

## **Easing Pressure on Host Countries and Advancing Refugee Self-Reliance: Model Pledges on Refugee Work Rights**

Asylum Access

### **Expert Guidance for Pledging States**

At the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019, States and other stakeholders will be encouraged to submit non-binding pledges on how they will protect and support refugees in their own countries and around the world.

As the first of what will become quadrennial reviews of progress toward the goals articulated in the groundbreaking Global Compact on Refugees, the Forum is an important moment for States, as well as multilaterals and NGOs, to identify new solutions to a global displacement crisis that surpasses anything the world has seen since World War II.

Recognizing that all actors seek to make pledges that are “ambitiously feasible,” advancing innovative and effective solutions to an unprecedented crisis of forced displacement, this paper articulates a set of model pledges that meet these criteria for two of the four principal objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, signed by 181 States in December 2018: 1) Easing pressure on host countries, and 2) refugee self-reliance.

The model pledges below are based on the latest empirical evidence about the best ways to advance refugee self-reliance and could radically change the situation for refugees, their host communities, and all States around the globe, transforming an unprecedented displacement crisis into an opportunity for all.

The Zolberg Institute, a group of experts from across the academic and practitioner spectrum including highly-placed actors in multilaterals, non-governmental organizations, universities and other entities has developed the following set of proposed pledges to assist stakeholders in the GRF process to:

- Understand best practices currently utilized in countries around the world; and
- Use one or more of the examples to guide their own pledges or those they encourage from others in the lead-up to the Global Refugee Forum.

The model pledges are set out in country categories to allow for more relevant and tailored pledges, and are followed by an explanation and examples.

### **The Importance of Refugee Work Rights**

Under international (and oftentimes regional) law, refugees are entitled to rights that facilitate their ability to rebuild their lives and contribute to their host countries. These include rights to access jobs and start businesses, as well as rights to fair working conditions (“decent work”), non-discrimination, and freedom from exploitation. Together with rights to freedom of movement, legal documentation, education, asset ownership and financial services access, this package of “refugee work rights” allows a refugee to become self-reliant and build a new life in a safe home.

In a statement to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention on 7 December 2011, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees stated, “There is increasing evidence that, when given the right to engage in legal employment, refugees are not only empowered to become more self-reliant, but

can also make significant contributions to the development of their host countries.”<sup>1</sup> Since this time, mounting evidence has shown the overwhelmingly positive outcomes for both refugees themselves and host countries, when refugees are allowed to work freely and fairly.<sup>2</sup> With more than 25 million refugees worldwide, and protracted refugee situations – mostly in Africa, Asia and Latin America – lasting an average of 26 years, it is important for the economic wellbeing of host countries, as well as for refugees themselves, that refugees can work freely and fairly.

### **Legal and Economic Benefits**

Legal and economic benefits of effectively implementing refugee work rights include:

- Refugees fill gaps in the economy;
- Refugees create jobs and hire locals;
- Refugees bring new skills;
- When refugees work, they buy more goods;
- Refugees increase cross border trade;
- Refugees’ work, spending and taxes benefit host communities;
- Refugees who work are more likely to return home sooner than those who don’t;
- When refugees are legally allowed to work, and have minimum protections, host country workers are protected from companies using cheap refugee labor;
- Work rights are guaranteed for refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention – 147 States have ratified the Convention and/or it’s Protocol, 85% with no reservations. However, many of these States do not comply with the international law they have signed up to. In this time of crisis, it is important that states implement their promises in practical ways.

Examples of all of these benefits are outlined below, in the explanation to the Model Pledges.

### **Definitions**

The categories used apply the following definitions:

- “Low income” applies to countries with a per capita national income of less than US\$3,895 (corresponding to the World Bank’s lower-middle income countries definition as of 1 July 2018).
- “Middle income” applies to countries with a per capita national income of less than US\$12,055 (corresponding to the World Bank’s upper-middle income countries definition as of 1 July 2018).
- “High income” refers to developed countries with a per capita national income above US\$12,055.

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<sup>1</sup> Guterres, Antonio, Statement by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Intergovernmental Meeting at Ministerial Level to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (7 Dec 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Betts et al, Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions, University of Oxford, Refugee Studies Centre (June 2014). <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/publications/other/refugee-economies-2014.pdf>; Zetter & Ruadel, Refugees’ Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment, September 2016, Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development. [https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/KNOMAD%20Study%201%20Part%20I-%20Assessing%20Refugees%27%20Rights%20to%20Work\\_final.pdf](https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2017-03/KNOMAD%20Study%201%20Part%20I-%20Assessing%20Refugees%27%20Rights%20to%20Work_final.pdf) Ana Swanson, The Big Myth About Refugees, The Washington Post (10 Sept 2015). <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/09/10/the-big-myth-about-refugees/>; International Labor Organization, The Fundamental Connection between Human Rights and Labor Rights, 10 December 2015, available at [https://www.ilo.org/rome/risorse-informative/speeches/WCMS\\_434604/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/rome/risorse-informative/speeches/WCMS_434604/lang--en/index.htm); Edwards, A. (2005). Human Rights, Refugees, and The Right ‘To Enjoy’ Asylum, International Journal for Refugee Law 17(2), p. 328. Available at: <https://ijrl.oxfordjournals.org/content/17/2/293.full.pdf+html>

- “High hosting” refers to countries in which the number of refugees is either more than 1% of total population or more than 500,000 in total.
- “Low hosting” refers to countries in which the number of refugees is less than 1% of the total population. (Almost all high-income countries are low-hosting, largely because these countries accept small numbers of refugees through asylum and resettlement.)

## Model Pledges

### 1. Low Income, High Hosting Countries

We pledge to open our labor markets to registered refugees and asylum seekers, so as to encourage self-reliance and increase the basic living standards of refugees, and increase taxation and reduce the drain on the national budget of hosting large numbers of refugees. Specifically, we pledge by 2021 to:

- Register all refugees and asylum-seekers within the country and provide them with state-issued identification cards [OPTIONAL: with financial support from *[Insert Donor Government Name]*] and after this is achieved, continue to provide new asylum seekers or refugees identification cards within 30 days of arrival;
- Amend our laws so as to specifically grant refugees and asylum seekers holding identification cards an automatic, unconditional right to work, including the right to be self-employed and operate their own businesses;
- Enact a freedom of movement policy applying to all refugees and asylum seekers, including those currently living in camps;
- Implement a livelihoods project in the area of agricultural production and related income-generating activities [OPTIONAL: with the financial assistance of *[Insert Multilateral Bank Name]*], in order to increase the income of both refugee and host communities in areas where refugees live in large numbers;
- Implement nationwide legal empowerment services [OPTIONAL: jointly with *[Insert NGO Name]* and funded by *[Insert Donor Government Name]*], which will ensure workers from all backgrounds and sectors understand their labor rights, know how to report breaches and are assisted in enforcing their rights against employers;
- Develop and advertise nationwide an online training module for immigration and labor officials and for employers [OPTIONAL: with the financial and/or technical support of *[Insert NGO Name]*], so that all groups understand the laws around refugees’ labor rights, and so employers understand their responsibilities under the country’s labor laws.
- Undertake a water and sewerage improvement project in *[Insert Name of City]*, a city that hosts more than *[Insert Number]* refugees and borders *[Insert Name of Refugee-Producing Country]*, a high refugee producing country. This project will employ a minimum of 25% registered refugees or asylum seekers [OPTIONAL: with funding from *[Insert Multilateral Bank Name]*].

#### *Examples and explanation*

Various countries have open border policies and allow freedom of movement once refugees are registered. This freedom is important to allow refugees to move to parts of the country where they can find jobs. Similarly, refugees should be explicitly granted the right to work on equal terms with nationals, both to comply with refugees’ rights as workers and to avoid undercutting nationals in the labor market. When work is allowed for refugees, both refugees and employers also must know the law and know that the law is enforced. Without enforcement, refugees will inevitably be exploited.

Uganda is an example of a country that has implemented refugee work rights effectively. A low income, high hosting country, Uganda has a freedom of movement policy (although with some restrictions), as

well as being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and having its own domestic refugee law. The law allows refugees to work, but regulations are inconsistent in relation to the need for a work permit, thus most employers require one. Work permits are fairly costly, which is a barrier for many refugees. Uganda provides a useful example, although best practice is for state-issued refugee ID cards to replace work permits entirely.

Ethiopia is another example. Revised in January 2019, Ethiopia's Refugee Proclamation provides a pathway for free movement, as well as access to primary school education, banking services and the labor market via work permits.

Countries that allow refugees to work reap benefits. Research on Uganda in 2014 demonstrated that many Ugandan businesses rely heavily on refugees as suppliers, customers, distributors and employees. The study also provided many examples of refugees contributing to Uganda's national economy and even training and employing Ugandan nationals.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, when refugees are allowed to work and move freely, they take jobs locals don't want to do in locations where labor is needed. Refugee entrepreneurs do not stress humanitarian aid or government services, and may create jobs as they grow and expand their businesses.<sup>4</sup>

Refugees denied employment rights inevitably find work, and displace nationals when employers opt to pay refugees less in the informal economy and then nationals are forced to offer their labor for less than the local wage rate in order to compete with refugees for work. Further, refugees denied employment rights work informally and are unable to pay taxes to contribute to the provision of public goods and services.<sup>5</sup> If the government itself employs refugees, employers will be more likely to follow suit.

## 2. Low Income, Low Hosting Countries

[OPTIONAL: While we are a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention,] we do not have sufficient national legislation regulating refugees. By 2021, we pledge to:

- Adopt an open-border policy for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing into our country, [OPTIONAL: particularly from other countries in the region];
- With the support and funding of UNHCR, allow UNHCR to register all refugees and asylum seekers in the country and provide protection and financial benefits to them;
- Enact a policy that clarifies that UNHCR-registered refugees and asylum seekers have a right to work, without the need for a work permit, and make this policy widely known among all government departments, in particular immigration officials and labor officials, and to employers.

By 2023, we pledge to:

- Enact a full suite of national legislation regulating refugees and asylum seekers, which includes a state-issued identification card, rights to temporarily reside, work, be self-employed and own businesses, and includes a pathway for permanent residence;
- [OPTIONAL: With the financial assistance of [*Insert Multilateral Bank Name*]] undertake the following reforms:
  1. Reform our labor law system by enacting legislation that protects the rights of all workers in the country and establishing an Industrial Relations Court to hear disputes; and

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<sup>3</sup> Omata, K. and Kaplan, J., Refugee livelihoods and engagement with host economies, 3 July 2014; Available at: <http://www.oxhip.org/2014/03/refugee-livelihoods-and-engagement-with-host-economies/>

<sup>4</sup> Asylum Access, Global Refugee Work Rights Report, 2014, p.15. Available at [http://asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FINAL\\_Global-Refugee-Work-Rights-Report-2014\\_Interactive.pdf](http://asylumaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FINAL_Global-Refugee-Work-Rights-Report-2014_Interactive.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.15.

2. Implement an agricultural livelihood program by leasing tracts of government land to both host and refugee communities for joint agricultural activity, and provide seed, tools, irrigation, fertilizer, training, advice and other necessary items to enable that activity, noting that no refugees will be forced to work in this activity, but that at least 50% of those in the program will be single woman head of households (SWHH). This project will be conducted jointly by the government and [*Insert Name of NGO*] with the latter providing oversight, training and advice.
3. Implement a mobile banking system for un-banked host communities and refugee communities to be able to save income, obtain access to credit and receive overseas remittances, in conjunction with the roll out of a national education campaign on banking and assisting at least 500,000 persons to register.

#### *Examples and explanation*

Indonesia is a low-income country with a small number of refugees and asylum seekers (around 14,000). It is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention, and UNHCR registers refugees within the country. In 2016, however, a Presidential Decree set forth the definition of a refugee and provided some regulations relating to housing and refugees with special needs.

Since this time the freedom of movement policy has progressed, with less than 1% of refugees still residing in detention centres. Work rights have not been granted as yet, although the issue has been brought to the government's attention by civil society organisations. While the government has stated it is concerned about refugees securing jobs that would otherwise go to locals,<sup>6</sup> evidence shows this is not at all likely. In fact, refugees are more likely to undercut locals' job prospects if refugees are forced to work without permission, which allows employers to pay lower wages and impose worse working conditions.

With a large population, a thriving economy and very low percentage of refugees (less than 0.01%), countries like Indonesia are in an excellent position to extend work rights to refugees. Such countries will benefit economically by extending work rights to refugees, and should be encouraged to make pledges on this issue.

In relation to the agricultural livelihood program, Uganda has implemented a program where it allocates land to refugees for cultivation for livelihoods, which has seen some success in terms of self-reliance, and due to its progressive stance in relation to refugees, has been able to bring together the World Bank, UN agencies, development partners and the private sector in its 5 year strategy to transform its interventions in relation to refugees and refugee hosting areas from a humanitarian approach to development approach, resulting in large amounts of development funding.<sup>7</sup>

In early 2019, Pakistan began allowing Afghan refugees to open bank accounts, incentivized and enabled by the World Bank under its IDA18 Refugee Sub-Window financing. Reports suggest that this has been life-changing for many refugees who can now easily receive remittances from overseas, pay for goods and services with ATM cards and make payments online, as well as keeping their savings safe. Funding by high income countries for banking services in under-banked countries could significantly assist host communities as well as refugees.

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<sup>6</sup> Regulation of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, No. 125, 31 December 2016. Available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/58aeee374.html>; Jakarta Post, Indonesia refugee policy is on right track, by Dio Herdiawan Tobing, 24 January 2019. Available at: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/01/24/indonesia-refugee-policy-is-on-right-track.html>

<sup>7</sup> Zetter & Ruadel, op cit., p 180-191.

### 3. Middle Income, High Hosting Countries

We pledge to open our labor markets to recognized refugees and asylum seekers, so as to encourage self-reliance and increase incomes of refugees, and to increase taxation and reduce the drain on the national budget. Specifically, we pledge by 2021 to:

- Register all refugees and asylum-seekers within the country and provide them with state-issued identification cards [OPTIONAL: with financial support from *[Insert Donor Government Name]*], noting that currently around *[Insert Number]* refugees still need to be registered;
- Enact an amendment to our national laws to grant refugees and asylum seekers holding state-issued identification cards an unconditional right to work, including the right to be self-employed;
- Revoke the current policy requiring separate work permits such that refugee or asylum seeker identification cards will be sufficient to prove employment eligibility to employers and government officials, and conduct a national education campaign to ensure employers and government officials are aware of the new policy;
- Enact a no-camp policy to provide freedom of movement and job-seeking to all refugees and asylum seekers;
- Significantly increase our labor enforcement budget by *[Insert Amount]* [OPTIONAL: via funding from *[Insert Donor Government Name]*] to ensure all types of workers, including nationals, migrants and refugees, can access their labor rights and avoid exploitation in the workplace. This labor enforcement initiative will include a complaints mechanism within the agency responsible for labor enforcement, increased random inspection activities in areas where many refugees live and work, and nationwide information sessions for employers;
- Implement a legal awareness program for refugees and asylum seekers, to be funded and rolled out by UNHCR and *[Insert NGO Name]*, so that this group understands the rights and responsibilities of working in the country (including payment of tax).
- On the planned construction of *[Insert Planned Project, eg, “a new mass transit metro line”]*, a minimum of *[Insert Percentage]*% of workers employed on that project will be refugees [OPTIONAL: to be funded in part by a loan from *[Insert Multilateral Bank Name]*].

#### *Examples and explanation*

Lebanon (hosting around 1m refugees, approximately 18.5% of the population<sup>8</sup>) and Jordan (hosting 770,000 UNHCR registered refugees and asylum seekers, approximately 25% of the population<sup>9</sup>) are the epitome of middle income, high hosting countries. Both countries now host large numbers of refugees from Syria, together with longer-standing large populations of Palestinians and Iraqi refugees.

In addition to receiving significant funding from traditional refugee response donors, both countries also have benefited from development investments specifically tied to improving policies related to refugees, including limited labor market access. However, flaws in the new policies have limited both countries' success: In Jordan, cumbersome administrative processes and an inability to transfer work permits from one employer to another have negatively impacted uptake of new and much-lauded work permits for refugees.

Similarly, Lebanon does allow some categories of refugees to work, including Syrians with residency permits, but they must obtain a work permit, which is a long and expensive process. This still leaves many refugees without the ability to apply for work permits.<sup>10</sup> While Lebanon and Jordan are both progressive in this area, more changes are needed to make the process fair, timely and free.

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<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, Statistical Online Database, as at end of 2018. Available at: [http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#\\_ga=2.81250005.378234771.1567990288-1141799138.1567388282](http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=2.81250005.378234771.1567990288-1141799138.1567388282)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Zetter & Ruaudel, op cit, p.119-124 (country information from Case Studies)

Further, although both countries provide some work rights, exploitation of refugees and asylum seekers in the workplace is rife. It is critically important for all workers in the country that their labor rights be upheld by labor inspectors, police and the court system. This requires funding for enforcement and training for all stakeholders.

Turkey reformed its refugee laws in 2013 and again in 2014, and is one of the most progressive in terms of allowing (Syrian) refugees to work. A regulation passed in 2016 allows those with temporary protection or refugee status to work for an employer without the need for a work permit. (Those with “conditional refugee status,” however, need a work permit unless they are employed in the agriculture industry.)

Once employed, refugees in Turkey enjoy protections under labor laws including payment of the minimum wage.<sup>11</sup> Having refugees in the labor market has changed the nature of work for Turkish nationals, including growth in higher paid, formal work for Turkish nationals as well as wage growth in those jobs.<sup>12</sup>

Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan all restrict refugees’ free movement in various ways. Turkey, for example, does not allow freedom of movement throughout the country, only within the province a particular refugee is assigned to. Restrictions on movement often are a barrier to employment and should be revoked.

#### 4. Middle Income, Low Hosting Countries

[OPTIONAL: While we are a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention,] we do not have domestic refugee legislation. We currently [*Insert: “allow” / “do not allow”*] recognized refugees to work in restricted sectors.

By 2021, we pledge to:

- Revoke the current policy requiring separate work permits such that refugee or asylum seeker identification cards will be sufficient to prove employment eligibility to employers and government officials, and conduct a national education campaign to ensure employers and government officials are aware of the new policy;
- Remove restrictions on the sectors in which refugees can work, allowing them to work at any vocation with the same restrictions as nationals;
- Allow asylum seekers to work until their status is determined by the government or UNHCR;
- Establish an office within the Ministry of Labor which will confirm and accredit foreign degrees and qualifications [OPTIONAL: with funding from [*Insert Donor Government Name*]];
- Fund expanded language learning programs for adult refugees and asylum seekers, to allow them to more easily access the job market [OPTIONAL: in a joint project with [*Insert NGO Name*]];
- Increase by [*Insert Percentage*]% the number of workplace inspectors employed by the Ministry of Labor to ensure employers adhere to laws and policies in relation to minimum wage, non-discrimination, payment of social security benefits, sexual harassment, and other forms of exploitation for the benefit of all categories of workers [OPTIONAL: with initial funding from

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.169-174 (country information from Case Studies)

<sup>12</sup> Del Carpio, X., and M. Wagner (2015) “The Impact of Syrians Refugees on the Turkish Labor Market,” Policy Research Working Paper 7402, World Bank Group, [www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2016/02/09/090224b08415e3b5/3\\_0/Rendere d/PDF/The0impact0of00Turkish0labor0market.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2016/02/09/090224b08415e3b5/3_0/Rendere d/PDF/The0impact0of00Turkish0labor0market.pdf); IMF (2016) “The Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges,” IMF Staff Discussion Note, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf>.

[*Insert Donor Government Name*]]. At least 10% of the newly-employed workplace inspectors will be from the refugee community.

- Establish a vocational training program for women refugees and asylum seekers in the area of entrepreneurship (how to set up a business, business structures, taxation, licencing, marketing etc), to enable women to run their own businesses and become self-reliant [OPTIONAL: with funding from UNHCR and in conjunction with [*Insert NGO Name*]];
- Develop a legal empowerment program for refugees and asylum seekers, [OPTIONAL: to be funded by [*Insert Donor Government Name*] and implemented by [*Insert NGO Name*]], so that this group understands the rights, protections and responsibilities they hold as workers in the country and can seek redress if such rights are violated.

By 2023, we pledge to:

- Employ within the government at least 500 refugees and asylum seekers under fair conditions equal to those applicable to nationals, and that comply with all national employment laws (e.g., minimum wages, maximum hours, workplace health and safety, etc).
- Revise legislation to allow refugees who have lived in and worked in the country for more than 3 consecutive years to apply for permanent residency and/or citizenship.

### *Examples and explanation*

Middle-income countries that are low hosting have a real opportunity to make positive changes for refugees without impacting their own nationals or their budget.

Thailand is a middle-income country hosting around 103,000 refugees (0.18 % of the population), mostly on the Myanmar border in camps, but with around 8,000 in urban centres. The country has recently committed to passing national legislation protecting refugees and providing them with legal status, as well as taking over refugee processing from UNHCR. However, since announcing the commitment in September 2016, it has moved slowly; to date no laws have been passed. Refugee work rights appear not to be contemplated in the first draft of the law, however, civil society organizations are strongly advocating for this to be added. Freedom of movement is proposed, but without the corresponding permission to work this will not help refugees in their quest for self-reliance.

Malaysia, another middle income, low hosting country, has been trialing a refugee work pilot project with a small number of Rohingya refugees since 2017. In May 2018, the new government coalition of Pakatan Harapan promised in its manifesto to give refugees the right to work in Malaysia on a par with locals, and to sign and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention, with Pakatan saying "... 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 build new lives, without subjecting them to oppression."<sup>13</sup> However there appears to have been little movement on this promise in the 16 months since.<sup>14</sup> Governments who have made public statements on refugee rights should be strongly encouraged to not only re-pledge on these topics in the short term, but to expand their protections and rights for refugees through other initiatives in the longer term (2023).

Ecuador (another middle-income, previously low hosting, now high-hosting) allows recognized refugees the right to apply for Ecuadoran citizenship after three consecutive years of residence, although it is an expensive process.<sup>15</sup> This is almost unprecedented in refugee law, even in high income countries with highly developed systems, but is an excellent example of best practice. Integration of refugees into not

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<sup>13</sup> Bedi, Kula: Govt Yet to Decide on Allowing Refugees to Work, The Star 5 Aug 2019. Available at: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2019/08/05/kula-govt-yet-to-decide-on-allowing-refugees-to-work>

<sup>14</sup> Bedi & Azizan, Grant Refugees in Malaysia the Right to Work, The Star 23 June 2019 <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2019/06/23/grant-refugees-in-malaysia-the-right-to-work>

<sup>15</sup> Zetter & Ruaudel, op cit. p.23.

only economic life, but the social and cultural fabric of the host country is best achieved through citizenship and/or permanent residency.

#### 5. High Income Countries

We have signed all relevant international conventions and have a highly developed domestic refugee system. We accept a small number of refugees for resettlement each year.

By 2021, we pledge to:

- In support of the pledge by *[Insert Middle Income, Low Hosting State Name]* to amend and simplify its laws to allow registered refugees and asylum seekers to work freely in its territory without the need for work permits, we pledge to:
  - Fund *[Insert State Name]* in the amount of *[Insert Amount]* over three years, to increase the Ministry of Labor's enforcement capacity in relation to workplace violations and exploitation, to benefit all categories of workers. At least *[Insert Percentage]*% of the new labor inspectors will be employed from the refugee community. A new tranche of funding will be available on successful completion of the first two years of the project.
  - Finance a nationwide legal empowerment project in the amount of *[Insert Amount]*, to be run by *[Insert Local NGO Name]*, which will employ and train refugee and local community paralegals. These community paralegals will conduct legal information sessions in all regions, all provinces, in refugee and local communities, and in large workplaces around the country, to ensure workers from all backgrounds and sectors understand their labor rights, know how to report breaches and are legally assisted in enforcing their rights against employers.
  - Fund UNHCR and *[Insert Local NGO Name]* in a joint program in the amount of *[Insert Amount]*, to establish a vocational training program for women refugees and asylum seekers in the area of entrepreneurship (how to set up a business, business structures, taxation, licencing, marketing etc), to enable women to run their own businesses and become self-reliant. This program will run in *[Insert Geographic Location, e.g., "the capital city and the 6 provincial capitals at least 5 times over 2020,"]* and host community women will also be encouraged to attend.
- In support of the pledge by *[Insert Low Income, High Hosting State Name]* to allow registered refugees and asylum seekers freedom of movement and non-restrictive access to its labor markets, we pledge to fund *[Insert State Name]* to:
  - set up a secure refugee identification and registration system using biometric capabilities, to register all refugees and asylum-seekers within the country and provide them with state-issued identification cards, with the assistance of UNHCR in a technical capacity, in the amount of *[Insert Amount]*;
  - develop a nationwide online training module as well as an in-person training program for immigration officials, police and employers (with the technical support of *[Insert NGO Name]*) and to roll out this training, so that these groups understand the laws around refugees' right to work and employers understand their responsibilities under the country's revised refugee laws, in the amount of *[Insert Amount]*;
  - implement a large-scale livelihoods project in the area of agricultural production and related income-generating activities in order to increase the income of both refugee and host communities in areas where refugees live in large numbers, in the amount of *[Insert Amount]* over two years;
  - develop a mobile banking system for un-banked host communities and refugee communities to be able to save income and obtain access to credit, as well as rolling out a

national education campaign and assisting at least *[Insert Target Number]* persons to register, with the technical assistance of *[Insert Multilateral Bank Name]*, in the amount of *[Insert Amount]*.

- We further pledge to provide *[Insert Target Number]* new resettlement places per year (on top of the already *[Insert Current Number]* places designated for refugees) from *[Insert Name of State]* and *[Insert Name of State]*, based on extreme vulnerability and protection risks in these countries, with technical assistance from UNHCR.

### *Examples and explanation*

Under our definition in this paper, Germany and the United States are the only high hosting countries with more than 500,000 refugees and asylum seekers, and with tens of thousands more seeking refuge. As we have seen, in recent years both countries have severely restricted access to their territories to asylum seekers, and used their wealth and political clout to keep refugees in their countries of first asylum, despite having the resources to do far more. Greece and Italy, while technically not high hosting, are also fully occupied in dealing with mixed migration flows from Africa and the Middle East.

Other high-income countries are not high hosting, and have a great capacity to step up and engage in responsibility sharing. They can do this in many ways, including through increasing their resettlement quotas. In relation to the promotion of self-reliance through work rights, they should prioritize funding programs in low- and middle-income countries that assist those countries to both provide work rights and enforce them. Traditionally, donor countries have funded UNHCR and other UN agencies and multilaterals to implement such programs for them. While this has many benefits in terms of expertise and pooling of funds for very large operations, donor governments will have better control over bilateral arrangements, such as projects administered directly by USAID, and often have more political clout to negotiate real changes to the host country's systems.

## 6. Multilateral Institutions

In furtherance of our mission to *[Insert Mission]* and in support of the intention of the countries listed below to provide, in law or policy, an explicit recognition of refugees' and asylum-seekers' right to access the labor market and to accept refugees' and asylum-seekers' existing state-issued identity documents in lieu of separate work permits or to issue work permits free of charge to any refugee or asylum-seeker who requests one, we pledge to:

- Provide a concessional loan of *[Insert Amount]* to *[Insert Low Income, Low Hosting State Name]* to significantly reform their labor law system by enacting legislation that protects the rights of all workers in the country, and establish an Industrial Relations Court (together with all systems required, capacity-building, and mobile regional courts) to hear labor disputes;
- Grant *[Insert Amount]* to *[Insert Low Income, High Hosting State Name]* to implement an agricultural livelihood program by leasing tracts of government land to both host and refugee communities for joint agricultural activity, and to provide seed, tools, irrigation, fertilizer, training, advice and other necessary items to enable that activity, noting that no refugees will be forced to work in this activity, but that at least 50% of those in the program will be single woman head of households (SWHH). This project will be conducted jointly by the government and *[Insert NGO]* (who will provide oversight, training and advice);
- Grant *[Insert Amount]* to *[Insert Low Income, High Hosting State Name]* for building infrastructure as listed in the memorandum of understanding, noting that this state has agreed that 25% of the persons employed by the government to work on these infrastructure projects will be refugees or asylum seekers;

- Provide a concessional loan of *[Insert Amount]* to *[Insert Middle Income, High Hosting State Name]* for a water and sewerage improvement project in *[Insert City or Region Hosting Large Refugee Numbers]*, on the basis that the State has agreed that a minimum of 25% of workers employed to undertake the project are refugees or asylum seekers.

#### *Examples and explanation*

While large multilateral institutions such as WHO and UNICEF regularly fund refugee-related projects as part of their humanitarian efforts, development banks (such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, etc) have not traditionally worked in this space. However, in recent years they have become much more involved.

The World Bank has led the way in reframing the refugee crisis from a solely humanitarian issue to a longer-term development issue, and as a result began providing conditional funding for various projects in high refugee hosting countries through its Global Concessional Financing Facility and IDA18 Regional Sub-Window. As pointed out by the Center for Global Development, the Bank “has uniquely strong relationships with government compared to other donors... and could use them more strategically to ensure policies – the backbone of lasting change – are a key part of agreements and accountability frameworks.”<sup>16</sup>

This is also true of other multilaterals, who should be encouraged to follow the World Bank’s lead in providing concessional and grant financing to low income countries in return for real policy change leading to improved conditions for refugees. Conditional financing should not only be directed towards changes to law and policy, but to practical implementation, including the government employing refugees in all development projects.

#### 7. International NGOs

In furtherance of our mission to *[Insert Mission]* and in support of the intention of the countries listed below to facilitate access to the labor market and to fair, decent employment opportunities equal to those of nationals, by 2021 we pledge to:

- Provide technical assistance to *[Insert Middle Income, High Hosting State Name]* to implement a community paralegal program that will allow refugees to understand their legal rights and responsibilities in the country, including labor rights, and provide financial assistance of *[Insert Amount and Duration]* to *[Insert Local NGO Name]* to formally employ and train the paralegals. At least 50% of the paralegals will be refugees;
- Provide funding and technical assistance in the amount of *[Insert Amount and Duration]* to *[Insert Local NGO Name]*, with the agreement of *[Insert Middle Income, High Hosting State Name]*, to establish and manage a legal aid clinic providing legal counsel and representation to refugees (at least 50% of cases) and migrant and local workers to enforce their labor rights within the State’s territory. At least 10% of *[Insert Local NGO Name]* employees working on the project will be refugees.
- In conjunction with the Government of *[Insert Low Income, High Hosting State Name]*, implement a livelihoods project to benefit female refugees in urban areas in the sectors of *[Insert Sector]*, specifically to finance the training of *[Insert Number]* of women refugees in *[Insert Locations]* and providing them with start-up grant funding of *[Insert Amount]*.

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<sup>16</sup> Centre for Global Development, Five Ways to Improve World Bank Funding of Refugees and Hosts in Low Income Countries and Why These Dedicated Resources Matter More than Ever, 5 November 2018. Available at: <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/five-ways-improve-world-bank-funding-refugees-and-hosts-low-income-countries-and-why>

*Examples and explanation*

Large international NGOs (INGOs) receive funding to implement refugee protection or relief projects in both high hosting and low hosting countries, from donor governments and UN agencies. Most often the NGOs propose the project and apply for funding, and thus have significant latitude in deciding what areas to concentrate on. While traditionally (and importantly) INGOs have largely proposed humanitarian relief projects, there is an opportunity now to focus on longer term development issues, which will in turn reduce the demand for aid.

For example, along the Thailand-Myanmar border, International Rescue Committee has in the past implemented “Know Your Rights” trainings for Burmese refugees; in Lebanon they have provided refugees and local communities with skills training, small business development and job placement; and in Ethiopia introduced new livelihoods-related skills and job opportunities to youth and vulnerable households. Other large NGOs do similar work that significantly improves the long-term opportunities for refugees.

While there is still a great need for emergency cash, health and other humanitarian services, we believe pledges which increase refugee self-reliance should be first and foremost. Further, pledges should be directed towards funding local NGOs to undertake the work and to employ refugees directly. This creates a knock-on effect, multiplying the effectiveness of the initial funding.