



INVESTING IN SOLIDARITY: DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS IN REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES



UNDP promotes
livelihoods and social
cohesion in Sudan.
UNDP Sudan



With the right support and policies, refugees can improve their own well-being, make vital contributions to host communities' development and help build a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient world.



Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP

Forced displacement is trapping millions of people in poverty, feeding xenophobia and holding back progress on sustainable development. In 2018, the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) set out a blueprint for governments, international organizations and other stakeholders to transform the way the world responds to refugee situations, benefiting both refugees and the communities that host them. While gains have been made, greater international cooperation is needed to implement the Global Compact's objectives and find long-term solutions to the obstacles that are hindering progress.

Host countries are providing refuge and asylum for longer periods or even indefinitely, while addressing development challenges of their own. Recognizing this, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is committed to investing in development for refugees, returnees and host communities. Building on its engagements with governments in host countries, humanitarian, development and peace partners, UNDP will scale up action on reducing, resolving and preventing forced displacement.

To respond to the needs for stepped-up development investment in situations of forced displacement, UNDP will:

1. Strengthen national/local capacities for coordination and management, service delivery, livelihoods and job creation, access to justice and social cohesion.
2. Promote increased access to development financing for host countries, including through Integrated National Financing Frameworks.
3. Address the drivers of forced displacement and expand work in peacebuilding, including conflict, violence and aggravating effects of climate change.

UNDP will mainstream age, gender and diversity in all its work on forced displacement by promoting gender equality and the economic empowerment of women, and fighting against racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

People do not become refugees by choice. They cross international borders fleeing war, violence and disasters. Refugees frequently experience extreme suffering, catastrophic family losses and trauma and are subjected to gender-based violence (GBV). They have often lost documents, assets and incomes. They tend to be deprived of essential services and face barriers to economic opportunities in host countries, leaving them reliant on international aid for their food, health, protection, education and other needs. People returning to their own countries when conflicts have ended might find devastation and neglect. It is often difficult for returnees to establish decent livelihoods, access basic services and benefit from the rule of law.

At the end of 2023, the number of refugees, asylum seekers and other people in need of international protection reached 47.8 million.

Low and middle-income countries hosted 75 percent of refugees and other people in need of international protection.

UNHCR



The main drivers of forced displacement in 2023 were conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine, and prolonged crises in Somalia and Afghanistan.

UNMAS

The humanitarian funding gap has never been greater: 53 percent at the end of 2022 ([Global Humanitarian Overview](#)). As new crises emerge, donor fatigue sets in and funding becomes overstretched, host countries are left with the economic, social and human cost of caring for refugees. About 80 percent of the world's refugee population is hosted by countries that together represent only 19 percent of the world's income ([UNHCR](#)). Without the necessary international support, infrastructure and services, developing countries can struggle to meet the immense needs of forcibly displaced people and host communities, putting a strain on their economies, public services and social cohesion.

While it is essential that refugees receive assistance to meet their immediate needs, a humanitarian response is neither sufficient nor sustainable. Local inclusion and longer-term development are the only way for refugees to become self-reliant and for societies to become more resilient to the pressures of hosting large displaced populations. Yet, the bulk of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for refugee situations in 2020-2021 was for humanitarian aid ([UNHCR](#)). Most refugees say they would choose to go home if it is safe to do so (for example, in [Ukraine](#)). However, new displacement outpaced available solutions, including returns in 2022, with close to two-thirds of refugees living in protracted situations.



UNDP strengthens the digital and entrepreneurial skills of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs that live in Peru and bridges the gap with the Peruvian entrepreneurial ecosystem.

[UNDP Peru](#)

When displacement has no end in sight, the cycle of aid dependency and poverty continues. Reversing these trends requires more investment or the world will face another decade of new and protracted displacement. Refugees need jobs, education for displaced children and the legal frameworks and policies that can make all of this possible. When refugees feel safe and can access health and care services, education and labour markets, they can support themselves, contribute to the communities hosting them and even share money and knowledge with their countries of origin.

Comprehensive responses to refugee situations need to be rooted in developmental approaches and national accountability aimed at reducing and phasing out humanitarian aid as displaced people, especially women and youth, regain their agency. Responses require more predictable collaboration that brings together development, humanitarian, peace, security and climate actors. National and local governments need support through long-term financing mechanisms that they can rely on when humanitarian aid recedes. Better anticipatory data can help formulate and implement effective prevention action.

DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE

The four-yearly [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) charts progress on delivering the Global Compact on Refugees. At the first GRF held in 2019, UNDP [pledged](#) to address the adverse drivers of forced displacement, support the rule of law and local governance and promote decent work through digital initiatives. At the second GRF in December 2023, UNDP is pledging to expand its work with national and local governments and partners, promoting innovative inclusion and solutions, supporting more focused financing and expanded prevention and peacebuilding programming.

UNDP'S PLEDGE

UNDP will expand its support to host countries and those welcoming returnees to ease pressure and protect development gains. Leveraging our extensive country presence and development expertise, we will strengthen the capacities of national and local institutions and actors, promote investments in local economies, infrastructure, justice and service delivery systems that benefit both host communities and refugees, and enhance social cohesion. UNDP will work in close collaboration with UNHCR and other relevant partners.



UNDP supported neighboring countries to respond to the refugee influx from Ukraine – improving living conditions, promoting access to decent work and training, and providing legal and psychosocial support.

UNHCR/Oksana Parafeniuk

Our priorities

1. Strengthen national/local capacities for coordination and management, service delivery, livelihoods and job creation, access to justice and social cohesion by:

- Providing gender- and conflict-sensitive technical assistance to national and local governments on incorporating target populations in their development planning and sectorial policies in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Supporting local service delivery systems and capacities that reach refugees, returnees, stateless people and host communities through area-based approaches, while enhancing the role of the private sector.
- Expanding support to national and local governance and rule-of-law institutions, systems and actors to broaden access to justice, security and the protection of human rights in refugee-hosting and return areas.
- Strengthening engagement with governments to promote an enabling environment for the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, returnees and stateless people.
- Facilitating access to training and job opportunities, including through digitally enabled livelihoods, supporting the right to work and benefit from social protection, while promoting social cohesion.
- Strengthening the capacities of governments to develop and maintain comprehensive civil registration, vital statistics and national identity systems to prevent statelessness by promoting legal identity for all.



The collaboration between UNHCR and UNDP is growing, ranging from collaboration in major multi-country regional platforms, through to country-specific projects, joint activities, coordination mechanisms with partners, and jointly developed tools.

UNHCR/Anthony Karumba

2. Promote increased access to development financing for host countries by:

- Supporting governments in developing Integrated National Financing Frameworks and in mobilizing and securing development cooperation and assistance in line with development plans and objectives that include support for forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

3. Address the drivers of forced displacement and expand its work on peacebuilding, including conflict, violence and the aggravating effects of climate change by:

- Scaling UNDP's anticipation and prevention efforts, while supporting programming that address the causes and drivers of conflict, disasters and multi-dimensional risks, including through supporting risk-informing development plans and programmes, as well as conflict analysis and social cohesion programming.
- Increasing support for climate change adaptation and mitigation in countries of origin and destination alike, such as through the inclusion of forced displacement into National Action Plans and ensuring that climate financing is getting to the most vulnerable.
- Ensuring that the agency of women, and those most marginalized, is recognized and that gender differential issues are addressed to ensure their full participation as decisionmakers and recipients of funding and services.

By 2027, UNDP will mobilize additional funding to support more than 30 countries impacted by forced displacement. UNDP reaffirms its commitment to promote development investments in all displacement contexts worldwide, including for internally displaced people (IDPs).

Multi-stakeholder pledges

UNDP is also engaged in several multi-stakeholder pledges including the [UN Common Pledge 2.0](#) in which 20 UN entities are renewing and strengthening their commitments to achieve measurably improved access to strengthened national services for refugees. With the Government of Japan, UNDP is leading a pledge on "[Leveraging the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus through comprehensive approaches to promote resilience, self-reliance, and durable solutions for refugees and host countries](#)". UNDP is also supporting a pledge on climate action and finance, the legal aid community pledge, advancing durable solutions through securing housing, land and property rights and leveraging its area-based approach and stabilization programming to facilitate reintegration in countries of return, such as Afghanistan.



UNDP Türkiye brings together Syrian and Turkish young talents to learn skills and seek innovative solutions for social cohesion.
UNDP Türkiye

UNDP'S APPROACH TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND STATELESS PEOPLE

UNDP has supported the inclusion, return, resettlement and reintegration of millions of refugees, built capacities that have helped reduce the impact of disasters and the risk of violence in dozens of countries. It also has supported tens of millions of people in retaining their livelihoods, accessing basic social, security and justice services, while rebuilding after crises.

First and foremost, UNDP engages with national and local governments in countries hosting refugees or welcoming back returnees. UNDP works within the UN system at a global, regional and national levels, including with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The World Bank and regional development banks are other key stakeholders.

In partnership with UNHCR, UNDP delivers on the [Global Collaboration Framework on Inclusion and Solutions 2023-2025](#) to prevent forced displacement, enhance inclusion and promote safe and sustainable reintegration. For instance, UNDP has developed with UNHCR a [Rule of Law and Local Governance Partnership Framework](#) and, in 2022, an [Appraisal Tool on the Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons in National Frameworks for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals](#). The tool supports government officials, local authorities, UN agencies and other partners to identify and overcome barriers for inclusive of refugees and host communities in sustainable development. As part of the Global Collaboration Framework, UNDP is also committed to strengthening protection and finding solutions on statelessness.

In situations of protracted displacement resulting from crisis and fragility, UNDP delivers development-oriented solutions that address the needs of both those who are displaced and the communities hosting them, in particular through strengthening local governance, urban planning, service delivery systems, livelihoods and access to justice.

[UNDP, Crisis Offer](#)



In Burundi, UNDP supports the return and reintegration of refugees especially through expanding access to legal services.
UNDP Burundi

With UNHCR, UNDP co-leads the [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan \(3RP\)](#) to the Syria Crisis. UNDP also assists the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Support Platform for the Horn of Africa; the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) on Mexico and Central America; the Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan; and the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) in Latin America and the Caribbean, among others.

Under MIRPS, UNDP co-leads working groups on jobs and livelihoods and on local governance. As part of the IGAD platform, UNDP and UNHCR are collaborating on a \$5m joint cross-border project in South Sudan and Sudan to enhance local capacities and promote socio-economic inclusion for forcibly displaced persons and host communities. The project responds to pressures that have arisen following the escalation of new armed conflict in Sudan since April 2023.

Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) to the Syria Crisis

The 3RP brings together around 270 UN and civil society partners to address refugees' needs while strengthening the resilience of institutions, host communities and refugees. Selected key 3RP resilience achievements:

- More than 500,000 individuals were employed or self-employed across the 3RP countries between 2015 – 2022.
- Over \$1.6 billion in support to public institutions in Lebanon, Jordan and Türkiye between 2017 and 2022.
- More than 935,000 civil servants working in the health, education, protection and public services sectors benefited from capacity development initiatives between 2017 and 2022.



In Lebanon, UNDP is supporting host communities to grow their businesses, including women entrepreneurs.

UNDP Lebanon/ Rana Sweidan

SUPPORT TO REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact on Refugees, UNDP already works with national and local governments, and host and displaced communities to prevent forced displacement, support countries hosting refugees and facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

Africa

As part of **Burundi's** Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan (JRRRP), UNDP builds the capacity of justice actors and expands access to legal services for populations in target areas. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, UNDP is building capacities of authorities, including security forces, strengthening local governance to be more responsive, improving social cohesion and people's participation.

In the Lake Chad Basin, UNDP launched the Regional Stabilization Facility to support **Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Niger and Nigeria** governments in restoring security, improving basic services and creating livelihoods, while curtailing insecurity, forced displacements and conflict. Overall, 15 Joint Action Plans have been implemented, leading to the strengthening of security architectures, the rehabilitation of essential infrastructure and basic services, and the provision of livelihood opportunities critical to achieving stability in target communities.

In **Uganda**, UNDP promotes the economic empowerment of women in refugee-hosting communities in Acholi and West Nile. By providing emergency employment and vocational training, capacity building and public education, UNDP addresses the root causes of gender inequality and gender-based violence. In Northern Uganda, UNDP has helped build refugee and host community resilience for enhanced gender-responsive livelihoods and environmental sustainability, ensuring communities and local municipalities have increased capacity to enable resilient livelihoods, employment opportunities and delivery of basic services and security.



In the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNDP is supporting socio-economic reintegration of returnees and host communities.
UNDP DRC

Asia and the Pacific

In **Afghanistan**, UNDP has been working through the Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiatives (ABADEI) to mitigate the drivers of forced displacement and meet the needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and local communities. Joint programming with UNHCR has delivered results for returnees in Herat and in response to displacement events triggered by a series of devastating earthquakes in 2023. As a co-leader on Durable Solutions in Afghanistan, UNDP is supporting communities as they prepare for the arrival of returnees from Pakistan.

In refugee camps in **Bangladesh**, UNDP is helping expand education for Rohingya communities and ensure community safety so young people have positive choices and are not lured into extremism or criminality, while building resilience to disaster and climate change impacts, and promoting innovation for green jobs and local economies. UNDP works with UNHCR and other partners in **Myanmar** to break in cycles of crisis, improve standards of living for the most marginalized in Rakhine State and lay a foundation for voluntary, safe and sustainable return.

To mitigate the adverse drivers of irregular migration and forced displacement in **Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati** and **Vanuatu**, UNDP is supporting local authorities in strengthening the understanding, implementation and coordination of risk management and adaptation strategies for areas threatened by disaster and climate change impacts.



UNDP and UNHCR are working together to support entrepreneurs, especially women, create jobs and rehabilitate productive infrastructure in Afghanistan for host countries and returnees.

UNHCR

Europe and Central Asia

In **Armenia**, UNDP is strengthening national capacities for enhanced resilience and greater opportunities for refugees and host communities. To aid emergency response and stabilization efforts, UNDP is providing support to refugee and host households in livelihoods recovery, shelter and basic services accessibility. Among a range of support, UNDP is also working to create inclusive, equitable and green economic growth opportunities, and sustain core government services through the provision of durable solutions for refugees.

In **Georgia**, the Ukrainian House was inaugurated in Tbilisi as part of the Rule of Law and Access to Justice project. The Ukrainian House is a communal hub and a referral point for various socio-economic services for Ukrainian refugees. It also serves as an operational office space for Ukrainian refugee volunteer groups and NGOs. In **Moldova**, UNDP has worked with the authorities and the private sector to support job creation for Ukrainian refugees and host community members. To enhance access to justice, UNDP and its partners provided refugees with legal counselling, while also training paralegals and social workers to better respond to the specific needs of refugees.

In **Türkiye**, UNDP works with the government and the private sector to support an inclusive digital freelancing platform for tech professionals for Syrian refugees and host communities. A feasibility study set the parameters to establish a new “Türkiye Compact” that harnesses trade to stimulate job creation for refugees and host communities. UNDP works with the government to build the capacities of young Turkish and Syrian people on information technology, entrepreneurship and shared sport, cultural and community activities, like tree planting to contribute to environment sustainability, while embedding social cohesion activities.

In **Uzbekistan**, UNDP supports a joint afforestation project in the Surkhandarya border region by engaging Afghan refugees and vulnerable people from host communities, enhancing local resilience and addressing pressing environmental issues such as dust storms. UNDP is also working to foster the economic empowerment of Afghan citizens through education and training, with a strong focus on women and youth.



With the support of UNDP and its partners in Moldova, Ukrainian refugees had their immediate needs met, been helped to find decent work and have received legal counseling.

[UNDP Moldova](#)

Middle East and North Africa

In a regional position paper, [Adaptive Solutions in the Region Affected by the Syria Crisis](#), UNDP has articulated its critical role in the protracted crisis. In **Lebanon**, UNDP strengthens the capacities of municipalities and communities and supports a Tensions Monitoring System to collect data, analyse and provide peacebuilding recommendations at interagency level. In **Jordan**, UNDP is pioneering a digital economy portal to benefit refugees and host communities as part of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative, and is exploring an inclusive social protection system. UNDP conducts research into the conditions of return and reintegration in **Syria**, rehabilitates critical civilian infrastructure, supports responsive and inclusive local governance, and works on the prevention of violent extremism from women's perspective, local peacebuilding and community resilience.

In **Sudan**, UNDP has been able to work at the local level in support of host communities and forcibly displaced populations. In the East, UNDP, UNHCR and IOM are working with local partners to maintain services, livelihoods and social cohesion. Programming also includes peacebuilding efforts with UN children's agency, UNICEF. In White Nile, UNDP and its partners are identifying and addressing areas of needs, including for refugees who have been further displaced by the ongoing conflict. Irrigation projects have seen around 50 km of main canal and hundreds of smaller canals rehabilitated, with host communities and refugees providing the labour in a boost to the economy and social cohesion. In **Egypt**, UNDP is working closely with UNHCR to advance a resilience-based development agenda on the fast-evolving Sudanese refugee situation.



The 3RP is now in its 12th year and targets over 6 million host community members and over 7 million refugees and asylum seekers affected by the Syrian crisis.

[UNDP Lebanon](#)

Latin America and the Caribbean

To help countries hosting large numbers of Venezuelan nationals, UNDP has published [policy guidance](#) on socio-economic inclusion. In **Colombia**, UNDP has supported the government in designing and implementing an [income-generation strategy for displaced people from Venezuela and host communities](#). It is also developing technical support to local, regional and national governments on how they can better incorporate refugees and other people on the move into their development plans and promote their socio-economic integration. In 2023, a joint UN-government steering committee was set up, co-led by UNDP and UNHCR, to support national, departmental and local authorities on urgent issues such as land, property, income generation and livelihoods. In **Peru**, UNDP has been supporting the entrepreneurship of refugees, migrant workers and host communities, through the digital platform, CREANDO. UNDP will be providing Peru with further technical support on a national strategy for the socio-economic inclusion of people on the move and the host population. In **Ecuador**, UNDP supports local governments in mainstreaming human mobility in public policies.

[Facing the challenges of Forced Displacement in Central America and Mexico](#) is a UNDP and UNHCR toolkit helping authorities include a human mobility approach into their local development planning. In **Mexico**, UNDP and UNHCR are improving community access to civic security and justice, and strengthening municipal services, particularly in the protection of human rights for forcibly displaced people. In **Costa Rica**, UNDP supports public authorities in promoting social cohesion between people on the move and host communities, and is looking to facilitate additional international funding to strengthen municipal capacities.



In Colombia, UNDP supported the government in providing skills assessment and certification services, so displaced persons from Venezuela can benefit from decent work.

[UNDP Colombia](#)

CONCLUSION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will not be fully achieved if the socio-economic needs and aspirations of those forcibly displaced and their host communities are not met.

Every refugee holds onto the belief that their future will be better than their past and often their present. Refugees can be vital contributors to host and home economies and communities. They can fill gaps in the labour markets, boost trade and bring knowledge, skills and networks. They also can support recovery, reconstruction, climate action and peace in their countries of origin, helping create the conditions for return and reintegration.

In the next four years, UNDP will scale up its work with countries on addressing the drivers of cross-border displacement, responding to the needs of forcibly displaced populations, stateless people and host communities, while creating the conditions for voluntary return and reintegration.

With the necessary support and resources, countries with large and protracted refugee populations can create the conditions where refugees can become self-reliant and contribute to sustainable development for themselves, their hosts, countries of origin and wider international communities.



Colombia, with the support of UNDP, has designed an income generation strategy for migrants from Venezuela and host communities.

UNDP Colombia

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Coral restoration in Tuvalu.
UNDP Pacific Islands



Supporting local governance and
development in areas hosting refugees
and internally displaced persons in the
Democratic Republic of Congo.
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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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