

Geneva, 14 October 2004

HIGHLIGHTS ILO-UNHCR Partnership through Technical Cooperation: Socio-economic Integration of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons

BASIC FACTS

- CONTRIBUTION: 500,226 US\$
- IMPLEMENTATION STARTING DATE: February 2004
- ONGOING PROJECTS: 7
(Angola, Eritrea, Serbia and Montenegro,
Mozambique, Somalia, Southern Sudan,
and Uganda)
- PIPELINES PROJECTS: 4
(Benin, DRC, Ghana, and Northern
Caucasus)



ILO-UNHCR TCP PARTNERSHIP

A joint programme, “ILO-UNHCR Partnership through Technical Cooperation: Socio-economic integration of refugees, returnees and IDPs” was launched at the end of 2003. This programme referred to as the “ILO-UNHCR TCP Partnership” sets the framework for the rapid deployment of ILO livelihood experts to UNHCR’s field operations. The joint programme is to support both reintegration of returnees and IDP’s in country of origin, as well as refugees self-reliance in the asylum context, in the recognition that the rapid deployment of ILO technical staff to crisis affected regions will allow the prompt development on refinement of programmes seeking to provide the affected population with employment/income generation opportunities.

The government of Italy approved, at the 2003 ILO-Italy Annual Review Meeting, a financial contribution of Euro 421,250 (equivalent to US\$ 500,226 according to the then currency exchange rate) to support the ILO-UNHCR TCP Partnership. This amount was paid into ILO reserve account in February 2004.

With the said funds in place, the programme became operational in March 2004. The funds are being used to translate into reality the creation of employment opportunities, in the above given contexts, through social finance, micro and small enterprise development and local economic development, specific skills trainings, and employment-intensive reconstruction projects. Bearing these objectives in mind, an ad-hoc ILO-UNHCR working group (WG), that joins the ILO In Focus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (IFP/Crisis) and the UNHCR Reintegration and Local Settlement Section has thus far undertaken expert-deployment, assessments and local development activities in countries such as Angola, Eritrea, Serbia and Montenegro, Mozambique, Somalia, Southern Sudan, and Uganda. It has also, in the pipeline, plans to deploy other experts to Benin, DRC, Ghana and Northern Caucasus within the end of the year.

To this end, the progress of the ILO-UNHCR Partnership through Technical Cooperation may be viewed in terms of ongoing and pipeline activities as accounted for in the ensuing pages of this HIGHLIGHTS.

A COOPERATION LINKING RELIEF TO DEVELOPMENT

In recognition that refugees and returnees can be agents of development who can contribute to sustainable social and economic development where they live, either in asylum or in their country of origin, UNHCR and ILO have cooperated on various activities over the last forty years in order to develop sustainable solutions for refugees/returnees, effectively combining their respective expertise. UNHCR’s relief expertise and ILO’s development expertise are mutually reinforcing, thereby contributing to a smooth transition from relief to development. The partnership also contributes to one of the main Millenium Development Goals, the reduction of poverty, as displaced populations are one of the most vulnerable to poverty. It also follows the Secretary General’s call for closer cooperation among UN agencies to achieve greater efficiency.

The last three years have witnessed more consistent and significant cooperation between the two agencies. Following an exchange of letters between the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Director General of the ILO in 2001, a number of measures have been taken. Respective focal points and working groups have been established.

The ILO-UNHCR partnership is centred around the creation of programmes for durable solutions targeting refugees/returnees, and focusing on micro-finance, skills training, women’s economic empowerment, labour based reconstruction and local economic development.

COUNTRY INTERVENTIONS

ON GOING ACTIVITIES

ERITREA – January-December 2004 -

Eritrea witnessed the first deployment of a livelihood expert as part of the *ILO-UNHCR Partnership through Technical Cooperation*. The ILO specialist was assigned to contribute to the socio-economic reintegration of the 200.000 Eritrean refugees returning from Sudan.

The programme entails a socio-economic assessment of the returnee population and the hosting communities in the areas of return of the Gash Barka region. The establishment of a village bank, funded by the ILO-UNHCR programme, and the upgrading of the micro-finance agency that collaborates with the two UN agencies are the first two major achievements of this programme.

The ILO expert is also engaged in the identification and project formulation of several development-oriented activities including rehabilitation of infrastructure of public economic utility adopting labour intensive schemes and horticulture self-sustainable farms' projects to be implemented by local organizations. Moreover the ILO expert is coordinating the establishment of three employment service centres in the region, to match job offer and demand as well as gathering information on labour force.



UGANDA – September-December 2004 –

In Northern Uganda UNHCR is providing international protection and assistance to Sudanese refugees trying to pursue durable solutions mainly through local integration and self-reliance, in collaboration with the Government.

In this context the *ILO-UNHCR Technical Cooperation Programme* aims to develop employability and livelihood programmes jointly with local partners and institutions, like the Office of the Prime Minister. The ILO expert in the field is preparing a comprehensive programme of skills and capacity building training with local counterparts specifically designed to meet the projected needs of the refugees, while in Uganda and upon their return to Sudan. A crucial point for the programme is therefore the identification of development partners and local entrepreneurs who will provide the necessary support for such a technical cooperation and for continued sustainable development, accordingly to the self-reliance strategy pursued. Local training providers, micro-finance institutes and business advice services are considered as fundamental intermediaries of sustainable support to those engaged in income generating activities.

The ILO expert, recently dispatched to Uganda, is therefore identifying crucial partners in the field, supporting plans for non-agricultural based income generating activities, and promoting literacy and numeric training, especially among women, to enable the development of small businesses. The specialist is also making an analysis of marketing opportunities, including an assessment of current skills among refugees and nationals.

SUDAN – October-December 2004 -

One of the main challenges that refugees and IDP's will have to face once they return to their place of origin will be the need to gain economic self-sufficiency and develop sustainable activities. Returnees require employment opportunities and should be involved in the reconstruction effort. In order to do this, it is crucial to assure that the beneficiaries have the appropriate skills and have been adequately trained.

It is against this background that in May 2004 the ILO-UNHCR working group approved a program that will allow ILO to support UNHCR plans aimed at reintegrate 150,000 refugees and 80,000 IDP's in the coming years, through job creation and skills development. ILO is considered as a crucial partner, which can address the employment dimension of this re-integration challenge, facilitating the voluntary repatriation of Sudanese refugees in safety and dignity in their community of choice. The ILO expert, recently dispatched to Sudan, is therefore working to assure that returnees will actively

participate in the rehabilitation process. Presently the specialist is identifying employment needs and opportunities in the rural communities. He is technically supporting the organization of vocational training facilities, leading returnees to the creation of small enterprises in the rural context and assisting capacity building for labour administration and civil society organizations.

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO – June-September 2004 –

Within the context of the ILO-UNHCR Partnership, a micro-finance international expert was assigned from June to September 2004 to assess and give guidance to the development of two implementing partners of UNHCR in Serbia/Montenegro. Both implementing partners, Micro Development Fund (MDF) and Microfins, are running micro-finance programmes and support UNHCR's self-reliance/income generation programme in the country. The expert conducted a three-month advisory assignment to support the process of institutional capacity building of MDF and Microfins.

It is expected that the two institutional partners will strengthen their ability to operate independently, while UNHCR prepares to withdraw from direct support of this sector in the region.

Within the three months assignment, recently concluded, the expert worked together with the management of the two credit institutions in defining next steps to be taken. As main recommendation it emerged that even in the absence of a legal framework for micro-finance management in Serbia and Montenegro, donors should not be discouraged from working with local micro finance institutions. It is essential to give support to micro and small enterprises, which are playing a crucial role in the overall development strategy of the country.

SOMALIA – September-December 2004 –

Reintegration activities in Somalia are being closely coordinated from the start among UNHCR, ILO and other agencies to ensure sustainability through local capacity building. Reintegration activities in Awdal and Puntland are implemented and technically supported by the ILO according to the local economic development (LED) methodology, empowering local communities to take responsibility for their own well-being during the relief to development transition. To facilitate this transition, ILO's expertise focuses on livelihood improvement and sustainable job creation, providing the technical support that UN partner agencies require.

For all these purposes an ILO expert, who is working as part of a wider team composed of UNHCR, UNDP and ILO, is engaged in the promotion of consensus building activities in areas of return, ensuring coherence among the various reintegration-oriented projects. The specialist works with local staff on the ground identifying stakeholders and others counterparts relevant to LED in Somalia. On-the-job training supports the LED process implementation, empowering local decision-making structures, such as village development committees, through social dialogue. The specialist also contributes to the territorial diagnosis and institutional mapping of selected areas that allows the definition of regional development plans and a realistic evaluation of economic projects by local communities.



MOZAMBIQUE – August-September 2004 –

To provide assistance to women in contexts of displacement and return in Mozambique, the ILO-UNHCR working group, has decided to support a program for women's entrepreneurship development and gender equality (WEDGE). Two exploratory missions were undertaken in November 2003 and March 2004 to formulate the project proposal for the women's economic empowerment in the country and an ILO expert has been working with UNHCR and partner teams in Marratane camp in Nampula province since August 2004.

The main project's objective is to enable potential and existing small women entrepreneurs to start viable businesses and increase individual or family based economic activities, and promote their improvement.

The consultant is currently looking into organizing a workshop in order to establish a sustainable network between all involved partners: local NGOs and donors, local micro-finance and business support agencies, vocational skills and training centers, basic and adult education centers, literacy

programs, local authorities and civil society. Trust and mutual coexistence between the various community groups in the refugee's areas, in particular among local residents, is considered as a fundamental premise to start up local economic development and to conduct a basic level of local economy mapping. This could be useful to identify potential and still existent viable business sectors related to gender activities, both to train female entrepreneurship and encourage male support.

The ILO-WEDGE technical support aims also to match with related UNHCR activities to impact indicators relevant to the characteristics, situation and needs of the targeted beneficiaries. This will be useful to carry out an initial baseline survey on the entrepreneurs' current situation and on the impact of ILO-UNHCR interventions.

ANGOLA – July-August 2004 -

After preparatory and exploratory missions undertaken by ILO and UNHCR headquarters staff in Angola in April 2004, the deployment of an ILO expert to the Lumbala Nguimbo region took place between July and August. The primary objective of the project was to promote a culture of entrepreneurship based on gender equality for female refugees and their families in order to enhance the economic activities and income generation potential for female refugees, both in individual and group/cooperative-based units. The project was conceived and implemented by UNHCR and its NGO partners, with technical support and guidance from the ILO expert and the ILO Regional and HQ offices, with a strong emphasis on developing local ownership of project strategies and activities. There were several tangible outputs and outcomes from the expert's assignment, including: the launching of a new fund for the accumulating savings and credit association; sensitization and training of women on business management, sustainability, basic micro savings, as well as introduction to credit models; establishment of a village committee with more developed planning capacity; sensitisation and capacity building of UNHCR staff; etc. Presently, the ILO consultant is elaborating economic mapping and analysis of prevalent business activities, mainly related to commercial transitions with neighbouring Zambia, and identifying obstacles to the development of these businesses, principally due to restricted mobility and inadequate infrastructures. The specialist is also providing training in small business development to the local population. Further support to the UNHCR field office in the follow-up of the project assignments and recommendations is envisaged.

<i>ILO-UNHCR PARTNERSHIP through TECHNICAL COOPERATION</i>	
COUNTRY	ACTIVITY
ONGOING	
Angola	women's entrepreneurship development and gender equality (WEDGE), vocational/skills training, micro and small enterprise promotion, micro-finance
Eritrea	micro-finance, local economic development
Mozambique	women's entrepreneurship development and gender equality (WEDGE), vocational/skills training, micro and small enterprise promotion and microfinance
Serbia & Montenegro	micro-finance programmes
Somalia	local economic development
Southern Sudan	vocational/skills training, labour based infrastructure reconstruction
Uganda	vocational/skills training, micro and small enterprise promotion
PIPELINE	
Benin	micro-finance programmes
DRC	micro-finance and livelihoods programmes
Ghana	livelihoods programmes
Northern Caucasus	livelihoods programmes

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