

# Livelihoods

Loss of livelihoods, evictions, and rising xenophobia coupled with the socio-economic crisis **affected displaced people disproportionately** across the region.

UNHCR partnered with the **national authorities** and the **private sector** to promote the inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced individuals in the host countries' workforce and reduce barriers to employment.

Across the region, UNHCR works with partners to **create opportunities** for refugees to improve their skillset through courses and access to education.

## Key Figures

**16** Operations are implementing livelihoods interventions across the region in 2021

**52,851** People trained on wage and self-employment

**17,084** People relocated for improved integration



Deisy had to leave Venezuela due to the economic and insecurity crisis. Now in Ecuador, she bought a sewing machine that now serves as part of her livelihoods. © UNHCR/Jaime Gimenez

## Operational Context

Refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced people access to formal employment in the Americas: 2019-2021



- The socioeconomic crises triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the **opportunity for inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers, and displaced people**. According to the UNHCR Livelihoods Global Survey 2021, carried out in 20 countries in the Americas, 90% of the surveyed operations report high rates of unemployment for those displaced, who used to work in the informal economy before the mobility restrictions and lockdown were in place. With rapidly changing dynamics in the field, UNHCR is continuously adapting its services and support to refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced populations, stateless people and those that host them in the region.
- **Allowing refugees to register and operate a business would improve their livelihoods.** Only 30% of countries in the region allow refugees to access formal employment without any restrictions, while another 30% grant them no access.
- **Working with national authorities and private sector will diminish the barriers refugees face** when looking for a job, such as lack of recognition of certificates and diplomas obtained in the country of origin, lack of knowledge of refugee rights and delays in accessing or renewing documentation.

## STRATEGY AND PRIORITIES



Carmen is a Colombian refugee in Ecuador. She lives in a rural area on the outskirts of Esmeraldas and participates in a livelihoods project called "Plant your food".

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- The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) aims to enhance the self-reliance of refugees and ease pressure on host communities. To contribute to this, UNHCR works with partners to promote **inclusive economic opportunities**, such as entrepreneurship programmes that target women, young adults, older people, and people with disabilities.
- UNHCR **advocates** for refugees to access formal employment and works with governments to overcome the legal barriers keeping them from accessing permits and documentation.
- The Stepped-up Livelihoods Strategy in the Americas aims to maximize UNHCR's engagement with a wide range of strategic actors in the public and private sector to mobilize support and resources for the economic inclusion of refugees, and to craft communication strategies that showcase the added value of employing refugees, generate technical and vocational training opportunities to boost the employability of refugees, and advocate for the recognition of titles and qualifications refugees obtained in their country of origin.
- Providing refugees with tools and skills for **self-employment** and **entrepreneurship** is also a way to support their financial inclusion. UNHCR works alongside authorities, companies, academia and other actors to facilitate access to business development services, trainings on financial services, and provide information to refugees to boost their entrepreneurship projects.

## UNHCR'S RESPONSE

- In [Peru](#) and [Colombia](#), UNHCR collaborated with various actors to develop the "Guide for hiring Venezuelan refugees and migrants". The document guide to the recruitment process and help implement employment programmes that will benefit the companies and the refugee population.
- The [Refugees Entrepreneurs](#) platform in **Brazil** is an innovative tool that gives visibility to refugee-led businesses. The site contains key information for companies interested on partnering with refugees and showcases inspiring stories that promote self-resilience and empathy.
- To promote the role of the private sector in the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, Companies with Refugees in [Ecuador](#) and [Brazil](#) promotes human rights within a context of corporate and commercial practices and shares successful stories. The platform offers recommendations and advice to support the integration of refugees.
- UNHCR and The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of **El Salvador**, in coordination with private sector actors, launched the [My First Job](#), an initiative benefiting 300 young displaced people through the modality of apprenticeship contract with the possibility of being hired under formal employment.
- A [green jobs initiative](#) in **Guatemala** provides an opportunity for refugees and asylum-seekers to contribute to their host communities and have a sustainable livelihoods by working as a national park ranger. Refugees oversee the maintenance of roads, while monitoring and protecting native flora and fauna.
- Within the Cities of Solidarity initiative in **Uruguay**, UNHCR partnered with the municipality of Montevideo so refugees could offer specialized care for older citizens. The project offers professionalization and a source of income, as well as a chance to integrate with the community.
- The [Empower – Self-Managed Work](#) project bolstered 111 refugee ventures in different parts of **Argentina**. The initiative, developed alongside the Ministry of Social Development and the National Commission for Refugees, offered refugees a chance to strengthen their business plan, as well as gain financial tools for self-employment.
- In **Costa Rica**, UNHCR in collaboration with private sector companies Manpower, Western Union, Boston Scientific and Accenture has developed a "Guide for hiring refugees" and a "Guidebook of good business practices for refugees' economic inclusion".

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- UNHCR, in collaboration with IOM, has supported the government of **Brazil** in [relocating](#) 58,715 Venezuelans from Roraima to other states from the start of the [interiorization strategy](#) since 2018 until 2021; 12,126 between January and August 2021). Around 8% of them were relocated under the Signaled Employment Vacancy modality which allows people to relocate with a guaranteed job in the destination city.
- [Inclusive Cities, Communities of Solidarity](#) project fosters protection and socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants by promoting a more inclusive urban development planning in cities in **Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru** and **Trinidad and Tobago**. It is implemented by an innovative inter-agency partnership between UNHCR, UN-Habitat and OIM.
- Thirteen operations in the **Americas** have already joined the global initiative [Coursera for Refugees](#) facilitating the enrollment of 1,615 people of concern in courses in the platform free of charge. The partnership with the online course platform Coursera provides access to a vast catalogue of on-line courses.

*Did you know that...?* The [Regional Framework for Local Governance](#), developed by UNHCR and UNDP, highlights the importance of the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and displaced people in their host communities.



## FROM THE FIELD



["Green Jobs" initiative in Brazil](#)



[UNHCR and ManpowerGroup work together to promote inclusion of refugees in the region](#)



[Relocations for refugee integration in Mexico top 10,000 mark.](#)



[UNHCR, Microserfin and Red Cross promote the financial inclusion of refugees in Panama](#)

## The importance of flexible funding for UNHCR's situations

**UNHCR is grateful for the critical and generous support** provided by donors to operations in the AMERICAS, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding.

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