and capacitating strategic partners is needed to work together toward a larger goal of social and economic inclusion for PoC. UNHCR should share actionable data and use co-branding to build partnerships.

Some refugees have resilience capacities to be “better off” than others despite the contextual challenges. **These capacities should inform an operation-wide approach to refugee resilience and self-reliance.** Refugee community governance structures and multi-sectoral support for employment readiness are the foundations for effective programmes in Malaysia at the current time. The concept of one-stop shops should be the outward face of UNHCR and its partners with the dual aim to provide information and resources in Kuala Lumpur and beyond, and to build the capacity of refugee community-based organisations (CBO) for self-governance and peaceful co-existence.

Conclusions

KEQ 1: Results and factors (retrospective)

Relevance: Community-based protection is the biggest need for PoC in Malaysia until national legislation for refugee protection is in place. Some livelihood activities were inappropriately designed given the restricted legal environment.

Efficiency: Internal dynamics in the CO have been influenced by a long history, resulting in a severe lack of communication and integration across technical units. The CO budget has remained the same, even decreased, while PoC numbers are increasing; staffing levels have been maintained by using short-term UNOPS staff.

Effectiveness: The ET did not find evidence that livelihood activities have led to adequate and consistent income and livelihood opportunities for most beneficiaries.

Impact and sustainability: Overall, impact has been limited. The number of beneficiaries reached is small. The case-by-case approach is not efficient for a programme with limited resources and a changing PoC population. The ET finds the work toward Objective 1 under the DSU is the most in line with the new global livelihood strategy compared to other activities implemented under the other objectives. Advocacy work leading to policy change are the most important factors needed for sustained positive impacts for PoC in the future.

KEQ 2: UNHCR strategic positioning (prospective)

Absorptive capacity: Both national and local measures to ensure PoC protection and basic safety are critical. A long-term safety net is needed for the most chronically vulnerable PoC. At the community level, strengthening social capital within refugee communities and with host communities, and access to basic services (including affordable health care and education), are an essential foundation for building resilience and self-reliance.

Adaptive capacity: Skills development and job opportunities need to be facilitated through the work rights/work pilot programmes. Through a multi-year/multi-partner (MYMP) partnership approach and an integrated CO strategy, a large-scale employment readiness activity is needed, which should consider the various profiles of the PoC population.

Transformative capacity: An enormous opportunity exists for UNHCR Malaysia to work more closely with the Government, private sector, financial sector, and other UN agencies, among other partners. UNHCR is best positioned for a role in facilitating strategic relationships and working on the enabling environment for refugees. Advocacy work and improved public awareness for peaceful co-existence between locals and refugees should be part strategies included in the goals of every CO unit.

The ET concludes that most activities implemented by the LU will need to be phased out or integrated into other units. Change management processes are key for the operation at this time, promoting office-wide buy-in for a coherent restructuring toward a common goal of refugee self-reliance. There is a sense of disappointment among staff with the low perceived relevance of their work and the limited results achieved through ineffective activities in past years; CO staff are ready for big changes to be implemented through the new senior leadership. This strategy process and restructuring is an important enabling factor for the future of UNHCR's LEI work in Malaysia.

Recommendations

Recommendations for UNHCR Malaysia

- R1. Recommendation on operation-wide participatory strategy development.** All units/functions within the operation should have a cohesive strategy that contribute to the advocacy objectives. The ET recommends a participatory process to develop a consolidated operation-wide strategy including PoC feedback.
When: begin by end of 2019.
- R2. Recommendation on restructuring and change management.** Continue with a change management process to align operational functions with the above strategy, hiring a consultant as possible. The ET advises the CO: reorganise the current 'operations' unit into functions that form one outward-facing programming package to address PoC needs; move the advocacy work to a team led by senior management; move the work rights/work pilot portfolio from the DSU to an operations team that has the capacity and systems to implement the pilot to scale. Finally, the reinvigorated Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Unit of Malaysia should be led by a senior staff with strategic support from the Senior Regional Technical Advisor to be based in Kuala Lumpur.
When: Restructure plan confirmed by end of 2019, implemented early 2020.
- R3. Recommendation on employment readiness.** Large segments of the PoC population are not ready for employment and financial inclusion activities. The LU should compile secondary data and build a complete profile of the employment readiness of the diverse PoC population—with the aim to strengthen current “foundational” capacity interventions through the one-stop shop approach in different regions of the country.
When: by Quarter 1 (Q1), 2020.
- R4. Recommendation on partnerships.** Senior management should conduct an operation-wide assessment of partnerships, and develop a new multi-year partnerships model. This includes working with the UN Country Team to identify opportunities for a joint advocacy strategy. **When:** Q2, 2020.

Recommendations for UNHCR HQ/RB

R5. Recommendation on HQ/RB support. There is a need for more capacity building support by HQ/RB around the shifts represented in the new livelihoods strategy, in particular for: distinguishing impact goals and measurement expectations, guidance on how to implement MYMP within the constraints of the annual project cycle and contracting mechanisms, and to create a mechanism for supporting other livelihood programmes similarly struggling with the strategy shift. **When:** Q2, 2020.



Sewing machines in a women's sewing centre in Malaysia, with start-up supported by UNHCR. TANGO/2019

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List of abbreviations

AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
BOKL	Branch Office Kuala Lumpur
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CO	Country Operation
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRS	Division of Resilience and Solutions
DSU	Durable Solutions Unit
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSP	Financial Service Provider
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
HQ	Headquarters
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IGA	Income Generating Activity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation on Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEI	Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion
LU	Livelihoods Unit
MCCA	Minimum Criteria Compliance Assessment (or MCA)
MED	Microenterprise Development
MERS	Minimum Economic Recovery Standards
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MYMP	Multi-Year Multi-Partner
MYR	Malaysian Ringgit (currency)
NAWEM	National Association of Women Entrepreneurs Malaysia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OP	Operational Partner
PoC	Person(s)/People of Concern
PPA	Project Partnership Agreement
PSC	People Systems Consultancy
PSPK	Association of social services and Community Development of Gombak District, Selangor
RB	Regional Bureaux
RFP	Request for Proposals
SC	Service Contract
SFS	Safe from the Start
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SPF	Social Protection Fund

TANGO	Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations International
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	UN World Food Programme

Introduction

Purpose of evaluation

Purpose and objectives: The motivation for a multiple country livelihoods programme evaluation arose per the requests from UNHCR country operations and the Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion (LEI) Unit headquartered in Geneva. The evaluation was commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service and independently conducted by Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International. The evaluation seeks to build on the evidence and findings from the recently published Evaluation of UNHCR's Livelihoods Strategies and Approaches (2014-2018), conducted by TANGO in 2018.¹

According to the Terms of Reference (TOR), the purpose of the evaluation is two-fold:

- ✓ Contribute evidence to inform UNHCR's global strategy development and implementation in the selected country operations; and
- ✓ Provide recommendations that will lead to enhanced economic inclusion of persons of concern (PoC) globally, by assisting the organisation to develop further guidance on the approach to livelihoods, self-reliance, and economic inclusion for refugees.²

The multi-country evaluation gathered evidence from five country operations (CO): Malaysia, Djibouti, Senegal, South Sudan, and Mauritania, selected based on country operation requests for evaluation and considerations of operational/contextual variety. As a decentralised evaluation, it is co-managed by the UNHCR LEI and the CO. The evaluations are designed to inform future strategy and planning of economic inclusion and livelihoods activities at the country-level. Programmatic results are assessed against a resilience framework (see Annex 3 and Approach, below), and most importantly, with their alignment to the global objectives set out in the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy. In advance of the strategy, the *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note* was released to all UNHCR staff, to replace the previous operational guidance.³ The key message of the concept note is for UNHCR operations to consider its comparative advantage and decide on its role in the area of LEI vis-a-vis the presence of other stakeholders, including through the following:

- Engage in **advocacy** to enhance the enabling environment such that refugees have legal and de facto access to decent work.
- **Partner** with and convene expert entities to facilitate inclusion of refugees into existing programmes/services.
- **Implement** interventions as a **last choice**, to fill a gap in service.

The evaluation seeks to provide strategic recommendations for CO on partnerships and private sector engagement, improved leveraging and mobilisation of resources, advocacy for economic inclusion and access to decent work, as well as suggestions for phasing out of small-scale and direct implementation. This new direction is ultimately aligned with UNHCR's advances within the development of new international frameworks such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which highlight the need for taking on a whole-of-society approach engaging a range of stakeholders to support refugees towards self-reliance. Based on the Grand Bargain, UNHCR has committed to the New Way of Working and is piloting a Multi-Year Multi-Partner (MYMP) protection and solutions strategy aimed at reducing dependency on aid through a durable solutions and resilience approach.

Scope: This evaluation focuses on UNHCR Malaysia livelihood activities from 2015-2018, with programme context

¹ UNHCR (2018a).

² UNHCR (2019a). (TOR text used for the remainder of this section, unless cited otherwise)

³ UNHCR (2018b).

and strategy development considered prior to 2014 as needed. It is expected to result in relevant evidence and recommendations for the future direction of LEI activities in the operation, taking into consideration the programme's evolution and thinking already underway.

Audience: The primary audiences for this evaluation are the UNHCR CO, Regional Bureaux (RB), and the HQ Division of Resilience and Solutions (DRS). UNHCR's implementing and operational partners, including Government, humanitarian and development actors, are a secondary audience.

Operational context

Malaysia represents a context with the complete absence of a policy framework for refugee protection, and an economy that is large and growing and that can easily absorb the refugee workforce. There is potential for positive change in the enabling political environment because of the promises of the new Government. In recent years, Malaysia has received a large increase in Rohingya refugees, a population with extremely low levels of education and literacy, as well as low gender equity. The public sentiment toward refugees is mixed, though public awareness around the presence of refugees may be improving.

As of June 2019, UNHCR reported approximately 175,760 refugees and asylum-seekers registered in Malaysia.⁴ The majority of registered refugees are from Myanmar (many of whom are Rohingya), along with people from Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, among others.⁵ See Annex 1 for the full operational context.

Livelihoods programme overview: The livelihoods programme has significantly evolved over the past five years, but to understand the concept of the current programme it was necessary for the evaluation to look even further into the operation's history. The livelihood programme concept began as the Community Services, Community Development and the Refugee Social Protection Fund (SPF) in 2009.⁶ The SPF was initially a cash-based intervention focused on developing refugee communities, and providing empowerment, livelihood support, and social protection for the refugee population. The programme expanded its scope over several years, introducing employment counselling in 2010, then multipurpose cash grants, bank account facilitation, and vocational training in 2012. See Figure 1 for a complete visual of the livelihood activities, partners, and its progression in past years; for a larger view of the same visual, see Annex 4.

⁴ UNHCR (2019c).

⁵ TANGO (2019b).

⁶ UNHCR Malaysia (2014).

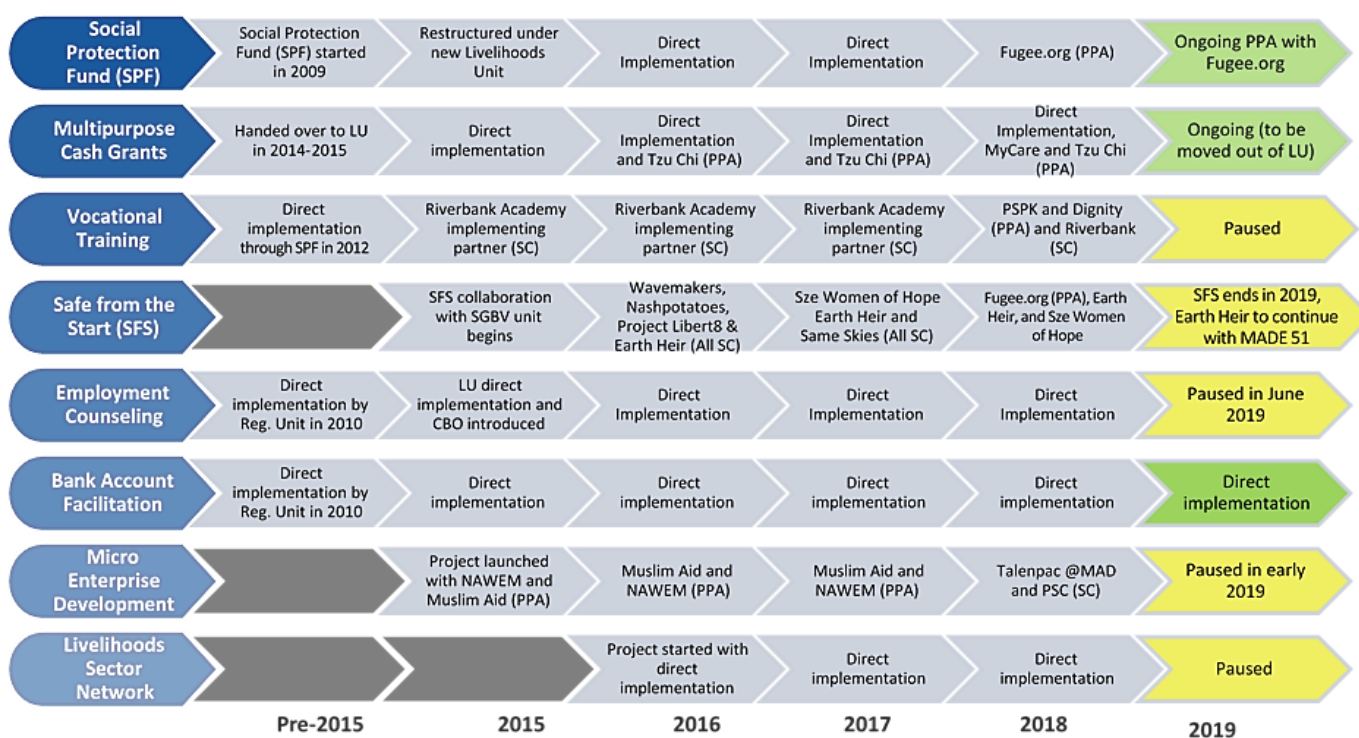


Figure 1. Malaysia livelihood programme timeline

See Annex 4 for a larger view of the timeline.

The SPF was restructured into the Self-Reliance and Livelihoods programme of the Livelihoods Unit (LU) in 2015. In 2016 came the addition of the Microenterprise Development programme (MED) and Safe from The Start (SFS), a collaboration with the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Unit. In its efforts to improve self-reliance among target populations, the LU focuses on a three-pronged approach (which each of their specific activities falls under): (1) Individual/ Household efforts (2) Community mobilisation projects and (3) Networking and coordination.⁷ The past and current livelihood programme activities are described further in the latter section on results.

UNHCR Malaysia has operated through a combination of direct implementation and a range of livelihood partners including non-governmental organisations (NGO), social enterprises, and private sector partners, organised through a combination of service contracts (SC) and partnership agreements (PPA). Livelihood activities include technical, vocational, and educational training, artisanal and skills development, entrepreneurship development, wage-earning and bank access facilitation, youth enterprise training, a community self-reliance project (e.g., SPF grants), and multi-purpose financial assistance.

The livelihood activities have centred around the state of Selangor, which includes Kuala Lumpur and surrounding cities, and Penang (island and mainland). The UNHCR Malaysia livelihoods budget has decreased from about US\$443,000⁸ in 2015 to approximately \$246,000 in 2018 (Figure 2). This coincides with budget stagnation for the operation overall even as the number of PoC in country has increased.

⁷ UNHCR Malaysia (2017a). Pg. 7-9

⁸ All \$ amounts hereafter are United States Dollar (USD).

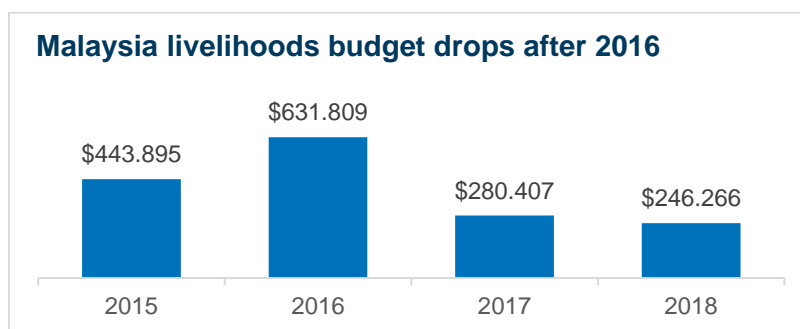


Figure 2. UNHCR Malaysia livelihoods budget, 2015-2018 (\$US)

Source: UNHCR (2018c).

UNHCR Malaysia has operated through a combination of direct implementation and a range of livelihood partners including non-governmental organisations, social enterprises and private sector partners, organised through a combination of service contracts and partnership agreements. Livelihood activities include technical, vocational, and educational training, artisanal and skills development, entrepreneurship development, wage-earning and bank access facilitation, youth enterprise training, a community self-reliance project (SPF grants), and multi-purpose financial assistance.

Methodology

Evaluation questions

The evaluation team (ET) assessed two key evaluation questions (KEQs) along with relevant sub-questions:

KEQ 1: What **changes/results** have emerged from UNHCR-funded livelihoods interventions on employment/business opportunities, and household well-being for targeted persons of concern (PoC) in each country? What **factors** contribute to desirable results in terms of economic inclusion, household well-being, and self-reliance/resilience of refugees and other persons of concern?

Sub-questions:

- How did UNHCR utilise livelihood monitoring systems to measure outcome and impact on economic inclusion and resilience, and what are the major gaps?
- What are the most important internal and external cross-cutting factors that enabled or inhibited the achievement of sustainable results?
- How does UNHCR engage with other development actors to further enhance economic inclusion, and what are the major gaps in the current approach?
- How well do the different livelihood interventions align themselves to the objectives of protection and durable solutions?
- Are there examples of good practices that led to desirable outcomes, and under which conditions were these results achieved?

KEQ 2: How can UNHCR **better position** its approach to and role in refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what are the current opportunities for enhancing **sustainability** and phasing out of direct implementation of livelihood programme activities?

Sub-questions:

- How do the results achieved in livelihood interventions align themselves with the objectives of the new global strategy?

- What key areas of livelihood programming need to be addressed in order to enhance an enabling environment for economic inclusion and protection within the different country contexts, and how can UNHCR better adopt a market-systems approach to its programming?
- What factors and conditions should be taken into account to determine UNHCR's strategic role across these different country contexts?
- How can UNHCR strategically build capacity of operational partners in order to strengthen national and local ownership of systems that promote economic inclusion?
- How can different country operations address funding gaps, and what short-term and long-term strategies can UNHCR adopt?
- How can UNHCR responsibly phase out of small-scale livelihood activities, keeping in mind the different contextual challenges and situational realities?

Country-specific evaluation inquiries: The UNHCR Malaysia LU did not add evaluation questions, but instead provided areas of key consideration in light of their ongoing strategic thinking and many programme changes underway at the time of evaluation. The CO's considerations for the evaluation are shown in Box 1.

Box 1. UNHCR Malaysia considerations for evaluation emphasis

Key points related to strategic planning underway by the CO/LU:

- UNHCR Malaysia is moving towards building social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.
- UNHCR is engaged in advocacy efforts with Government and private sector to improve the enabling environment.
 - UNHCR is seeking to identify ways in which to promote protection, self-reliance and economic inclusion in an operational context where there is no legal refugee framework.
- UNHCR Malaysia plans to overhaul this relatively small scale and low impact livelihood programme, and move away from direct implementation to partner implementation and coordination, with the following considerations:
 - The CO seeks to leverage limited programming funds for larger reach, recognising that implementation of small projects for few beneficiaries is not cost-efficient. The CO wants to refocus resources on efforts where UNHCR is clearly competent and has a strategic role, moving away from direct services to refugees (e.g., supporting broader strategic partners/platforms to more effectively reach refugees with relevant programming, advocacy, and limiting direct services to strategic pilots and critical protection issues).
 - As stated in the current livelihood strategy, the CO may focus on supporting one-stop shop service centres that are located where the refugees are, with mainly a referral function to partners on livelihood, education, health issues and, to a more limited extent, referral to UNHCR, i.e., on protection issues.
 - The CO will focus on an advocacy and facilitation role, expanding work with private sector and Government in building human and social capital
 - The CO would like clarity on the appropriate impact indicators in this context and adjustments that may be made under the UNHCR results framework. This includes systems-level indicators to capture results from the advocacy and facilitation work.
- This evaluation has been undertaken in the context of broader CO reorganisation and change management processes. CO leadership clearly indicated their plan to wait for these evaluation results before finalising reorganisation decisions.

Analytical framework

The resilience analytical framework that was developed by TANGO in the 2018 livelihoods strategy evaluation (see Annex 3) is used. This conceptual framework has also been integrated into UNHCR's forthcoming livelihoods strategy. The following text (and Box 2) describe this framework.

Box 2. What is resilience?

UNHCR defines resilience as the ability of individuals, households, communities, national institutions and systems to prevent, absorb and recover from shocks, while continuing to function and adapt in a way that supports long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, and the attainment of human rights.

Fostering resilience requires strengthening **resilience capacities** at the individual, household community and systems levels. Resilience capacities can be broken down into three types:

- **Absorptive capacity** or the ability of households and communities to minimise exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure;
- **Adaptive capacity** or the ability of households and communities to make pro-active and informed choices about their lives and their diversified livelihood strategies in response to changing conditions;
- **Transformative capacity** encompasses the system-level changes that ensure sustained resilience, including formal safety nets, access to markets, infrastructure and basic services

Initiatives to foster refugees' economic inclusion, whether implemented by UNHCR or other actors, should work to reinforce existing capacities and build new capacities as needed across all three areas to ensure the long-term sustainability of refugees' economic activities.

Source: UNHCR (2019b).

A resilience framework is relevant to UNHCR's objectives because it links the work of supporting refugees' economic inclusion, protection, and durable solutions for refugees. Protection and basic services and assistance to meet needs help refugees to cope with the shocks and stressors related to forced displacement, while livelihoods and economic inclusion support refugees in gaining the resources and skills to recover from these shocks and prepare for the future. Durable solutions, in turn, support refugees' long-term resilience through ensuring they are in an environment where national systems guarantee protection and reinforce their ability to earn a sustainable income and absorb and recover from future shocks.

In applying this framework to the new strategy, it should be noted that UNHCR is urging livelihood programmes to focus on strengthening absorptive and transformative capacity, and to promote adaptive capacity through partnerships that can operate at scale. This evaluation utilises qualitative methods that gather descriptive information related to absorptive, adaptive, and transformative resilience capacities and the components that comprise each capacity. A summary of the resilience capacities accessible to refugees is presented in this report and describes where gaps exist in livelihood programming, partnerships, and the enabling environment as they relate to the capacities.

UNHCR is urging livelihood programmes to focus on strengthening absorptive and transformative capacity, and to promote adaptive capacity through partnerships that can operate at scale

Approach

The TANGO ET included two international consultants, female and male, both with extensive refugee and livelihoods experience. An officer from the UNHCR LEI Unit participated in the fieldwork as an observer and provided insights that were incorporated into the final analysis.

The fieldwork took place 18-28 June 2019, followed by a debrief presentation and discussion. The ET collected qualitative data through focus groups discussions (FGD) with 174 refugees and key informant interviews (KII) with 63 stakeholders. The ET conducted fieldwork in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and surrounding area, and brief visits to Ipoh and Taiping on the way to Penang (island and mainland), as shown on the Malaysia map in Figure 3. The ET also conducted a desk review of available programme document provided by the CO and retrieved from publicly available sources. See Annex 1 for the full methodology and Annex 2 for KII and FGD lists.



Figure 3. Malaysia fieldwork map

Source of map graphic: yourfreetemplates.com

Evaluation Findings

Preface

As an introduction to this evaluation, the reader should note that this is not a typical performance evaluation because major shifts are underway in how UNHCR supports refugee livelihoods. The livelihood programme results are assessed against a new rubric, that is, how the programme can be better aligned to the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy. UNHCR is shifting away from the traditional humanitarian livelihood activities that would comprise an acceptable livelihood programme in the past, aiming instead to support an enabling environment that can provide widespread opportunities for economic inclusion. The ET recognises this is a significant new direction with implications for budgets and staffing structure that will take time to implement. This evaluation is one step in that direction.

KEQ 1

What changes/results have emerged from UNHCR-funded livelihoods interventions on employment/business opportunities, and household well-being for targeted PoC in each country? What factors contribute to desirable results in terms of economic inclusion, household well-being, and self-reliance/resilience of refugees and other PoC?

Box 3. Main findings - Results and factors affecting results

Durable Solutions Unit work rights portfolio (Objective 1 of the livelihood strategy)

- **While the work rights portfolio of the DSU was not included in the TOR of this livelihood evaluation, this work is highly aligned with the new UNHCR global livelihoods strategy.** The evaluation interviews had a resounding consensus that the achievement of work rights is the foundation for securing refugee protection and self-reliance in Malaysia. As an overarching goal of the CO, the advocacy work should continue to be a main focus. The work to expand work pilots and worker/employer readiness needs to shift from an individually-intensive model to larger scale projects through the focused attention of a programmes/technical team.

LU portfolio of activities (all other objectives of the livelihood strategy) – Results

- **Overall, the LU activities do not result in adequate and consistent income and livelihood opportunities for refugees.** The ET did not collect evidence that the livelihood activities led to sustained livelihoods for most participants; this was confirmed through beneficiary and partner interviews and project documents. Some beneficiaries earned supplementary and sporadic income for their households as a result of their participation.
 - In addition, targeting is such that the project participants would likely excel on their own given the restricted employment context. Some activities have continued without an assessment of their real impact, sustainability, or their potential to ‘do harm’ in the current context.
- **The main benefits to livelihood beneficiaries are psychosocial and social capital.**

The main programme benefits reported by refugees, partners, and UNHCR relate to the improved confidence and social connections gained by beneficiaries. Other noted benefits for some activities include:

- improving **women’s empowerment** in the household, particularly when spouses are participants together.
- contributions to **community building** and social protection, enabling linkages between refugee groups and community members or local authorities.
- **Some refugees have resilience capacities to be “better off” than others despite the contextual challenges**, including social capital, assets/savings, human capital, confidence to adapt, women’s empowerment, and good relations with employers and local authorities, among others. These resilience capacities should inform an operation-wide approach to refugee resilience and self-reliance.

Factors affecting results

- **The partnership approach did not foster effective projects, but the main issue is in the design.** The use of service contracts instead of partnership agreements with a multi-year planning approach, highly prescriptive RFP for partners with very small budgets, and in some cases, the wrong partners selected for the work have contributed to ineffective projects. Yet, the main issue limiting the results is the design of activities, which reach small numbers of refugees, and in the absence of an enabling environment, are will ultimately result in weak livelihood outcomes.
- **Generally, LU staff commitment is an enabling factor, but internal CO dynamics have constrained the programme.** LU staff dedication and genuine care for PoC have contributed to positive experiences for PoC and partners involved in the projects. Internal CO dynamics that have developed over the past five or more years have impacted the programme such as shifting and isolated work streams.
- **Restrictive political environment, partner capacity, changing PoC profile, among key external factors affecting results.** Across interviews it could not be overstated that the absence of a refugee political framework is the most important constraining factor for UNHCR’s LEI work in Malaysia. Additionally, UNHCR has struggled to find partners with the capacity and expertise to work with PoC, particularly outside of Kuala Lumpur. The changing profile of PoC also affects the employment readiness of some segments of the PoC population.

Results of the livelihood programme

Livelihood programme objectives. UNHCR Malaysia’s livelihood strategy fits within the country operation’s five-year strategic plan for 2017-2021.⁹ The UNHCR Malaysia livelihood strategy is comprised of five objectives. Table 1 provides a summary of the objectives and main activities, which provides an outline for this section on results of the livelihood programme.

⁹ UNHCR Malaysia (2017a).

Table 1. Livelihood strategic framework: summary of objectives and main activities

Objective 1: Advocacy for the Right to Work	
Main activities:	Advocacy and work pilot activities (coordinated by Durable Solutions Unit- DSU)
Objective 2: Community Based Organisation (CBO) capacity building for Social Protection.	
Main activities:	SPF, Vocation Skills and MED Training, SFS, Employment Counselling, Bank Account Facilitation
Objective 3: Livelihood stakeholder network development.	
Main activities:	Livelihood Sector Network Development
Objective 4: Financial assistance and psycho-social support for the most vulnerable.	
Main activities:	Multi-purpose Cash Grants
Objective 5: Self-reliance monitoring and project quality control.	
Main activities:	Monitoring and impact assessment

See Annex 6 for the full livelihoods strategic framework, and Annex 5 for indicator results reported by the programme. In this section, each objective is described below along with key findings on results and factors affecting results related to the corresponding outcomes and activities for each objective.

Objective 1) Advocacy for the right to work

The desired Outcome 1 is: *to acquire work rights for refugees with the Government of Malaysia to secure legal stay and work permits for all refugees in the country.* The DSU activities have included work pilots; advocacy strategy for work rights; labour migration pilot development; multi-stakeholder joint action plan development; joint advocacy papers submitted to the Government; and formation of a platform to discuss law and policy development for refugee protection and rights. Under the current operational structure, DSU sits outside of the programming/operations umbrella. It is comprised of 13 staff who handle resettlement, small-but-increasing voluntary return, and complementary pathways, in addition to their efforts around advocacy and work rights/work pilots.

It should be noted that the work rights portfolio of the DSU was not included in the TOR of this livelihood evaluation, and therefore not evaluated with the same depth as the other objectives.

DSU's Advocacy and Work Rights Activities

ET conclusions on the activity: The achievement of Objective 1/Outcome 1 is the foundation for securing refugee protection and self-reliance and thus an overarching goal for the CO. The ET concludes this is a critical moment for the CO to intensify both the advocacy and work pilot efforts, objectives which are highly aligned with the new UNHCR livelihood strategy. In order to make advocacy an overall objective of the CO and expand the work, it will likely need to move out of DSU. Advocacy should continue to be the CO focus and led by senior management, which is discussed further under KEQ 2. The efforts to broaden work pilots and harness private sector and Government engagement will need to be a programming function in order to receive attention by a technical team and be able to significantly grow in scale.

Background and findings: Led by DSU, UNHCR's advocacy strategy has been intensified since the change in Government in May 2018 and subsequent release of their Election Manifesto's Promise 35, which states the Government's commitment to ensure refugees have legal rights to work.¹⁰ Seizing this major window of opportunity, in June 2018 UNHCR developed and submitted the *Briefing Paper on Refugees and UNHCR's Activities in Malaysia*, which lists recommendations for future areas of improvement, in cooperation with the Government, to the plight of

¹⁰ The text of Promise 35: "Recognising that Malaysia is hosting more than 150,000 refugees, including Rohingyas and Syrians, the Pakatan Harapan Government will legitimise their status by providing them with UNHCR cards and ensuring their legal right to work. Their labour rights will be at par with locals and this initiative will reduce the country's need for foreign workers and lower the risk of refugees from becoming involved in criminal activities and underground economies. Providing them with jobs will help refugees to build new lives and without subjecting them to oppression."

refugees in Malaysia—among them access to legal work.¹¹ By the end of 2018, UNHCR submitted a White Paper on the implementation of Promise 35.¹² UNHCR has worked with stakeholders to develop numerous other documents and studies to be used as advocacy tools, and has commenced various stakeholder roundtables and consultations on a comprehensive policy framework for refugees. The stakeholders have included private sector and the Tent Partnership, UN Country Team, academic institutions, government agencies, worker unions/cooperatives, diplomatic community, and media, among others documented in a stakeholders mapping.¹³

DSU's 2019 strategic work includes collaborating with private sector and Government to expand the work pilots. DSU has managed the perception by government representatives that the first Rohingya plantation work pilot was a failure (Phase 1 ended in July 2017), providing more evidence on the value of refugee work schemes and the employability of refugees. During the plantation sector recruitment, UNHCR called over 4,000 Rohingya refugees. After a series of briefings, interviews, and medical screening, only 14 refugees showed up the first day to be transported to the plantation.¹⁴ Most refugees were not interested in the scheme because of the low salary scale compared to informal work in the construction sector and the isolated location. DSU set up a Work Pilot Hotline for current and prospective workers to contact UNHCR.

According to interviews with staff, DSU's recruitment of work pilot participants has been individually intensive, but refugees' involvement in work preparedness workshops has proven effective in their retention for Phase 2 of the pilot. Another major factor in the increased success of Phase 2 is the recognition of appropriate sectors for Rohingya. In applying the lessons learned from the previous small pilots and capitalising on the political and private sector relationships that have been built, DSU believes there may be opportunities for expanding the number of participants in work schemes and the types of pilots.

Objective 2) Refugee-based organisation capacity building for social protection

The three outcomes under this objective include: (Outcome 2) *Centralise basic livelihoods services to allow for one-stop assistance in employment and education services* – this includes the SPF community grants activity; (Outcome 3) *Upskill communities to enhance short to medium-term employment or self-employment* – including: vocational trainings, MED, SFS, employment counselling; (Outcome 4) *Facilitate access to savings, money transfer and money lending to provide a mechanism for mitigating risk and accessing capital* – which includes the bank account facilitation. This objective comprises nearly all of the LU activities.

Social Protection Fund (SPF)

ET conclusions on the activity: The SPF grants have lacked cohesion with the livelihood strategy and integration with other CO sectors in order to build refugee community capacity. The “one-stop shops” envisioned as the programme outcome have not been developed. The activities provide one-time benefits to the original participants without planning for how the benefits can be sustained and passed on to the larger community of the refugee group. The ET finds livelihood activities to enhance worker readiness, including issues of language and childcare, are greatly needed.

Background and findings: The SPF activities to strengthen refugee community-based organisations (CBO) began in 2009 and was moved under the LU during an operational restructuring. The SPF provides community grants and was implemented directly by the LU until 2018, at which time Fugee.org¹⁵ became implementing partners (IP). This is one of the few LU activities not stopped in 2019. According to programme results (Annex 5), 23 projects were supported in 2017 and 17 projects in 2018.

¹¹ UNHCR Malaysia (2019a).

¹² UNHCR Malaysia (2018b).

¹³ UNHCR Malaysia (2019b).

¹⁴ UNHCR Malaysia (2017c).

¹⁵ This is the partner's current name as of August 2019, previously known as Payong and Liberty to Learn.

The SPF grants vary widely, providing funds, for example, for refugee community groups to initiate football clubs, to buy computers for a refugee community centre, to support women's shelters/transitional homes, and to host social events and trainings for refugee youth. The benefits have centred around community building. For example, LU staff explain that SPF funded community clean-up initiatives in various locations, which led to engagement with the municipal council, local residence committee, and joint management committee (of apartment buildings), and thus, have served as a platform to link refugees with host communities. While directly implemented, the LU staff say they struggled to have the capacity to follow through on SPF projects they felt had potential.

In 2017, SPF reported 224 beneficiaries across Rohingya, Somali, Sudanese, Yemeni, and Pakistani community groups.¹⁶ The LU called the 2017 beneficiaries from each project to discuss the benefits of English/Malay classes, and to determine employment status and income. For language classes, over half of the beneficiaries across the ethnic groups have found the use of English or Malay useful for them to find/perform work. The results related to employment status and income showed mixed results, and some results could not be attributed to the SPF project but other factors affecting household income. For many of the projects, regular employment was limited and income increases reserved for a select few who, for instance, already had business activities, productive assets, work in the informal sector, or a supportive social network prior to their participation. Partner reports list results related to social protection, refugee community development, and capacity building around project management. These include, for example, increased awareness and participation of the local community in protection efforts, training group facilitators, and enabling women to become project leaders.¹⁷

The ET identified several specific factors affecting the limited results of the SPF activity. First, the community-based grants are one-off projects and not linked to a livelihood strategy or "one-stop shop" for the target community. This was a challenge identified in the 2014 SPF Impact Evaluation, stating that the activity needed to sharpen its mandate towards livelihood creation leading to self-reliance, and "UNHCR should re-vitalise SPF by updating its core mandate and strategic vision from quick-impact support to more durable solutions."¹⁸ Secondly, from the ET's observations and all SPF beneficiary discussions, the projects are not designed to be sustained by the community nor to have larger reach beyond the original participants. The exceptions are those groups who, for example: took the initiative to raise matching funds from their own community; who collectively resolved their challenges such as around childcare; and who have been supported longer term through direct partnerships with private sector actors and UN Volunteers. Thirdly, for some SPF projects, the ET finds the partner did not have the adequate expertise in market-based livelihoods and community development, nor sufficient presence in the target geographic locale, to effectively administer the SPF. This has caused confusion about the purpose and implementation process of the grants among some beneficiary groups.

Vocational Skills and Micro-Enterprise Development (MED) Training

ET conclusions on the activity: The ET concludes the livelihood outcomes of the vocational and MED training activity are very minimal. The number of beneficiaries reached is small with no potential for scaling up, and the activity itself is inappropriate given the context. The benefits to refugees are: increased confidence, providing PoC with 'something to do', social capital, and in some cases, reports of gender equality promoted in the household and within project structures.

Background and findings: Vocational skills training started with direct implementation under SPF in 2012. In 2015, Riverbank Academy became a partner through a Service Contract (SC), which has continued each year through 2018. Two more partners, Association of Social Services and Community Development of Gombak District, Selangor (PSPK) and Dignity for Children Foundation, were brought on for vocational skills training in 2018 through Project Partnership Agreements (PPA). For the MED training, including business grants for some qualifying participants, the project launched in 2015 through PPA with National Association of Women Entrepreneurs Malaysia (NAWEM) and

¹⁶ UNHCR Malaysia (2018c).

¹⁷ Liberty to Learn (2019).

¹⁸ UNHCR Malaysia (2014).

Muslim Aid. In 2018, the MED project added SC with TalenPac MAD and People Systems Consultancy (PSC).

According to programme results for MED (Annex 5), 258 PoC received cash for business start-up in 2015, decreasing to 55 PoC in 2018. The number of PoC receiving life skills training for livelihood purposes was 703 in 2015 and 763 in 2018; these figures include vocational, job skills, literacy, and other types of trainings through the programme.

In 2016, under the value chain analysis activity required per the UNHCR Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods, the LU completed a market and labour needs assessment to inform the areas of training. The assessment identified the following sectors as having the most potential for PoC inclusion (from largest to smallest¹⁹): hotels, restaurants, construction, electronic components, and repair of household appliances. However, for the largest labour markets identified such as hotels, restaurants and construction, the legal context prevents PoC from formal, authorised work in those sectors, which already employ many migrant workers informally. As a result, the programme selected smaller labour opportunities, such as air conditioning repair, for the training. The labour assessment in its current form proved useful as it identified both policy barriers for large-scale employment and opportunities for work on a smaller scale. The ET finds there was a missed opportunity, however, for the LU to use the labour results in advocacy, such as for planning work pilots in relevant national sectors with the DSU.

Approximately 25-30 participants were selected for each round of training by each partner. Interviews with IP explained that the terms of each training round were often pre-determined by UNHCR (i.e., beneficiary group, type of training) in the request for proposals (RFP), and the partners implemented some trainings beyond their better judgement of what could actually be profitable for the participants. Partners told the ET that they discouraged businesses in tailoring, handicrafts, and baking/catering, among other areas, unless real demand could be demonstrated. Yet, some refugee groups requested these trainings from the LU as an activity to do at home, which is why they were included in some project RFP.

The ET conducted focus groups with the former participants of several vocational training projects and found that none of the interviewed refugees had made a livelihood from the training. This stark result differs from end-of-project reports where partners present that the vast majority of participants have started a business to use their skills, and this is because participants eventually drop the activity after the completion of the project and there is no follow-up mechanism that measures this indicator.

According to FGD with vocational training participants, refugees felt the training was too brief to develop market-level skills and confidence, they lacked contacts within the industry to employ their skills, and/or their work in the informal market proved to be more practical—i.e., more consistent and with higher earning potential. With very little income reported from their UNHCR endeavours at the time of the interviews, the main benefit cited was use of the productive assets provided by the project for their own household (e.g., using a sewing machine to sew clothes for their family members).

“Some skills might be useful to have but not practical.”

~ PoC Interview, beneficiary remark on vocational trainings

Similar challenges and results were reported by MED projects. While project results often state that refugee income has increased; partners explain that the increased income can be attributed to their new business income and/or because the participants (or other members of their family) found employment during the project. It also does not distinguish how much income is earned in proportion to household needs, nor intermittent versus stable income. Some participants told the ET they are indeed earning a small portion of income as a result of the MED project, but due to the limitations they face in legally accessing markets it serves as a small income source rather than a primary business livelihood.

The MED project reports describe the impact most attributable to the activity as psychosocial—an increase in self-

¹⁹ Estimated number of PoC that can contribute to the value chain.

confidence and change of mindset for the participants.

Another key issue to discuss is targeting. The vocational skills and MED projects were highly selective in their targeting approach in order to identify participants most likely to succeed in three to six months and less likely to drop out. Participants were selected from a larger pool of interested refugees based on how well they demonstrated their enthusiasm and ability to attend the training to the partners, with criteria including: how far they lived from the training centre, the need for childcare, and the likelihood of permission granted from husbands (for female participants, which can prove to promote their decision-making power in the household). KII with partners and UNHCR staff explain that the selected participants are likely those highly-capable individuals who could already manage their household income activities on their own. The question was raised during the debrief discussion about whether livelihood resources go to a) the most vulnerable or b) to a wider swath of people who need a smaller amount of support to survive. This issue as it relates to the aims of the new livelihood strategy is discussed further under KEQ 2. The ET believes the targeting strategy for this activity was relevant in theory, selecting individuals with more capacity to be productive with short-term/small inputs; however, the activity itself was not relevant due to the restrictive legal context and potential risk for PoC engaging in business without authorisation.

The programme's approach to building partnerships has been disjointed, hindering the potential for effective projects. The ET finds the service contracts were used in place of PPA for some projects because of the procedural ease and timeliness of using an SC. The SC allows a partner to deliver a specific product or service, yet, the deliverable is not necessarily tied to results as would a PPA. Both UNHCR staff and IP commented on how the SC mechanism was unsatisfactory. The partners felt the short-term nature of the contracts limited their involvement in the co-creation and design of the activity, constrained their follow-up with beneficiaries, and hindered continuity across activities. Partners were brought on in a batch approach to implement the many different activities of the programme in a given year. They were not connected to other projects or partners nor encouraged to link their activities across years as part of a larger strategy. ET interviews with LU staff confirm the time pressures to launch projects, recruit partners, and ensure the projects are completed all within the annual cycle when programme funds must be disbursed. While the ET recognises that UNHCR HQ guidance is to use SC with for-profit organisations and this is the norm, the most appropriate contracting mechanism is ultimately decided by the operation. If SC are used, the ET feels the SC could be used more effectively, if implemented with a partnership approach and long-term collaboration in mind.

Even more than the limitations with partnerships and the annual project cycle, the effectiveness of the vocational and MED training projects have primarily been impacted by their design within the restrictive legal environment of Malaysia. The design of the activity, which provides training to PoC when they cannot legally work, is inappropriate in a context with no legal framework and with limited options to make market or job linkages. This reality is reflected in the result observed by the ET that the vast majority of PoC interviewed report going back to (informal) wage work after participation in the project, or drop out before the end in order to find work, where income is more stable and earning potential is higher.

“A lot of NGOs are doing this (vocational trainings), but at the end of the day there will be no big change for refugee livelihoods until there is legislation. Whatever refugees do for employment - full stop - they are restricted.”

~Stakeholder KII

Safe from the Start (SFS)

ET conclusions on the activity: The ET concludes that the main benefit of SFS as implemented thus far in Malaysia is to provide a safe and dignified activity for women in a context with many challenges, with some income earning opportunities. There is potential for income earning toward economic self-reliance with this activity if key assumptions are addressed such as market access, scalability including adequate number and skill level of the female labour force, and regularity of work for reliable income. The partnership with MADE 51 has made this possible with one group, but addressing these assumptions may require resources beyond what is available through SFS.

Background and findings: SFS began in 2015 as a collaboration with the SGBV Unit with funding from the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. Under the LU, the project was implemented directly and through numerous SC over three years with: Wavemakers, Nashpotatoes, Project Liber8, Earth Heir, Sze Women of Hope, Same Skies, and Fugee.org; it also included one small PPA for assessment, coordination, and reporting. By mid-2018, the project was taken on by the SGBV Unit.

According to KII with partners and staff, SFS was designed to support SGBV prevention in refugee communities and to provide safe and dignified livelihood opportunities for vulnerable PoC women who could not work full-time outside the home. This activity was also designed to be relevant for women with childcare needs and to prevent the risks of police extortion. UNHCR staff explained that many of the participating women have been extremely isolated in their households and, previous to the project, have never engaged in livelihood activities in the past, thus possessing limited skills to build on.

SFS was implemented as a phased project, with the first phases aiming to strengthen the social cohesion and psychosocial support of women's groups, and the final phase culminating in sustainable inclusion in the artisan value chain and livelihood results. Given the vulnerability profiles of the participants, it was expected that only 1-2 groups would reach the third phase, i.e., MADE51 status; others may advance their skills and support groups, though may not develop to the point of being able to craft products for international markets. A MADE 51 staff explains that the aim is for the women to develop a support structure, form strong groups, orient themselves towards a market activity, and then for those groups who have been able to develop to the point of being partnered with a private sector crafts-based social enterprise (phase 3), to be included in sustainable supply chains.

MADE 51, a global project based in the LEI Unit of UNHCR Geneva, began in 2017 and has provided technical assistance to the CO for the SFS project with the aim of helping qualified groups reach international markets where their products are more in demand. MADE 51 has helped SFS in Malaysia identify social enterprise partners, develop sustainable product design and production systems, and show products in trade shows around the world. The only MADE 51 social enterprise partner in Malaysia is Earth Heir.

The SFS 2017 year-end results for the artisanal livelihood programming reported seven small business/artisanal groups formed with products to sell, one Rohingya women's support group formed, 74 PoC provided with business training, and 104 PoC who received life-skills training for livelihood purposes (e.g., literacy, leadership).²⁰ UNHCR SFS stakeholders report that the products developed in 2017 were sold as a 'charity' item but not yet intended for local and international markets. By 2019, one group achieved Phase 3-MADE 51 status and another group is developing to this end.

Poor attendance and high drop-out, lack of PoC ownership over product design, lack of childcare, the need for advanced training, and inconsistent sales opportunities were cited in project documents as common challenges across the SFS projects.²¹ The beneficiaries interviewed reported similar challenges, and that they held high expectations at first for the income potential of participating in the project, but then realised the longer-term dedication to overcoming challenges that would be required (to potentially earn significant income), thus discouraging their continued participation.

While there are a few success stories from this project, the ET did not find that the majority of artisanal group members were achieving sustained income through the activities. Project partners explain that sustained income through the artisanal work is a long-term goal but is slow to be reached as markets and product lines are developed, which may not have been clearly communicated to participants from the start. The ET finds the project participants voiced different expectations for what they thought they would achieve through their work, some frustrated by the years of build-up without much pay off. Through visits to the SFS partner sites, the ET also observed that the

²⁰ UNHCR Malaysia (2018d).

²¹ UNHCR Malaysia (2018d).

production was largely individual-based for participants, so the benefits of group interaction were not always gained.²²

Finally, the integration with SGBV programming was not evident. According to the field visits, the trainers did little to disseminate SGBV messages and the participants did not recall programming on such themes. It should be noted that the scope of this evaluation did not cover measuring effectiveness of overall SGBV prevention.

Employment Counselling

ET conclusions on the activity: The ET agrees with the senior management in placing a pause on this activity. The ET concludes that general employment counselling, not referrals, should take place at registration. Refugee CBO also need more capacity building on worker safety and rights to properly screen employers themselves and to provide some protections for their own community members.

Background and findings: Employment counselling, which evolved to include job referrals, began in 2010 under the management of the Registration Unit. Since 2015, the activity has been directly implemented by LU staff. The activity was paused in June 2019 by the senior management. The programme results report the following (see Annex 5), though the indicator wording changed from year to year for this activity (and both employment counselling and bank facilitation were reported under one indicator): 825 PoC were registered in job placement services in 2015, 976 PoC received job counselling in 2016 and 938 PoC in 2017, and 1,649 in 2018 received guidance on labour market opportunities. These are the largest numbers of any given activity of the livelihood programme.

The LU's 2017 Operating Procedures for employment services advises that UNHCR does not authorise the hiring of refugees.²³ In tracking employment enquiries, LU staff first brief the employers through in-person or telephone meetings, explaining the status of refugees in Malaysia and advising them of UNHCR's minimum employment criteria. The LU staff collect their contact details and information on the nature of their business and purpose of the enquiry. Some types of business were deemed unsuitable for placement by UNHCR.²⁴ Employers then filled out a Google Form, filed in the LU's client database. A background check was conducted on the employer, and then UNHCR disseminated the employer information to refugee CBO. CBO were then expected to screen the employer before recommending jobs to refugees, though the ET did not find that CBO were trained on how to adequately screen employers. Some job-matching with individual job seekers was also conducted at the BOKL. Employers then verified refugee registration status with the LU upon hiring the worker. The LU sought to maintain contact with the employers, CBO, and employed PoC.

The ET finds that employment counselling, as it has been conducted in past years, is inappropriate for the CO's strategy moving forward for several reasons. Most importantly, job referrals facilitated by UNHCR could 'do harm' to PoC if UNHCR unintentionally directs PoC to a workplace with protection issues, which is a risk despite the efforts made to conduct employer background checks. Further, as an activity that is individual-intensive, it could not be scaled with the granting of work rights, and should be reassessed for that reason.

Bank Account Facilitation

ET conclusions on the activity: The ET agrees with the conclusion by UNHCR that the current agreement with the banks requiring case-by-case determination was a quick-fix but not sustainable or scalable for the long term. Access to financial services is critical for the safety and economic inclusion of refugees, and thus, should continue to be a part of the longer-term strategy (discussed further for KEQ 2).

Background and findings: There is no legal framework in Malaysia to allow those in possession of a UNHCR card to open a bank account. In order to open a bank account in Malaysia, foreigners typically need a residency or work

²² It should be noted that post-fieldwork communications with Made 51 clarified that Earth Heir Phase-3 artisans craft together in a common workshop.

²³ UNHCR Malaysia (2018e).

²⁴ Ibid. "In accordance to UNHCR's policy, placements are not made for spa, massage centres, pubs, bars and also not as maids, domestic helper, security guards or any other position deemed as not suitable by UNHCR."

permit, along with a reference from their Malaysia-based employer.

As with the employment counselling activity above, bank account facilitation began under the Registration Unit (2010) and transitioned to LU in 2015. Since then, the LU has supported PoC access to bank accounts by issuing letters to banks and employers that confirm their refugee registration. UNHCR established communications with banks through personal contacts of UNHCR staff with CIMB and Public Bank managers to provide conditional access to accounts for refugees.²⁵ Refugees are required to bring a recommendation letter from UNHCR confirming their refugee status, a letter from their current employer addressed to the bank branch as proof of salaried work, and UNHCR card. There are no written agreements with the banks, and thus, approval to open an account is subject to approval by the bank branch manager. Interviews with PoC holding bank accounts and with UNHCR staff agreed that the process can be cumbersome and inefficient because of the paperwork and coordination required for each individual, an effort that could still result in the PoC being denied the account.

According to the 2016 year-end report, 510 PoC received bank access per UNHCR's facilitation in that year.²⁶ The results on this activity for recent years are included under the same indicator noted above for employment counselling.

A focus group with PoC benefiting from the bank account facilitation described their increased safety because they are not carrying cash. Many PoC carry large sums of cash on-person and are robbed by authorities or criminals who know this about refugees. If more refugees had bank accounts, they believe it could reduce opportunistic corruption and extortion. Other benefits of having the account are they can make online purchases, use the debit card for shopping, make transfers between accounts, and pay bills online using the phone app. Some say they manage family expenses better when not spending cash. These PoC bank account holders also spoke about feeling their banks viewed them with a high level of suspicion, and that it is common for the branch manager to call them in to the bank to ask for details about their transactions (e.g., due to suspicions about money laundering). The ET was not able to conduct interviews with any bank managers regarding these issues.

In 2019, the UNHCR Malaysia operations team recognised that the unofficial cooperation with banks was too dependent on personal relationships with individual branch managers and would not be able to serve a broader PoC clientele. At the time of the evaluation, the CO was exploring a contract with the financial service provider (FSP) Merchantrade to fill this gap. Merchantrade is based in Malaysia and focused on providing financial services and products to migrant workers and unbanked groups. It has developed an e-wallet that serves as a bank account, advertising the product through NGO and refugee community leaders. They report that the biggest barrier to PoC accessing these accounts is lack of information about how to use the accounts and the benefits of such an account.

Some KII noted that certain segments of the PoC population may not be ready to interface with the banking system without some advance support, and that vice versa, FSP may need sensitisation for working with refugees. Some refugees, for example, may not trust financial institutions because of their history of marginalisation and exploitation; some may need the basics of literacy, numeracy, and financial education in order to use the services. UNHCR can work to ensure FSP adequately pair their financial products with these critical non-financial services.

Finally, another side activity of the LU has been coordinating PoC vendors to set up food stalls at the UNHCR BOKL annex to provide a food option where PoC wait for appointments with UNHCR. During the ET's evaluation debrief with the LU, the ET questioned why this activity was under the unit's scope. Following the discussion, the ET was informed that the LU will no longer be in charge of the annex food stalls and the CO will designate a new custodian of this task. This activity is briefly mentioned here as another small piece of evidence to show how the LU's scope in recent years has become a catch-all for various activities semi-related to PoC jobs/income but not to a larger strategy for economic inclusion.

²⁵ UNHCR Malaysia (2018e).

²⁶ UNHCR Malaysia (2016c).

Objective 3) Livelihood stakeholder network development

This objective includes Outcome 5) *Create a network of NGO, Social Enterprise organisations, foundations, private sector partners and government agencies to implement livelihoods projects in partnership with refugee organisations and BOKL.*

Livelihood Sector Network

ET conclusions on the activity. The ET concludes that the LU has been successful in creating a diverse network of stakeholders but it lacks strategic direction. The network platform also needs stronger communications protocols and facilitation by the LU.

Background & findings. The LU began reaching out to stakeholders in 2015, and the Livelihood Sector Network was established on 26 July 2016. As of 2019, the Livelihoods Sector Network consists of approximately 50 active organisations, including social enterprises, NGO, CSR linked to businesses, and refugee CBO. In 2016, the programme reported the Network supported 7,782 individuals through the involved groups.²⁷

KII with network members voiced an appreciation for the existence of the platform to share information, which included a large WhatsApp group and periodic in-person meetings. However, the purpose of the network was not clear for the participants, and it has not led to the expected synergising of efforts. Some network members voiced frustrations with the large number of network communications (particularly messages over WhatsApp).

"It [the network] feels like crisis management, and there is not a sense that we are working towards a larger economic inclusion goal."

~Stakeholder KII

Objective 4) Financial assistance and psycho-social support for most vulnerable

Outcome 6) states: *Continue Financial Assistance mechanism for the most vulnerable and/or emergency cases.*

Multi-Purpose Cash Grants

ET conclusions on the activity: The ET finds this activity has made the LU into a case management and referral unit across the office, detracting from their efforts to work toward a coherent livelihood strategy. The ET agrees with the conclusions of multiple UNHCR staff and management to remove this activity from the LU. Indeed, there is a need for holistic case management with the most vulnerable PoC, but the informal referral system in the office should come to an end. Future cash activities under the LU would need to be part of a well-funded graduation programme, as originally intended.

Background and findings: Financial assistance has been a part of CO operations for more than a decade. In 2008, when a multi-sectoral Field Services team existed, cash management was part of their services; then the Field Services team was disbanded and all assistance and community-related services was moved to a unit named Individual Assistance Desk, which was also implementing public health programmes and headed by public health personnel. In 2014, the Individual Assistance Desk was then renamed Health Unit in an effort to focus on public health work and move towards partner implementation for all social welfare assistance services. In the same year, financial assistance was moved from the Health Unit to the new Livelihoods Unit, formerly SPF, with the intention that the cash assistance would be linked to a livelihood graduation approach. However, a strategic plan for supporting cash recipients to “graduate” or make the transition to self-sufficiency was never developed, and the funds available

²⁷ UNHCR Malaysia (2016c).

for the cash assistance were short-term and emergency in nature.

It should be noted that in developing the scope for this evaluation, the CO advised that a separate Impact Evaluation of Multipurpose Cash Assistance was commissioned by BOKL for July/August 2019. The ET included this activity in the overall evaluation because it is one of an assemblage of activities that comprise the livelihood strategy of the operation.

Project documents report that 460 of the most vulnerable families received financial assistance in 2016, 338 PoC households in 2017, and 644 PoC households in 2018 (see Annex 5). The Tzu Chi Foundation has been a partner in cash assistance since 2015 covering 5-6 states, and since 2018, MyCare Malaysia has implemented the activity in four states. Both partners operate with PPA. To address the issue of cash delivery identified by an OIOS²⁸ audit and to align with HQ SOP for cash-based interventions (CBI), Merchantrade, was identified in 2019 to handle the cash release system. At the time of evaluation, the service contract for Merchantrade was in process.

The LU uses an excel spreadsheet to record referred cases and then sends referral lists to the partners based on location and urgency, who then conduct home visits to assess the need based on the Livelihood Vulnerability Assessment Tool. Some cases continue as direct implementation out of the LU.

Partner interviews indicate that the maximum amount received by a qualifying PoC household is 700 Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) per month over three months; thus, most households qualify for much less, and the cash is intended to supplement a portion of costs for food and medication. It is important to understand this amount of cash in relation to average household expenditures. The most recent Malaysia household expenditure survey (2016) reports the mean monthly household consumption expenditure as 4,033 MYR, varying by state, and from 4,402 MYR in urban areas to 2,725 in rural areas.²⁹

According to CO staff interviews across units, the LU is mainly seen as the referral unit for vulnerable cases. There is a fragmented and informal referral process within the operation that functions in parallel to the formal ProGres internal database where direct calls, faxes, and walk-ins are logged. UNHCR staff and partners agree that most cases are related to health needs such as the need for more extensive testing or treatment. Health needs are considered to be the number one trigger of deprivation for PoC households in Malaysia.

Interviews with partners and beneficiaries confirm that the cash grants relieve some suffering, but many households still resort to begging or sleeping on the street. The grants are too small and short in duration to support livelihoods. Many cases need longer-term social protection (e.g., elderly widows, or women caring for their families after the breadwinner was permanently injured or disabled from manual labour). The CO noted the need for a longer-term safety net for the most vulnerable in the 2018 Year-End Report.³⁰

Staff across the CO recognised the financial assistance activity in its current form has no real contribution to livelihoods, and its implementation under the LU has affected the time and efficiency of the livelihood programme. At the time of the evaluation it was planned that financial assistance would be moved out of the LU by August 2019, to reside directly under the programmes team until further restructuring of the CO is completed.

Objective 5) Self-reliance monitoring and project quality control

Outcome 7) for the final objective aims to: *Monitor changes in community level self-reliance and impact of programming on participants*. The LU measures two livelihood impact indicators: i) Self-reliance and livelihoods improved (for Objective 2 listed above- livelihood promotion activities); ii) Population has sufficient basic and domestic items (self-report) (for Objective 4 above related to cash assistance). See the 2017-2018 results in Figure 4.

²⁸ Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is the internal oversight body of the United Nations.

²⁹ Malaysia Department of Statistics (2016).

³⁰ UNHCR Malaysia (2019c).

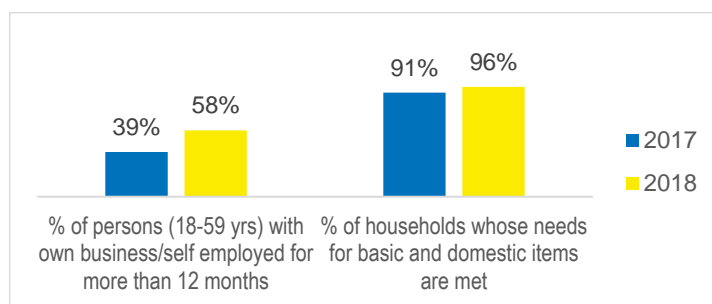


Figure 4. UNHCR Malaysia livelihood impact indicators

Source: UNHCR Malaysia (2019).

As noted in the discussion above on the limited project results for various activities, without a follow-up mechanism in place to measure livelihood impact post-project and without more robust and relevant indicators, impact attributed to the programme cannot be quantified. The main impact indicator for owning a business (shown in Figure 4) has numerous limitations: e.g., it does not measure if the self-employment was the PoC's primary livelihood or simply a small income generating activity, nor does it show if the business was started as a result of participation in the programme.

"We are keeping the machinery of the programme going with very little results."

~UNHCR Staff Interview

Interviews show that LU staff were aware that many of the activities of the unit were not contributing to livelihood results for PoC. Reasons cited for LU staff not acting on those issues include: they were unclear what the alternatives should be or what changes could be made, the LU team is comprised of short-term and rotating UNOPS staff without an LEI background, and CO leadership at that time also did not provide a clear new direction for substantive LEI activities under the LU. Thus, in past years it was reported that the LU struggled to fit their activities into the required HQ livelihoods results framework and to create a new operational plan amidst the restrictive policy environment.

During 2019, and as the new senior management placed most activities on hold, the LU has been developing a new strategy to include a focus on social cohesion, private sector engagement, and partner (Government and non-government) capacity building, pending the results of this evaluation.

In addition, the ET finds that the regional and HQ mechanisms for improving quality livelihood programmes did not adequately support the LU in determining a clear new direction. The regional office (Bangkok) provided support and guidance on the Malaysia Livelihoods Strategy developed in 2017. The strategy is a good one on paper, and the RO³¹ was aware of the challenges the programme faced. Yet, the region lacks the mandate to direct country operational decisions that would have helped the LU address concerns. Another reason for this was the mechanism that existed to review programmes in past years was also limited: i.e., it was designed to track process, and not to measure livelihood programme quality, outcomes, and impacts. UNHCR HQ's Minimum Criteria Compliance Assessment for Livelihoods Programming (MCCA) was conducted annually and scored the Malaysia livelihoods programme very high despite the issues on the ground: 96.7 percent (out of 100) in 2017.³² Since 2018, the MCCA process has been phased out due to the strategic shifts of away from livelihood sector direct implementation.

Resilience capacities

Refugee resilience capacities should inform UNHCR's approach. The GAEI strategy uses a resilience framework to

³¹ Note: Since the evaluation, further regionalisation has occurred in UNHCR, and the RO is now the regional bureau.

³² UNHCR (2017).

understand UNHCR’s best positioning to strengthen refugee protection and self-reliance (refer back to Section 1.3.2 and Annex 3). While it is clear that the lack of legal protection and social protection for refugees is the key factor causing vulnerability, some refugees have access to resilience capacities that allow them to be “better off” than others despite the contextual challenges. The ET gathered perspectives from refugees and stakeholders on what factors affect the livelihoods and well-being of PoC in Malaysia (Table 2).

Table 2 shows that strong refugee community support and household assets/savings to rely on are critical in times of need. These **absorptive capacities** prevent refugees from resorting to potentially harmful coping strategies like begging or early marriage. Refugee households with the ability to adapt their livelihood strategies to respond to risks had: breadwinners with access to education, training, and/or local languages; good relations with the host community; confidence; and many valued women’s empowerment in the household. According to the new strategy, LU should find operational partners to build up **adaptive capacities**. At the systems level, access to markets/employers, financial services, and structures to support gender equity and protection, particularly among local authorities, are key **transformative capacities**. In addition, the foundation for resilience building is ensuring basic needs are met; most pertinent for the Malaysia context are access to social safety nets and social services such as health services and education.

Table 2. Profile of refugee resilience capacities in Malaysia

Refugees are ‘better off’ in Malaysia who have the following capacities...

Absorptive Capacity	Adaptive Capacity	Transformative Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonding Social Capital and informal safety net - support within the refugee community for detention, strong community governance, etc. • Assets - arrived with jewelry to sell, accumulating household and productive items, and no longer paying smuggler debt • Savings - even a small buffer for hard months, ideally kept in a protected account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Capital - breadwinner is healthy & hard-working; language (Malay, English); education and training • Bridging Social Capital - good relations with host community, e.g., to help negotiate rent; remittances from family abroad • Confidence to adapt, mindset and psychosocial health • Women’s empowerment valued in the household and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to markets/employers - access including distance, transport, networks; also non-exploitative workplace • Local governance and protection provided by authorities - e.g., to combat police corruption and extortion mentioned in nearly every refugee interview • Access to financial services - reduces risk of theft • Structures to support gender equity and address SGBV

Foundations of LEI and refugee resilience – basic needs are met: Access to social protection and safety nets, safe water and sanitation, electricity, food and nutrition security, health services, education, shelter, safety, etc.

Note: According to the new global livelihoods strategy, LEI units should focus on absorptive and transformative capacities.

The resilience capacities show the importance of strong refugee community organisations (absorptive capacity) and their fostering of good relations with host communities and local authorities (adaptive and transformative capacities). Refugee resilience also requires access to basic services and strengthening human capital, including women’s empowerment and psychosocial supports, all of which UNHCR may not be able to provide but could facilitate through partners. These resilience capacities, among others that may be identified through future study, should inform an operation-wide approach to refugee resilience and self-reliance.

Factors affecting livelihood results

Internal factors to the CO: Enabling—The LU staff commitment and genuine care for PoC is the main factor that has contributed to positive experiences of PoC and partners in the projects. The LU staff know many refugee community leaders by name, and treat PoC with dignity and respect. The partners speak highly of the dedication and

hard work of the LU. An important enabling factor for the future observed by the ET is that across the CO there is a critical mass of staff ready for and expecting change. Multiple rounds of reorganisation in the past 5-10 years have contributed to a sense of readiness and anticipation that current CO senior management will execute the much-needed organisational reforms.

Constraining—The constraining factors involve internal CO dynamics, which the ET recognises are related to complex histories and operational cultures developed over years or in response to critical incidents. Generally, the ET observed and heard vocalised by staff challenges related to: the shifting and often isolated work streams of programme teams over the past five years due to the lack of a cohesive CO strategy; lack of clarity in roles both within the LU and across teams; and several changes in senior management. As with many operations globally, the CO has also faced budget constraints in recent years, with a stagnant budget as PoC numbers have increased.

External factors to the CO: Enabling—Malaysia's economy is growing and can absorb refugees and foreign workers. This is a critical piece of the enabling environment for LEI for refugees.

Constraining—The absence of a refugee political framework is the most important constraining factor for UNHCR's LEI work in Malaysia. Beyond the absence of a legal right to work, PoC have no access to social protection and social services, restricted mobility (no access to drivers' license), and limited access to financial services. Refugee communities are consumed with the persistent challenges of their community members facing detention, arrest, and extortion. PoC have no right to compensation or public justice due to injury, abuse, and exploitation in the workplace.

"Life is lived here feeling like a criminal, where you are always afraid of the authorities."

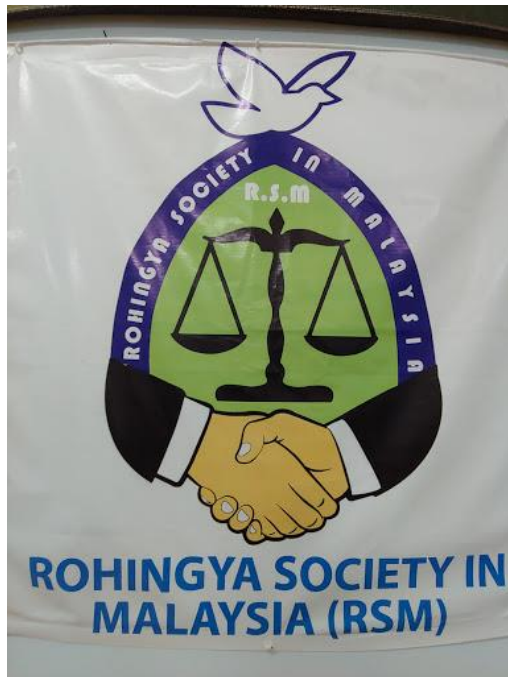
~ Refugee

Next, more buy-in and capacity building around refugee LEI is needed for stakeholders and partner organisations, including UN agencies—discussed further under KEQ 2. The 2018 Year-End Report recognises this challenge and the need to strengthen relationships with private sector and partners to reach PoC outside of Klang Valley and in other states.

Finally, the changing PoC profile affects the employment readiness of some segments of the PoC population. Staff KII note that the CO has not adequately considered and made changes to programme strategy based on this PoC population change. The PoC profile has shifted in the past decade from an educated population with strong internal community cohesion to a PoC profile with significant education, literacy, language, gender equality, and cultural barriers. Partners and PoC communities voiced concern for the generation of refugee youth growing up in Malaysia who have little access to education and future opportunities.

"The lack of education for Rohingya children is a problem they will face for all of their future."

~Refugee



Banner of PoC community group in Malaysia. TANGO/2019

KEQ 2

How can UNHCR better position its approach to and role in refugees' livelihoods and economic inclusion vis-à-vis those of other stakeholders, and what are the current opportunities for enhancing sustainability and phasing out of direct implementation of livelihood programme activities?

Box 4. Main findings - UNHCR's strategic positioning to enhance scale and sustainability

- **Policy change is the priority.** All activities across the operation should support the advocacy strategy led by senior management. Staff and partner interviews expressed readiness for a cohesive advocacy strategy, with UNHCR at the lead.
- **Coordination across the operation in identifying and capacitating strategic partners is needed.** The ET finds there is no overall coordination of partner engagement nor assessment of partner capacity, according to staff and partners. UNHCR could do more to share actionable data and use co-branding to build partnerships. This includes the need to strengthen the purpose and strategic direction of the current Livelihoods Sector Network. There are also opportunities to engage UN agencies in-country as advocacy partners or in joint programming.
 - ET interviews with various stakeholders—civil society organisations, potential employers, financial institutions, UN agencies, other service providers—expressed a great interest in engaging in strategic work to support refugees and a legal framework.
- **To align with the new global strategy, reorganisation of LEI activities is critical.** All current activities of the LU should phase out and/or remain stopped. With limited resources, individual-intensive activities are not appropriate to build widespread refugee economic inclusion. The work rights/work pilots should shift to the LU under programmes to focus on employment readiness and scale. UNHCR should continue to work toward widespread access to financial services in the future.
- **Refugee community governance structures and multi-sectoral support for employment readiness are the foundations for effective programmes.** Until a national refugee protection framework is in place, this approach builds a 'parallel' universe for localised protection. The concept of one-stop shops should be the outward face of UNHCR and its partners with the dual aim to provide information and resources in Kuala Lumpur and beyond, and to build the capacity of refugee CBO for self-governance and peaceful co-existence with host communities.

UNHCR's strategic role

All activities should support the advocacy strategy. A key factor determining UNHCR's strategic role in Malaysia is the political context, and since 2018, there is an opening with the new Government to establish a refugee protection framework for the first time. Policy change is thus the priority. Nearly all stakeholder and PoC interviews see UNHCR in the lead advocacy and convener role with the goal of promoting refugee self-reliance and economic inclusion in Malaysia. Due to the strategic importance of the advocacy work, the ET concludes the advocacy and external relations strategy should be led by CO senior management. All units within the operation, starting even with the data collected at registration, should have a cohesive strategy that contribute to the advocacy objectives.

"If given legal residency here, maybe we could have control of our lives. We have a lot of dreams, but it can't happen with the current restrictions."

~Refugee

Coordination across the operation in strategic partnerships. Coordination across the operation in identifying and capacitating (where necessary) strategic partners is needed: Government, private sector, financial institutions, social enterprises, donors, research institutions and universities, NGO, CBO, etc. The ET finds there is no overall coordination of partner engagement nor assessment of partner capacity, yet, there are many partners interested and willing to engage more to support refugees in Malaysia (along with others who would be involved with more sensitisation of the issues).

"I wish other [private sector] companies would be brave and put helping refugees down on their corporate social responsibility."

~KII

According to interviews with staff and partners, each CO unit separately engages partners to carry out their activities, and some partners have separate agreements with multiple units. Partners are largely unaware of UNHCR's strategy in Malaysia and how they contribute to it because they are not engaged in a multi-year relationship. This includes strengthening the purpose and strategic direction of the current Livelihoods Sector Network. Some partners who have been responsible for the implementation of livelihood activities that have been stopped should be engaged to contribute to the advocacy strategy through the Network.

The UN system in country, including International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organisation (ILO), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have not been strategically engaged as advocacy partners nor in joint programming. UN partners told the ET they would like to better align their work with UNHCR and identify areas for joint work. Some feel the general public is more aware of migrants and refugees in their midst and are looking to the UN for answers on community development and social cohesion. There is an opportunity to work together as a UN team on targeted campaigns for social awareness and advocacy on worker/refugee rights.

"The time is right [for UN coordination in country], but someone just has to take the leadership on and do it."

~KII

In addition to being a leader in advocacy, partners believe UNHCR could be both a better advocate and partner by improving its data collection and data sharing. UNHCR's data on the PoC population is needed to change policy, but UNHCR's registration data are not aligned with the strategic information interests of Government. Multiple partners would like to see improved data sharing and co-branding by UNHCR, both to advance advocacy at the national level, as well to promote social cohesion among refugee community groups and host communities at the local level. Partners also say that UNHCR has an important role to play in channelling private sector for advocacy, particularly for Malaysian businesses who need the social and political currency to be involved.

"UNHCR is a very strong and impressive brand that can be used to build partnerships... Move some of the onus of implementation from UNHCR to partners in a beneficial way."

~KII

Operational changes to enhance scale and sustainability

Reorganisation of LEI activities is critical. In order to realign with the new global strategy, the ET finds that the LU portfolio should be revamped. All current activities of the LU should phase out and/or remain paused until further review of the strategic activities that should be included in the LU portfolio: e.g., financial literacy/services, advocacy, coordination with partners on refugee governance/CBO capacity building and work pilots, etc.

With limited programme budgets, individual-intensive activities are not appropriate to build widespread refugee economic inclusion. As noted, the emergency financial assistance is in the process of moving out of the LU and should find a home where a longer-term safety net can be provided to the most vulnerable PoC.

The work rights/work pilots should shift to the LU under programmes to focus on employment readiness and scale. In terms of targeting, the most vulnerable should not be the livelihood beneficiary unless part of a well-funded and integrated graduation approach. The LEI will target the potential workforce segment of the PoC population.

As financial inclusion is key to the economic inclusion that will be made possible with refugee rights, UNHCR will need to continue dialogue and negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, major banks, and FSP to formalise an agreement for widespread access in the future. Further, a strategic collaboration with Merchantrade can be used to learn more about PoC utilisation of financial services. This information can be used as an advocacy and awareness-raising tool with financial institutions and Government. It will also help UNHCR and FSP to better understand the readiness and challenges in accessing the services faced by segments of the PoC population.

Refugee community governance structures and employment readiness are the foundations for effective programmes. Until a national refugee policy exists, this approach is building a ‘parallel’ and localised protection universe. For instance, it links refugee communities with municipal councils and local authorities for increased localised recognition of refugee identification cards. Strong refugee community groups with the support of municipalities are better able to ‘vet’ employers or landlords and negotiate safe/fair working and living conditions.

To this end, the SPF grants have potential if they are more strategic in building community governance structures, and if the grant activities are linked to PoC readiness for employment. The ET sees potential in using SPF to fulfil the original Outcome 2 of one-stop assistance integrating livelihood, education, and other assistance, as well as revamping the work of the Community Liaison Unit as it exists. To achieve this activity under the LU it would need to be part of an operation-wide strategy to strengthen community self-governance and provide multi-sectoral assistance and/or referrals.

“Employability skills are most needed. This is good for ANY durable solution. How do we ensure while refugees are here they are not just waiting? They are learning. They are prepared. They can take ownership of their own learning and development.”

~KII

These one-stop shops should be the outward face of UNHCR and its partners with the dual aim to provide information and resources in Kuala Lumpur and beyond, and to build the capacity of refugee CBO for self-governance and peaceful co-existence. The ‘shops’ should link the services/activities of the technical units to address employment/livelihood readiness issues around: language, awareness of workplace norms and worker rights/safety, literacy/education for children and adults, childcare, lack of networks/lack of social cohesion in host communities, and financial education (to eventually promote services like bank accounts and health insurance).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

KEQ 1: Results and factors (retrospective)

The conclusions for KEQ 1 are drawn around the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.³³

Relevance: Community-based protection is the biggest need of PoC in Malaysia until national legislation for refugee protection is in place. Some livelihood activities were inappropriately designed given the restricted legal environment, where their work could lead to repeated arrest, abuse, or other risks.

Efficiency: The internal dynamics in the CO have been influenced by a long history, resulting in a severe lack of communication and integration across technical units. The CO budget has remained the same, even decreased, while PoC numbers are increasing; staffing levels have been maintained by using short-term staff, for example, to staff the LU. The partnership approach has been disjointed and based on short-term contracting instead of an approach to build up partners with a multi-year vision.

Effectiveness: In all, the ET did not find evidence that the Objective 2 livelihood strategy activities have led to adequate and consistent income and livelihood opportunities for most beneficiaries. The main benefits to refugees from participation in LU activities are psychosocial and social capital, with some cases of women's empowerment and community building for social protection as a result of the programme.

Impact and sustainability: Overall, impact has been limited. The number of beneficiaries reached is small. The case-by-case approach is not efficient for a programme with limited resources and a changing PoC population. Some activities have been carried over from year to year without an assessment of their relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, or their potential to 'do harm' such as with employment counselling. The standard indicators for the livelihoods results framework and the oversight mechanisms provided by the region and HQ in past years have been inadequate to identify and address the issues with programme design and quality. The ET finds the work toward Objective 1 under the DSU is the most in line with the new global livelihood strategy as compared to the other activities implemented under the other objectives.

KEQ 2: UNHCR strategic positioning (prospective)

The conclusions for UNHCR's future strategic role in LEI programming in Malaysia use the frameworks provided in the UNHCR 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note³⁴ (see references) and the Refugee Resilience Theory of Change (see Annex 3).

Absorptive capacity: These capacities are the prerequisite foundations for building refugee resilience and self-reliance. This is a core mandate area of UNHCR in ensuring protections and basic needs are met for PoC. This evaluation finds that both national and local measures to ensure PoC protection and basic safety are critical. A long-

³³ See: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

³⁴ UNHCR (2018b).

term safety net is needed for the most chronically vulnerable PoC households. At community level, strengthening social capital within refugee communities and with host communities, and access to basic services such as education and healthcare, are an essential foundation for this safety net.

Adaptive capacity: As stated in the Concept Note, UNHCR is to partner and convene experts to facilitate the inclusion of refugees into existing programmes and services that address livelihood skills development, jobs, and business opportunities. In the current context, skills development and job opportunities need to be facilitated through the work rights/work pilot programmes. Through a MYMP partnership approach and an integrated CO strategy, a large-scale employment readiness activity is needed, which takes into account the various profiles of the PoC population.

Transformative capacity: This is a strategic area for UNHCR in future years. There is an enormous opportunity for UNHCR Malaysia to work with Government and with the private sector. This advocacy and convener role must also extend to financial institutions and development actors, including other UN agencies, to demonstrate how they, too, can contribute to the Global Compact on Refugees. Thus, UNHCR is best positioned for a role in facilitating strategic relationships and working on the enabling environment for refugees. Advocacy work and improved public awareness for peaceful co-existence should be part of the goal of every unit.

For this livelihood programme to be aligned with the new global strategy, most direct implementation activities of the LU will need to be phased out, and the functions such as cash-based interventions and case management with vulnerable PoC integrated into other units. The ET recognises these changes can be sensitive as they impact the responsibilities of CO staff. **Change management processes** are key for this operation, promoting office-wide buy-in for a coherent restructuring toward a common goal of refugee self-reliance. Malaysia can then provide a good example of this process for other operations. There is a sense of disappointment among staff with the low perceived relevance of their work and the limited results achieved through ineffective activities in past years; CO staff are ready for big changes to be implemented through the new management. This is an important enabling factor for the future of UNHCR's LEI work in Malaysia.

Recommendations

Recommendations for UNHCR Malaysia

1. **Recommendation on operation-wide participatory strategy development.** All units/functions within the operation should have a cohesive strategy that contribute to the advocacy objectives. This includes operating around a single approach with integrated outreach and partner engagement. The ET believes this is the first step toward the necessary organisational change. The ET recommends a participatory process to develop a consolidated operation-wide strategy with PoC at the centre. This should include activities such as Theory of Change workshops with staff and stakeholders, and PoC feedback sessions. **When:** begin by end of 2019.
2. **Recommendation on restructuring and change management.** The second step is to continue with a change management process to align operational functions with the above strategy. The ET recognises that strategies for restructuring of the operation are underway with the guidance of senior management and does not intend to detail a new organigram for the office in this evaluation. The ET recommends senior management hire a change management consultant to support them in this process. The ET advises that the following are considered in the restructuring process:
 - Reorganise the current 'operations' units into functions that form one outward-facing programming package that addresses holistic PoC needs through a community-based peaceful coexistence approach. This package should be made accessible to PoC through community outreach centres, also called one-stop shops, instead of the current system where PoC need to travel to the main offices of UNHCR and its partners.
 - Move the advocacy work to a team led by senior management so that the advocacy function aligns better

with strategic opportunities at country operation level.

- Move the work rights/work pilot portfolio from the DSU to an operations/programmes team, which has the capacity and systems in place to implement the pilot to scale.

The reinvigorated Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Unit of Malaysia should be led by a senior staff (P4/P5) with strategic support from the (newly arriving) Senior Regional Technical Advisor on livelihoods to be based in Kuala Lumpur. The profile of staff needed for the technical team should reflect expertise in strategic coordination and private sector engagement. **When:** Restructure plan confirmed by end of 2019, implemented early 2020.

3. **Recommendation on employment readiness.** Large segments of the PoC population, specifically new arrivals from Myanmar, are not ready for employment and financial inclusion activities, instead requiring support in the basics of language (Malay/English), literacy, financial education, awareness of cultural work norms, etc. The LU should use the time under restructuring to compile secondary data and build a complete profile of the employment readiness of the PoC population— and to strengthen current “foundational” capacity interventions on the aforementioned items. The profile should include a separate economic activity assessment by age groups, gender, ethnic group, and region. This information should inform the situational analysis for designing the approach to the one-stop shops in different regions around Malaysia. **When:** by Quarter 1 (Q1), 2020.
4. **Recommendation on partnerships.** Senior management, supported by an advocacy/knowledge management technical advisor and a partnership advisor, should conduct an operation-wide assessment of partnerships, including partner capacity and gaps. Based on the findings and integrated with the referral needs of the one-stop shops, new multi-year partnerships should be developed. Additionally, senior management or a senior staff designee should approach the UN Country Team to identify opportunities for a joint advocacy strategy. Individual UN agencies should also be approached to identify areas where programmes can be aligned and opportunities for joint programming, particularly around employment readiness and worker protections. **When:** Q2, 2020.

Recommendations for UNHCR HQ/RB

5. **Recommendation on HQ/RB support.** There is a need for more capacity building support by HQ/RB around the shifts represented in the new livelihood strategy. Capacity building and sensitisation could be used around the following issues in particular, as learned from this evaluation:
 - *Distinguishing impact goals and measurement expectations.* Promoting small and sporadic income and business activities among PoC is not the same as promoting livelihoods or self-sufficiency. This distinction is not measured because there is no mechanism for follow-up with PoC participants and the current livelihood indicators do not reflect this distinction. HQ/RB should develop a memo that outlines expectations around indicator measurement going forward and in the transition as the new results framework and global strategy are rolled out.
 - *How to do MYMP within the annual project cycle and partner contracting constraints.* The LU has struggled with how to do long-term partnership development working within the constraints of the annual project cycle and within the SC/PPA contract mechanisms. Good practices and experience from other livelihood programmes exist, and HQ/RB should disseminate these learnings to be used as guidance for other programmes.
 - *Create a mechanism for supporting struggling livelihood programmes.* As shown through this evaluation, there is a need HQ/RB to better support livelihood programmes to ‘let go’ of activities that are no longer aligned with the global strategy. This includes support to LU in assessing when their operational context is not ready for an activity, particularly when the activity could ‘do harm’ but also if it will not be able to go to scale nor be sustainable in the long term. HQ should work with its RB advisors to develop a process for working with livelihood programmes struggling with the transitions and shifts of the new strategy.

When: Q2 of 2020.

Annex 1: Background & Methodology

Operational Context – continued

Social, political, and economic context: Malaysia has a total population of 31.6 million (as of 2017). According to the results of the last census (2010), 92 percent of the population are Malaysian citizens (consisting of the ethnic groups: *Bumiputera* (67 percent), Chinese (25 percent), Indians (seven percent), among others) and eight percent are non-citizens.³⁵ Many national socio-economic indicators have shown steady improvements since 1990.³⁶ Less than one percent (0.4) of the population lives below the national extreme poverty line. The average life expectancy at birth is 75 years in Malaysia.

Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957, and runs under a parliamentary democracy and federal constitutional monarchy system of governance.³⁷ It is comprised of 13 large states and three federal territories. Executive power is controlled by the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The current prime minister Mahathir Mohamad was reelected prime minister in May 2018 with the *Pakatan Harapan* (Alliance of Hope) coalition. Mohamad previously served for 22 years from 1980-2002.

Malaysia's economy has seen significant industrialisation and growth over the past 50 years as a result of the country's openness to trade and investment.³⁸ As of 2017, the services sector was the largest employer of the workforce and contributed to nearly 54 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), with manufacturing/industry at about 38 percent of the GDP, and agriculture at nine percent. As a result of this growth, the country is expected to transition from an upper middle-income economy to high-income by 2024. Despite this, income inequality in Malaysia remains high as compared to other countries in the East Asia region but is slowly declining.

National refugee policies and legal frameworks: Malaysia has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor the 1967 Protocol. Refugees in country are thus recognised as undocumented migrants and criminalised under the Immigration Act of 1959.³⁹ Refugees have no access to legal employment, basic social services, or education, and they face detention, arbitrary arrest, exploitation in the workplace, limited mobility, and negative public perceptions. With no access to work permits, combined with low levels of skills and education (60 percent are qualified for low-skilled employment⁴⁰), many refugees end up working in unsafe, unstable, and underpaid jobs. However, in recent years the harsh tone toward immigrants has shifted, including positive change initiated by the Government such as:⁴¹

- The Syrian Temporary Relocation Scheme: At the 70th UN General Assembly in 2015, Malaysia agreed to receive 3,000 Syrians, granting them temporary legal stay, access to work, education, and healthcare.
- The Rohingya Work Pilot: In March 2016, the Cabinet agreed to allow 300 UNHCR-registered Rohingya refugees to legally work in the plantation and manufacturing sectors through an i-Kad, temporary employment card, renewable each year for up to three years.
- The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (2016) adopted by Malaysia, as UN member state.
- UNHCR Malaysia sees the change in Government in May 2018 as an important opportunity for advocacy

³⁵ Malaysia Department of Statistics (2011).

³⁶ World Bank Group (2019a).

³⁷ BBC (2018).

³⁸ World Bank Group (2019b).

³⁹ The law regulates various aspects of immigration into Malaysia. See: ILO (2003).

⁴⁰ UNHCR Malaysia (2016a)

⁴¹ UNHCR Malaysia (2019).

and continued positive change.

Refugee context: As of June 2019, UNHCR reported approximately 175,760 refugees and asylum-seekers registered in Malaysia.⁴² The majority of registered refugees are from Myanmar (many of whom are Rohingya), along with people from Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, among others.⁴³ UNHCR estimates that 79 percent of the population of people of concern (PoC) are adults of working age.⁴⁴ PoC are integrated in urban areas across 10 states as part of a much larger migrant community of three million people. According to UNHCR, the main challenge to refugee self-reliance in Malaysia is the lack of legal protections.⁴⁵

UNHCR's baseline socio-economic survey of 2016 found that employment and self-employment rates differed drastically between ethnic groups and across gender.⁴⁶ Across adult registered refugees, 60 percent are employed. Yet, only half (52 percent) of Rohingya refugees were employed, but self-employment for Rohingya at 11 percent was the highest as compared to the other ethnic groups. Unemployment rates were extremely high among groups from the Middle East (approximately 70 percent). In terms of differences by gender, only 23 percent of working age women of surveyed households were employed, as compared to 72 percent of men.

The baseline survey also found that the primary livelihoods of refugee households were: food and beverage, as the most common sector for both men and women; followed by manufacturing, vehicle service/repair, and electronics for men; and cleaning services, retail, and tailoring for women. It should be noted that other estimates of refugee employment by industry puts the construction industry as second to food and beverage, as an employer of one quarter (24.6 percent) of refugees in Malaysia, and Rohingya refugees predominately work in the construction and cleaning industries.⁴⁷ UNHCR's market and value chain analysis found that the hotel and restaurant sectors have the potential to employ over 78,000 PoC, the construction industry nearly 21,000 PoC, and manufacturing or repair of electronics thousands more.⁴⁸

Social capital was reported in the baseline survey as an important mechanism for finding employment, for emergency assistance, and social support, provided by friends and family in the community.⁴⁹ According to the Kuala Lumpur-based refugees interviewed, the key barriers to attaining better employment are lack of legal status (72 percent), language barriers (44 percent), and lack of skills (35 percent).

Methodology– continued

Approach: A key element to TANGO's approach is the participatory and systematic feedback process through all phases of evaluation. The evaluation design was jointly agreed by all involved levels of UNHCR. The fieldwork was conducted to solicit sensemaking and validation from a broad range of stakeholders. In the post-fieldwork and analysis phase, preliminary analysis and results briefings engaged UNHCR and partners in order to ensure the results and subsequent conclusions and recommendations are relevant and actionable. After submission of the draft evaluation report, there was a period of time to collect and submit comments to TANGO by UNHCR. The comments process is a crucial step to ensuring the usability of the final deliverable for UNHCR stakeholders. This process was repeated for a second draft before this report was finalised.

This evaluation examines the results of livelihood activities and factors affecting those results (KEQ 1) in light of the strategic objectives of the CO and of the strategic direction promoted by HQ through the forthcoming global livelihoods strategy (KEQ 2). Thus, the two KEQs represent both retrospective and prospective inquiries.

⁴² UNHCR (2019c).

⁴³ TANGO (2019b).

⁴⁴ UNHCR Malaysia (2016a). Note: based on the 2016 estimates of 123,753 (total population of working age adults) out of 156,546 total registered PoC.

⁴⁵ UNHCR Malaysia (2017a).

⁴⁶ UNHCR Malaysia (2016b).

⁴⁷ UNHCR Malaysia (2017c).

⁴⁸ UNHCR Malaysia (2016a).

⁴⁹ UNHCR Malaysia (2016b).

Summary of methods/techniques

The Malaysia ET included two international consultants, TANGO Vice President and senior researcher, both with livelihoods and refugee expertise. During site visits the ET was introduced by an LU team member (who then left the room in most cases), and translation was assisted by UNHCR interpreters. A UNHCR HQ LEI staff also joined the fieldwork as an observer, with roles during interviews clearly articulated to the respondents; and their inputs to the ET were valuable contributions to the analysis. The TANGO country team was supported by TANGO HQ executive officers and desk-based researchers, ensuring consistency in approach across the country evaluations.

The ET conducted an in-depth evaluation focusing on programmatic results of the past five years, factors that affected results, and the role of UNHCR during this period and moving forward. The ET used a mixed-methods approach to ensure triangulation of evidence. The main techniques included a desk review of secondary data and relevant external literature or policies, and primary qualitative data collection. The desk review included the collection and review of approximately 145 documents provided by the CO (e.g., indicator reports, programme strategy documents, project reports from implementing partners, etc.).

Qualitative data collection was comprised of focus group discussions (FGD) with livelihood programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiary refugees, and key informant interviews (KII) with programme stakeholders: UNHCR staff, partners, private sector representatives, academia, other UN agencies, among others.

The TANGO-led team, in close collaboration with UNHCR, used a purposive sampling method for this qualitative study to explore the effectiveness of current livelihood activities supported by UNHCR across varied contexts and PoC groups. The sites were selected primarily based on origin of the refugee population and population size, length of time activities have been implemented, and differences in geographic setting. The ET conducted fieldwork in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and surrounding area, and brief visits to Ipoh and Taiping on the way to Penang (island and mainland).

The sampling strategy ensured that the most significant partners and perspectives are included. This approach ensured age, gender, and diversity (AGD) considerations in the perspectives gathered. The focus groups were conducted with youth and adult disaggregated by gender and ethnic background for most groups, as well as by intervention type. Due to the small size of the programme, the ET included refugee non-beneficiaries in the sample in order to gather broad perspectives of livelihood strategies and challenges for refugee groups not receiving direct support. Field work was conducted 18-28 June 2019. Interviews were conducted with 174 PoC (108 women, 66 men), and 63 total key informant/stakeholder interviews (see Table 3). Female PoC account for 62 percent of the total PoC interviewed, and non-beneficiary PoC interviews account for 33 percent.

Table 3. Type and number of interviews completed

Type of interview	Female	Male	Total
PoC interviews	108	66	174
Beneficiaries	88	36	124
Non-beneficiaries	20	30	50
KI/Stakeholder interviews	-	-	63

See Annex 2 for the interview lists.

Analysis and quality assurance

At the end of the field mission a debriefing was conducted with members of the livelihood team, heads of unit, and senior management to present emerging findings. This report was prepared with information collected during the field visit and subsequent interviews/validation discussion, and triangulated with the available secondary data.

For analysis, the ET used the matrix approach. The ET began with open coding to become familiar with the data and develop initial interpretations of emerging themes and concepts, and thus gain a sense of how to proceed with analysis. Coding schemes were developed, which is an arrangement of related themes and concepts into which data

are classified to draw findings. As TANGO is not using computer-assisted qualitative analysis for this study, the coding scheme is developed and organised manually within a matrix. The TANGO consultant formatted the matrix by the main categories of the data across the data sources. Quality assurance was conducted by a senior researcher at TANGO HQ, who reviewed the consistency and coherence of the conclusions drawn from the data and provided guidance on UNHCR evaluation quality standards and processes.

The draft report and preliminary recommendations were discussed via teleconference with UNHCR stakeholders in the analysis and reporting phase. All stakeholders submitted detailed comments on the draft report, and TANGO revised and finalised the report based on this feedback. This iterative process ensures the final recommendations of the evaluation are relevant and actionable.

Limitations/constraints

The qualitative data collection via purposive sampling are not meant to provide findings that are generalisable to the entire PoC population in country. The evaluation focused on the perceived benefits of the livelihood activities and areas for improved LEI support for refugees, and thus, sought to conduct sufficient fieldwork to reach saturation for those ideas. In all, the ET feels the qualitative fieldwork was sufficient to draw conclusions based on beneficiaries of the programme.

The programme was very light-touch over the last two to three years. Participants struggled to recall details, results or even intent of some activities. Significant time was spent on establishing clarity of project activities and the role of UNHCR and its partners. While this did not affect overall quality of data, it had a negative impact on the efficiency of fieldwork.

In addition, social desirability or other types of response bias are common potential constraints with beneficiary respondents, including the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a way they think the interviewer (or UNHCR/partner) or their social group wants them to respond. To limit this bias and mitigate data quality issues, the evaluation team was clear in its introduction that it is independent of UNHCR and does not make decisions for the programme. When UNHCR staff were present as interpreters or observers, their presence was explained as a learning opportunity, emphasising the importance of participants being forthright in their discussion and feedback. The interviewer used techniques to promote comfortable interaction and honest exchanges of views during the interview. TANGO does not believe the overall quality of the data were impacted by bias.

Annex 2: Interview Lists

Key informants

List of persons and institutions consulted. Note: both individual and small group interviews were conducted.

Total Number Key Informants: 67

Number of interviews: 42

Date	Number of respondents	Organisation/Unit
18/6/2019 (ongoing during evaluation) Tuesday	1	UNHCR Malaysia - Livelihood Unit
19/6/2019 Wednesday	1	UNHCR Malaysia – Senior Leadership
19/6/2019 Wednesday (with follow up during the evaluation)	6	UNHCR Malaysia - Health, Education, Protection/SGBV, and Volunteer Units
19/6/2019 Wednesday (and ongoing during evaluation)	4	UNHCR Malaysia -Livelihood Unit
20/6/2019 Thursday	2	Humanitarian Care Malaysia (MyCARE)
20/6/2019 Thursday	1	K'cho Shelter
20/6/2019 Thursday	1	National Association of Women Entrepreneurs Malaysia (NAWEM)
20/6/2019 Thursday	1	TALENPAC/MAD
20/6/2019 Thursday	3	PSC (People System Consultancy)
20/6/2019 Thursday	1	UNIQLO
20/6/2019 Thursday (first of two meetings)	3	DSU
20/6/2019 Thursday	1	Merchantrade
21/6/2019 [Friday]	4	Taiwan Buddhist Tzu-Chi Foundation (Tzu-Chi)
21/6/2019 [Friday]	1	Earth Heir
21/6/2019 [Friday]	2	Riverbank Academy
21/6/2019 [Friday]	3	Nashpotatoes
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	1	UNHCR Malaysia - Programmes
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	1	UNHCR Malaysia - Programmes

25/6/19 [Tuesday]	2	UNHCR Malaysia – Public Information and Fundraising
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	2	Asia School Business (ASB) and IDEAS
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	2	Monash University
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	1	Humanity Heroes
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	1	Picha Project
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	1	UNHCR Malaysia – CLU/OST
25/6/19 [Tuesday]	1	UNHCR Malaysia – Education Unit
26/6/19 [Wednesday]	2	Fugee.org
26/6/19 [Wednesday]	1	Beyond Borders
26/6/19 [Wednesday]	1	Geutanyoe Foundation
26/6/19 [Wednesday]	1	Rohingya Project
26/6/19 [Wednesday]	1	RECODE
27/6/19 [Thursday- Skype]	1	UNHCR Regional Office BKK
28/6/19 [Friday]	1	UNHCR Malaysia – Senior Leadership
10/7/19 [Emailed responses]	1	UNHCR HQ – Financial Inclusion
10/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	United Artisans – Volunteer
10/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	Same Skies
18/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)
23/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	International Labour Organisation (ILO) Malaysia
24/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Malaysia
26/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	Mercy Malaysia - Health
30/7/19 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	3	UNDP Malaysia
8/8/2019 [Emailed responses]	1	Muslim Aid (YKMAM)
9/6/2019 [Skype/ Phone Interview]	1	MADE 51, UNHCR HQ

Beneficiary and PoC interviews

Total number of beneficiary and PoC interviewees: 174 (66 males, 108 females)

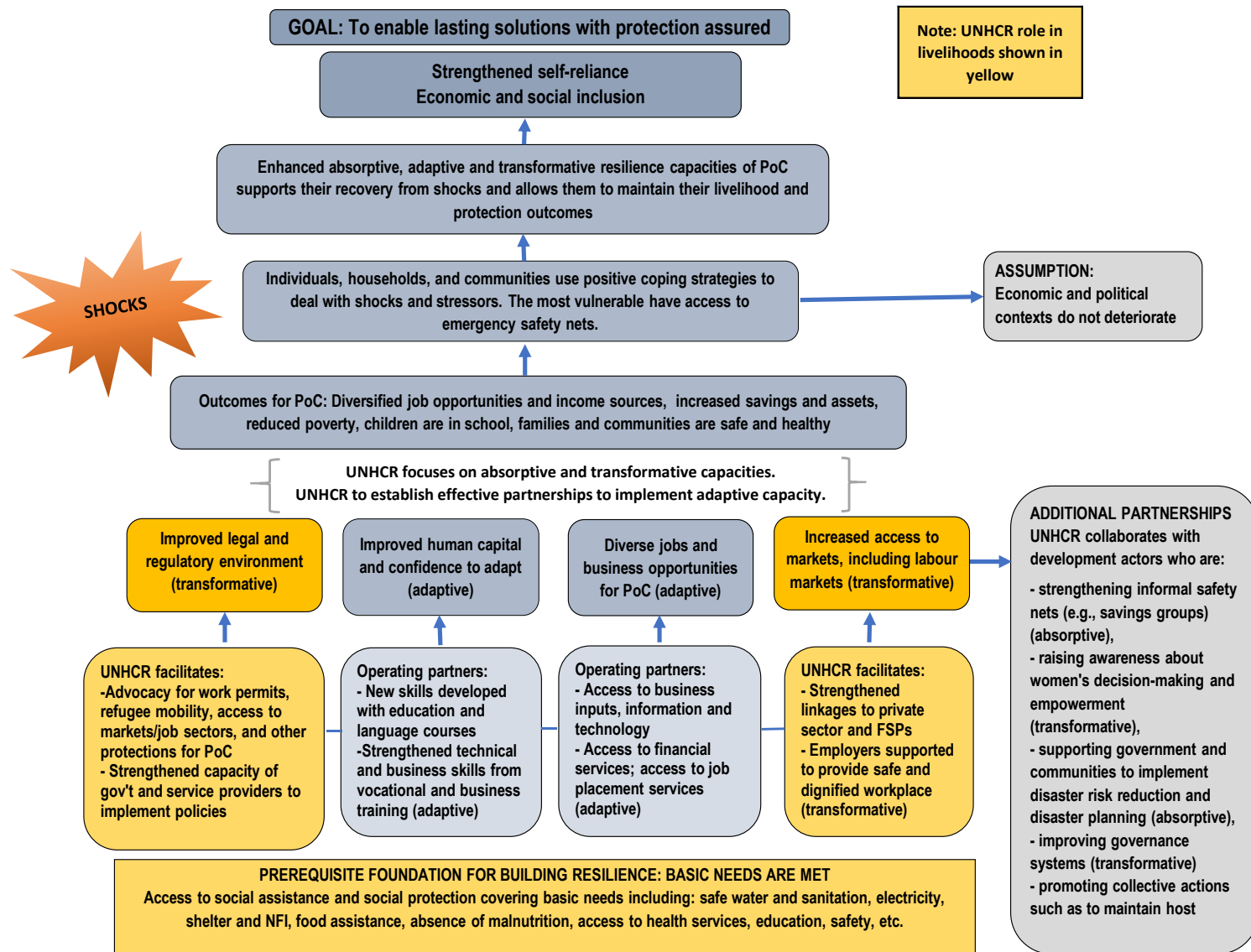
Number of FGD: 24 (6 with men, 9 with women; 9 mixed/or with youth)

Date	Type	Location	POC Ethnic Group	Livelihood activity beneficiary?	# Female	# Male	# Total
19/6	Men & Women	KL	COBEM (Coalition of 7 Burmese Ethnic Migrants)	Non-beneficiary (Community Leaders)	2	6	8
20/6	Men & Women	KL	Chin	Beneficiary (K'cho Shelter)	4	6	10
21/6	Women	KL	Somali	Beneficiary (Bakers)	9	0	9
21/6	Youth & Women	KL	Rohingya	Beneficiary (Tailoring)	5	0	5
21/6	Women	KL	Syrian, Iranian, Afghan	Beneficiary (SFS)	5	0	5
21/6	Women	KL	Chin	Beneficiary (SFS)	7	0	7
22/6	Youth & Women	Ipoh	Rohingya	Non-beneficiary	3	0	3
22/6	Men	Ipoh	Rohingya	Beneficiary of SPF (community leader and other men)	0	9	9
22/6	Women	Taiping	Rohingya	Non-beneficiary	5	0	5
22/6	Men	Taiping	Rohingya	Non-beneficiary (community leader and other men)	0	11	11
23/6	Men	Penang	Rohingya	Non-beneficiary (community leader and other men)	0	5	5
23/6	Men	Penang	Rohingya	Beneficiary (MED)	0		0
23/6	Women	Penang	Rohingya	Beneficiary (CBI)	9	0	9
23/6	Men	Penang	Rohingya	Beneficiary (Air Con TVET)	0	2	2
23/6	Men & Women	Penang	Rohingya	Beneficiary (Access to Bank Accounts)	5	3	8
23/6	Men & Women	Penang	Rohingya	Beneficiary (SPF)	3	9	12
24/6	Youth & Women	Penang	Rohingya	Non-beneficiary	10	0	10
24/6	Men	Penang	Rohingya	Non-beneficiary (community leader and other men)	0	8	8
26/6	Men & Women	KL	Afghan	Beneficiary (SPF, Theater Group)	3	4	7
26/6	Women	KL	Rohingya	Beneficiary (SFS)	6	0	6
27/6	Youth & Women	KL	Rohingya	Beneficiary (SPF)	3	3	6
27/6	Women	KL	Pakistani	Beneficiary (SPF and SFS)	10	0	10
27/6	Women	KL	Sudanese	Beneficiary (SPF)	9	0	9
27/6	Women	KL	Afghan	Beneficiary (SPF and CBI)	10	0	10
				TOTAL:	108	66	174

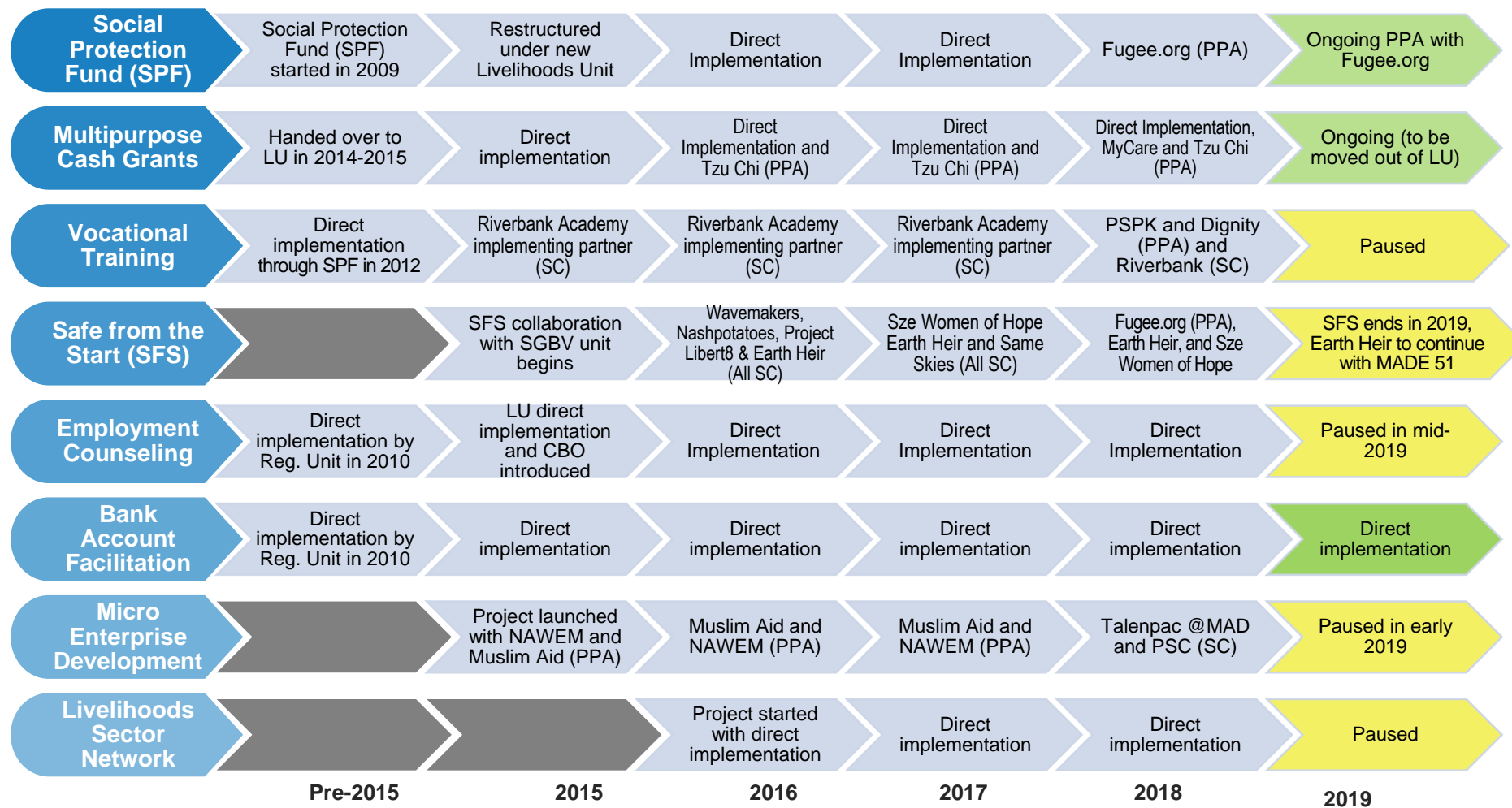
Annex 3: Resilience Capacities and Framework

- 1. Absorptive capacity is the:** Ability of households and communities to minimise exposure to shocks if possible and to recover quickly after exposure.
 - Informal Safety Nets (e.g., involvement in savings groups, *zakat*, mutual help groups, civic or charitable groups, religious groups, women's groups)
 - Asset Ownership (e.g., productive assets and livestock gained through the programme)
 - Local shock preparedness plan or protection structures in place and disaster risk reduction (e.g., awareness of disaster preparedness plans (for natural hazards) and about their awareness of how to prevent protection risks such as SGBV trainings or through conflict management committees, or how to report abuses.
 - Household savings (e.g., use savings to cope with shock, not negative coping strategies such as distress sale of productive assets, withdrawing children from school to work, or taking on consumptive debt)
 - Bonding Social Capital (e.g., connected to informal safety nets, above, it is seen in the bonds between community members. It involves principles and norms such as trust, reciprocity and cooperation, and is often drawn on in the emergency context, where PoC work closely to help each other to cope and recover)
- 2. Adaptive capacity is the:** Ability of households and communities to make pro-active and informed choices about their lives and their diversified livelihood strategies based on changing conditions.
 - Livelihood diversity (e.g., what have been the opportunities for PoC to diversity their livelihoods and income sources? What livelihoods can be sustained in the face of different kinds of risks/shocks?) and asset ownership (same as above)
 - Human capital (e.g., basic literacy, primary or higher education, trainings received)
 - Access to financial services (e.g., access to bank accounts, loans, micro-credit)
 - Psychosocial adaptations (e.g., confidence, perceived ability to adapt and be self-reliant)
 - Bridging social capital with the host community and to others in different risk environments (e.g., those with social ties outside their immediate community can draw on these links when local resources are insufficient or unavailable. Some PoC may heavily depend on remittances, for example. For this evaluation, it may also mean ties to the host community indicating greater social inclusion.)
- 3. Transformative capacity is the:** System-level changes that ensure sustained resilience, including formal safety nets, access to markets, infrastructure, and basic services.
 - Access to basic services (e.g., nearby health centre, primary school, security services, etc.)
 - Policy changes regarding work permits and mobility
 - Access to formal safety nets (government, NGO, or UN- provided food or cash assistance for relief or for the most vulnerable)
 - Access to infrastructure (e.g., water and sewerage systems, shelter, electricity, telecommunications, paved roads)
 - [For rural areas] Access to livestock services or natural resources (e.g., grazing land)
 - Access to markets (e.g., regulations and policies allow PoC to access work permits, land, formal employment in all sectors)
 - Linking social capital (e.g., a refugee group leader is designated to participate in local government decision making)

Refugee Resilience and Self-Reliance Theory of Change



Annex 4: Livelihood Programme Timeline



Annex 5: Programme Results Tables

The following tables summarise the programme indicator results reported by year. The blue colour is the impact indicator, the purple colour shows the output indicators, and for the year-end achievement of results—green represents targets achieved and yellow not-achieved.

Table 4. 2015 Livelihood programme indicator report results

Objective	Impact Indicator	Baseline	Target (OL)	Target (OP)	Total Year End
Self-reliance & livelihoods improved	% of female persons of concern (18-59 yrs) with own business / self-employed for more than 12 months	0.3	0.4	5.0	0.4
Output	Performance Indicator		Target (OL)	Target (OP)	Total (Year end)
Sectorial cash grants or vouchers provided	# of PoC receiving cash/vouchers for business start up		80.0	250.0	258.0
Access to wage earning employment facilitated	# of PoC registered in job placement services		500.0	3000.0	825.0
Access to training and learning enabled	# of PoC receiving life-skills training for livelihood purposes		250.0	400.0	703.0
Strategy developed and Implemented	# of projects supporting livelihood capacities of PoC		20.0	65.0	7.0
Assessment and analysis undertaken	Market survey / labour sector survey conducted or available (yes/no)		100.0	100.0	100.0
Vocational training / Technical skills provided	# of vocational and technical training institutions that waive or reduce tuition fees for PoC		3.0	10.0	5.0

Prioritised target (OL): The operation's expected result given existing resources (OL).

Comprehensive target (OP): The operation's ideal result if all required resources were available (OP).

Source: UNHCR Malaysia (2015).

Table 5. 2016 Livelihood programme reported results

Note: The 2016 Indicator Report was not available. A summary of the self-reliance and livelihood results are listed below

2016 Self Reliance and Livelihoods Results

- 976 POCs received job counselling
- 510 POCs received bank access facilitation
- 460 of the most vulnerable families (1,317 persons) received financial assistance
- 30 persons benefited from psychosocial counselling
- 130 PoC received business grants
- LU supported 9 CBO, 2 self-help groups, and 3 learning centres
- 120 predominantly Rohingya youth received training in craft-making and entrepreneurial skills
- The Livelihoods Sector Network supported approximately 7,782 individuals
- 88 Rohingya households determined to be most vulnerable were provided financial assistance. This included persons with serious medical conditions, at-risk women, survivors of GBV and households with detained/arrested breadwinners.
- 120 persons participated in functional literacy training, 20 women were trained in post-natal care, 20 Rohingya men received training in air condition (AC) installation and phone repair, while 92 youth obtained artisanal and entrepreneurship training.

Source: UNHCR Malaysia (2016c).

Table 6. 2017 Livelihood programme indicator report results

Objective	Impact Indicator	Baseline	Target (OL)	Target (OP)	Total (Year end)
Population has sufficient basic & domestic items	% of targeted households whose basic needs are met with multi-purpose cash grants or vouchers		100.0	100.0	91.1
Self-reliance & livelihoods improved	% of persons of concern (18-59 yrs) with own business / self-employed for more than 12 months	7.2	16.7	58.00	39.0
	Extent persons of concern have formal access to work opportunities in host country	10.00	30.00	40.00	20.00
Output	Performance Indicator		Target (OL)	Target (OP)	Total (Year end)
Cash-based assistance: Cash grants or vouchers provided	# of households receiving cash grants		220.0	250.0	338.0
	Needs assessment conducted to set entitlement and report available (yes/no)		100.0	100.0	100.0
Sectorial cash grants for business start up	# of PoC receiving cash/vouchers for business start up		60.0	365.0	55.0
	# of PoC with specific needs provided with cash/vouchers for livelihoods purposes		240.0	900.0	55.0
Access to wage earning employment facilitated (Informal)	# of PoC provided with guidance on labour market opportunities		1000.0	1200.0	938.0
Access to training and learning enabled	# of PoC receiving life-skills training for livelihood purposes		250.0	2500.0	454.0
Strategy developed and Implemented	# of projects supporting livelihood capacities of PoC defined and implemented		20.0	40.0	23.0
	Strategic plan for livelihoods programming informed by assessment (yes/no)		100.0	100.0	100.0

Prioritised target (OL): The operation's expected result given existing resources (OL).

Comprehensive target (OP): The operation's ideal result if all required resources were available (OP).

Source: UNHCR Malaysia (2017b).

Table 7. 2018 Livelihood programme indicator report results

Objective	Impact Indicator	Baseline	Target (OL)	Target (OP)	Total (Year end)
Population has sufficient basic & domestic items	% of targeted households whose basic needs are met with multi-purpose cash grants or vouchers	91.1	96.0	100.0	96.95
Self-reliance & livelihoods improved	% of persons of concern (18-59 yrs) with own business / self-employed for more than 12 months	39.0	39.0	58.0	35.97
Output	Performance Indicator		Target (OL)	Target (OP)	Total (Year end)
Cash-based assistance: Cash grants or vouchers provided	# of households receiving cash grants		478.0	600.0	644.0
	Needs assessment conducted to set entitlement and report available (yes/no)		100.0	100.0	100.0
Sectorial cash grants for business start up	# of PoC receiving cash/vouchers for business start up		60.0	300.0	55.0
Access to wage earning employment facilitated (Informal)	# of PoC provided with guidance on labour market opportunities		1500.0	3000.0	1649.0
Access to training and learning enabled	# of PoC receiving life-skills training for livelihood purposes		649.0	1420.0	763.0
Strategy developed and Implemented	# of projects supporting livelihood capacities of PoC defined and implemented		17.0	25.0	17.0

Prioritised target (OL): The operation's expected result given existing resources (OL).

Comprehensive target (OP): The operation's ideal result if all required resources were available (OP).

Source: UNHCR Malaysia (2018a).

Annex 6: Livelihood Strategic Framework, Malaysia

Livelihood Strategic Framework (Strategic Plan 2017-2021)

Objective 1: Advocacy for the Right to Work (coordinated by the Durable Solutions Unit).		
<p>Outcome 1: Acquire work rights for refugees with the Government of Malaysia to secure legal stay and work permits for all refugees in the country,</p>	<p><i>By end 2017</i></p> <p>Output 1.1 The Rohingya work scheme for the plantation sector was piloted, with an eventual conclusion that it is not the best fit for the Rohingya community. MOHA identified 3 companies under the manufacturing sector to participate in the work pilot. Positions for one of the manufacturing company will be filled.</p> <p>Output 1.2 Multi-pronged advocacy strategy for work rights developed by DSU, discussion with various stakeholder groups on possible areas of collaboration/ joint advocacy to advance refugee work rights commenced.</p> <p><i>By end 2018</i></p> <p>Output 1.3 The labour migration pilot scheme is successful for the manufacturing sector, and expanded to include other employment sectors and other nationalities/ethnicities.</p> <p>Output 1.4 Committed stakeholders involved in work rights advocacy identified and detailed joint action plan developed with each of them.</p> <p>Output 1.5 Joint advocacy paper by private sector/ corporations complete and submitted to the Malaysian Government.</p> <p><i>By end 2019</i></p> <p>Output 1.6 Lawful work opportunities for refugees expanded, with adequate oversight and monitoring mechanisms in place in cooperation with the Malaysian Government, employers and refugee communities.</p> <p>Output 1.7 Discussion with external stakeholders, including the Malaysian Government, on law and policy development to protect, respect and fulfil the right to work for refugees, as well as regularisation of all refugees commenced.</p> <p><i>By end 2020</i></p> <p>Output 1.8 Positive conclusion reached with Malaysian Government on law and policy development to protect, respect and fulfil the right to work for refugees, as well as regularisation of all refugees.</p> <p><i>By end of 2021</i></p> <p>Output 1.9 Legal work rights for all registered refugees are in place.</p>	
	Objective 2: Community Based Organisation (CBO) capacity building for Social Protection.	
	<p>Outcome 2: Centralise basic livelihoods services to allow for one-stop assistance in employment and education services.</p>	<p>Output 2.1 POC Resource Centres. Centres may be housed in CBO or partner offices, learning centres or other locations as agreed by the community. The centres will offer information on services described in the programme below, in addition to job placement and educational opportunities. They will also facilitate access to community, legal, health and other services.</p>

	<p>Output 2.2 PoC are well informed of all self-reliance and protection services available in their area.</p>
<p>Outcome 3: Upskill communities to enhance short to medium-term employment or self-employment.</p>	<p>Output 3.1 Training in language and vocational skills. The trainings is based on areas identified in the Market Survey and Value Chain Analysis study as facilitating opportunities for PoC to enter the market.</p> <p>Output 3.2 PoC find jobs in their respective area due to skills acquired in the trainings. For those already employed, they are able to gain access to higher paid jobs within their market sector.</p> <p>Output 3.3 Current Entrepreneur Development Programme project with Middle Eastern and Rohingya PoC will be extended to new groups, including host community members.</p> <p>Output 3.4 PoC start businesses or expand existing businesses due to knowledge and skills acquired during the training and the cash grant.</p> <p>Output 3.5 Enhance Refugee Artisan Initiative. With technical support from UNHCR (HQ) and collaboration with local or global businesses, refugee artisans will be assisted to gain access to markets and materials.</p> <p>Output 3.6 Quality of refugee artisanal products improved and partnership with business partners at global and country levels established</p> <p>Output 3.7 Employment Counselling and Job Placement</p> <p>Output 3.8 Employment opportunities on humanitarian ground for vulnerable POCs supported.</p>
<p>Outcome 4: Programme: Facilitate access to savings, money transfer and money lending to provide a mechanism for mitigating risk and accessing capital. The Office also intends to improve cash delivery mechanism and reduce protection risk.</p>	<p>Output 4.1 Facilitate access to formal financial services</p> <p>Output 4.2 PoC receiving financial services including e-wallet and holding bank accounts.</p>
<p>Objective 3: Livelihood stakeholder network development.</p>	
<p>Outcome 5: Create a network of NGO, Social Enterprise organisations, Foundations, private sector partners and government agencies to implement livelihoods projects in partnership with RBOs and BOKL.</p>	<p>Output 5.1 Functioning Livelihoods network. Network members maintain active communication and coordination with BOKL, with CBO and among themselves for activities, events and continual capacity building.</p> <p>Output 5.2 Network members support PoC in complementary projects such as Income Generating Activities, Skills Training, and other emergency support</p> <p>Output 5.3 Network members extend, create or provide market linkage to build self-reliance of community groups/individuals</p> <p>Output 5.4 Network members create opportunity for POC or community groups to access financial services</p>

	<p>Output 5.5 Network members provide employment and self-employment opportunity to POCs through their business linkage/network</p> <p>Output 5.6 Network members support UNHCR initiative to mobilise network of funders and advocates in Malaysia and abroad towards creating adequate and sustainable funding mechanism for CBO struggling to sustain their community space</p> <p>Output 5.7 Network members increasingly establish independent working relationships with CBO.</p> <p>Output 5.8 Network members become pillars to advocate for refugee rights in Malaysia.</p>
Objective 4: Financial assistance and psycho-social support for the most vulnerable.	
<p>Outcome 6: Continue Financial Assistance mechanism for the most vulnerable and/or emergency cases</p>	<p>Output 6.1 FA mechanism for cash-based assistance. The mechanism provides funds to vulnerable PoC and helps them take advantage of services available through the nearest Resource Centre.</p> <p>Output 6.2 Vulnerable PoC receive immediate assistance and tailored support to enter and thrive in a self-reliance-based initiative.</p> <p>Output 6.3 PoC assisted through FA are linked to psycho-social and other support services as needed.</p> <p>Output 6.4 Vulnerable PoC detected through the FA mechanism receive the services and/or treatment they need for SGBV/Child Protection, Health or Education.</p>
Objective 5: Self-reliance monitoring and project quality control.	
<p>Outcome 7: Monitor changes in community level self-reliance and impact of programming on participants.</p>	<p>Output 7.1 Three-year report on self-sufficiency levels of Middle Eastern and Rohingya communities. Study will detect macro-level changes allowing for comparison to self-sufficiency levels identified in the Socio-economic Baseline Survey of June 2016. This information will potentially be used to re-prioritise resources and initiatives targeted to certain communities.</p> <p>Output 7.2 Shift in programming due to changes in community self-reliance levels.</p> <p>Output 7.3 Impact measurement on individual self-reliance resulting from projects/programmes. Impact measurement tools will be created for specific projects or programmes. The Livelihoods Unit will follow-up with participants in a given time frame to identify how the project or programme has impacted change in their self-reliance.</p> <p>Outcome 7.4 Shift in programming due to impact assessment. Aspects of projects or programmes that resulted in improved self-reliance will be replicated while unsuccessful components will be changed. Projects or programmes with high success rates may be studied further to retrieve and communicate lessons learned.</p>
<p>Outcome 8: Monitor and evaluate selected projects for quality control</p>	<p>Output 8.1 Project monitoring report against performance objectives. The Livelihoods Unit will select projects for in-depth monitoring, develop performance objectives and benchmarks with the partner, and assess findings. Monitoring will be done collaboratively with partners as a learning opportunity.</p> <p>Output 8.2 Consistent high-quality programming carried out by livelihoods partners.</p>

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