

PILLAR 4: OPPORTUNITIES FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Local integration and livelihoods

Mid 2018

Local integration and livelihoods are key components for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers in their host countries. Local integration includes legal, economic and cultural aspects in order for refugees to fully integrate in their new society. In particular, the economic aspect of local integration often faces challenges, while at the same time this is paramount to access basic services and be able to sustain their families.

Refugees and asylum-seekers do not come empty handed; through their skills and capacities they are able to support the development and contribute positively to their host communities.

The MIRPS and the whole society approach aims at bridging humanitarian and development oriented interventions and to obtain increased engagement of non-traditional actors, such as ILO, IADB, private sector, and others, in promoting local integration.

In the different MIRPS countries, the initiatives developed to ensure refugees and asylum seekers self-reliance and local integration include:

- the provision of tailored education and skills training;
- assistance with income generation and employability;
- microcredits and seed money;
- access to safety nets and other basic services (education, health, social security and housing).

1,550

Number of refugees and asylum-seekers provided with guidance on labour/business market opportunities (Jan -Jun 2018)

1,200

Number of refugees and asylum-seekers provided with skills training/job-placement services (Jan-Jun 2018)



Major highlights and achievements

In **Belize**, UNHCR continued to support English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in Belmopan and Valley of Peace, and is in the process of scaling up ESL in Armenia and Bella Vista. UNHCR, through its partner Help for Progress, supports access to education for refugee children by providing material assistance to cover the costs of uniforms, books and annual school fees for primary and secondary schools. UNHCR also built 2 classrooms in Armenia community, one to replace a dilapidated classroom and the other to provide space for at least 22 new students that had been rejected due to lack of space.

In **Costa Rica**, refugees living in vulnerable circumstances now enjoy access to government-led welfare programmes and to initiatives such as the Graduation Approach and the Living Integration program, which promote access to the labour market and to livelihood projects.

Women's Foundation has worked in job-placement assessments with refugees and asylum seekers through livelihood participatory assessments. So far, a total of 229 refugees and asylum-seekers from the NCA have benefitted from such livelihood initiatives. In addition, the Ministry of Labour, together with UNHCR and Women's Foundation, supported 427 persons from the NCA through job-placement initiatives locally known as "Get employed, living integration".

With regard to social protection, important achievements have been reached, as the Joint Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS) includes refugees and asylum seekers in social assistance and poverty reduction programs, using the same criteria as for nationals.

In **Guatemala**, FAO in alliance with UNHCR supported livelihoods through productive projects for refugees and persons in transit.

33 children received scholarships through one of UNHCR's partners for their integration into the education system of **Guatemala** and to continue their formal education. These scholarships are comprised of tuition, uniforms, backpacks and

books. Also, the Professional Training Centre P. Bartolome Ambrosio agreed to include refugee and asylum-seeking children within their educational programmes, disregarding whether they have their school certificates.

Baseline studies were conducted in **Panama**, **Mexico** and **Guatemala** on the socioeconomic profiles of refugees and asylum seekers to obtain relevant data for the design of labour insertion programmes.

In **Mexico**, important steps to guarantee access to training, employment programmes and financial services to refugees, as well as to improve access to education for asylum-seekers and refugees have been taken.

During 2018, a second local integration programme in **Mexico's** second largest city, Guadalajara (Jalisco State), was started, in addition to the programme established in Saltillo in mid-2016. While the Saltillo programme targets mainly refugee families, the programme in Guadalajara is currently focusing on providing integration opportunities for single adults, based on the job offers identified by UNHCR's local partner, FM4.

268 refugees accessed the local integration programme in Saltillo and Guadalajara. Candidates for local integration are being prepared for future integration right from the start of the asylum procedure. This preparation includes access to vocational training, inclusion into national programmes, revalidation of primary and secondary education, certification of skills and legal support throughout the asylum procedure.

In line with **Mexico's** commitments within the MIRPS, the Ministry of Education (SEP) and UNHCR agreed to coordinate several joint actions aiming at improving access to education for asylum-seekers and refugees. One of the achievements is that refugee children will not be required to present documentation from their country of origin. As a result of this, 154 children were enrolled during the 2017-2018 education cycle.

With regard to economic integration, a partnership was established with the Ministry of Labour in **Mexico** City to facilitate the labour insertion of refugees and other persons of concern.

In **Panama**, UNHCR and INADEH established a pilot project to include refugees in the Government's Vocational Training and Human Development Program.

UNHCR, HIAS and Manpower Group have begun a project to promote labour insertion

for refugees through capacity building and skills training, benefitting a total of 90 refugees.

Microcredit opportunities for refugees were enhanced through the renewal of the partnership between MICROSERFIN, a microcredit institution, and UNHCR. A total of 116 microcredits have been granted.

Youth United for Education, HIAS and UNHCR participated in an anti-bullying awareness campaign for 300 students from 13 schools in **Panama** City.

Main challenges

In some countries – regardless of their economic situation – fears built on negative stereotypes and prejudice have triggered xenophobia and discrimination directed at populations of concern and foreigners in general. Consequently, negative perception of foreigners in host communities and countries often limit labour opportunities for persons of concern.

In most of the MIRPS countries, asylum seekers do not have access to work permits. This prevents them from fulfilling their needs in a dignified manner and they become more depending on humanitarian assistance programmes and vulnerable to exploitation.

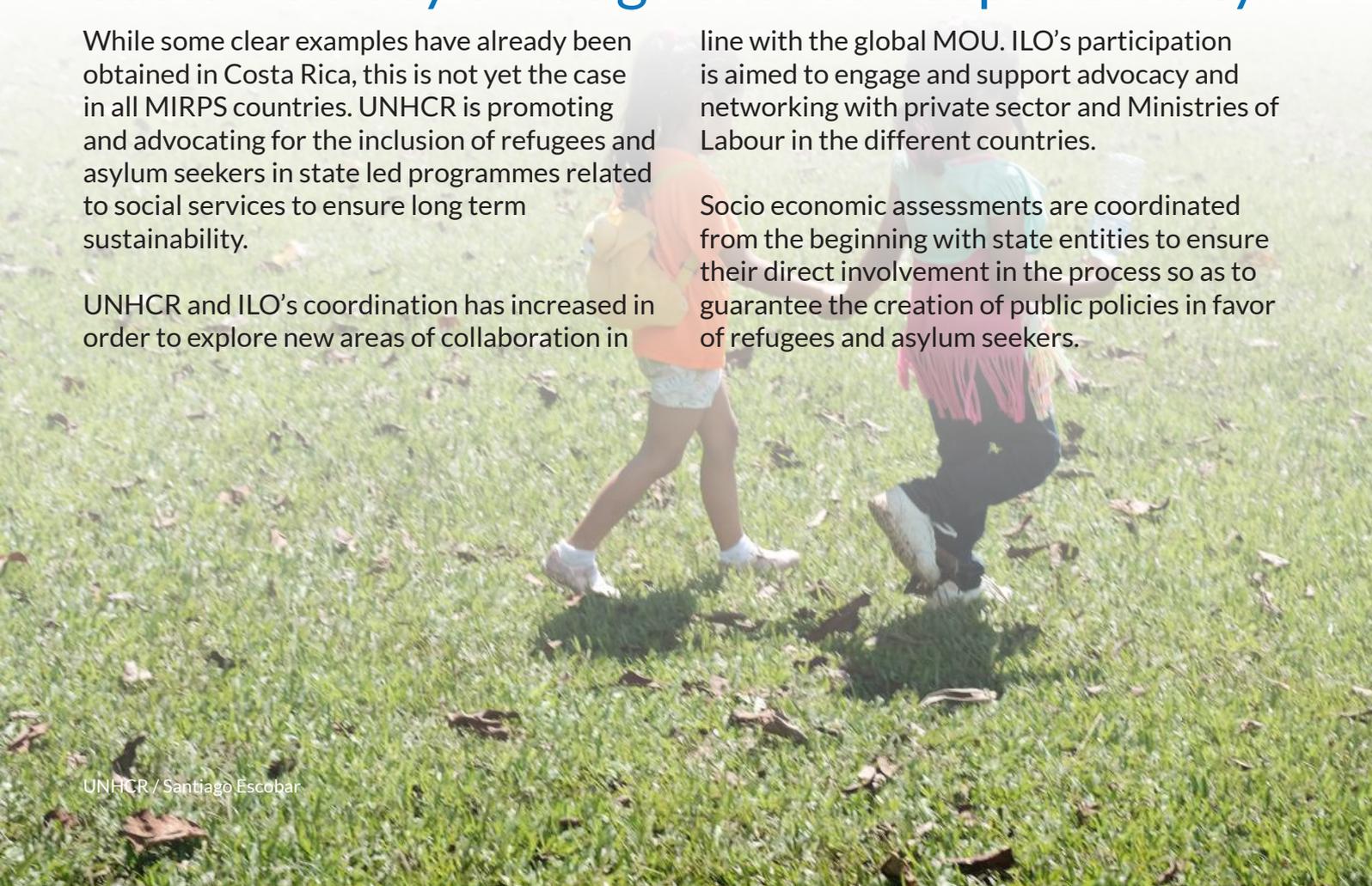
Sustainability through shared responsibility

While some clear examples have already been obtained in Costa Rica, this is not yet the case in all MIRPS countries. UNHCR is promoting and advocating for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in state led programmes related to social services to ensure long term sustainability.

UNHCR and ILO's coordination has increased in order to explore new areas of collaboration in

line with the global MOU. ILO's participation is aimed to engage and support advocacy and networking with private sector and Ministries of Labour in the different countries.

Socio economic assessments are coordinated from the beginning with state entities to ensure their direct involvement in the process so as to guarantee the creation of public policies in favor of refugees and asylum seekers.



Next steps

Donor engagement and interest in providing funding to the MIRPS, with particular focus on social protection and employment. Increased engagement from ILO for labour insertion programmes, advocacy and legal support.

UNHCR is coordinating closely with local authorities and partners to document best practices related to labour insertion, work permits and inclusion of refugees.

RELATED MIRPS PROJECT PROFILES

PROJECT 6: Self-reliance and livelihoods improved in Costa Rica.

PROJECT 9: Developing livelihoods for refugees and host border communities in Guatemala.

PROJECT 12: Local integration in Mexico.

PROJECT 16: Technical assistance to local government and communities receiving refugees in Mexico.

PROJECT 20: Livelihoods and local integration for refugees in Belize and Panama.

For more information visit: www.globalcrrf.org. Or contact Hugues Van Brabandt, Regional External Relations Officer, Panama, vanbraba@unhcr.org

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