



The Implementation of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas

Global Survey – 2012

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Executive Summary

Since the publication of its 2009 policy on urban refugees, *UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*, the topic of urban refugees has become increasingly prominent amongst humanitarian actors. It is widely acknowledged that refugees are more often fleeing to cities instead of camps. According to current estimates, as many as almost seven million refugees and asylum seekers are living in cities, potentially more than half of the world's refugees.¹ In 2012, UNHCR created an Urban Refugee Steering Group to coordinate the agency's strategy for meeting the evolving needs of this burgeoning demographic group.

The body of literature on urban refugees is also growing. Beginning in 2010, UNHCR published a series of evaluations of urban refugee operations in various countries. UNHCR's Asia Bureau recently completed a regional analysis of urban refugees in nine of the countries they cover. However, a global analysis of UNHCR's urban refugee operations was missing. The Urban Refugee Steering Group commissioned this review of its largest urban refugee operations in 2012. This study is based on a detailed survey that was sent to the agency's 24 programs with urban refugee programs that numbered more than 5,000 according to UNHCR's 2011 statistics. The survey sought to gauge the rate of implementation for each of the 24 UNHCR operations against the twelve protection strategies set forth in the policy. By doing this we hoped to provide a baseline for future implementation measurements, and, to identify good practices and specific challenges concerning urban refugees.

The way the policy is written is conducive to measuring implementation. The policy's twelve protection strategies are readily translated into objectives and are so well described that it was easy to formulate indicators for compliance for each protection objective. For an overview, the twelve objectives can be grouped into three categories: **1 Documentation and Status Determination;** **2 Community Relations;** and **3 Safe and Sustainable Existences for Urban Refugees.**

Documentation and Status Determination includes the first four objectives of the policy: *providing adequate reception facilities for refugees and asylum seekers; undertaking registration and data collection; ensuring that refugees are documented; and determining refugee status.* The principal finding with respect to these objectives is that urban refugees are often unable to formalize their status due to the distance to administrative offices, related travel costs, fees for documentation, a lack of awareness of procedures and/or fear of arrest. From the UNHCR side, the difficulties are the struggle with limited office space and staffing constraints in terms of both sufficient numbers of staff and the language abilities of staff. To overcome this, offices are increasingly using web and cell phone technologies to deliver information to urban refugees without the need for face-to-face meetings.

Most UNHCR offices express concern about the poor quality of government registration data and asylum decisions in the countries where the government is providing this function, which is the majority of the cases in this survey. When UNHCR provides these functions, significant backlogs and limited recognition of UNHCR issued documentation are the overriding concerns. However, in highlighting practices that work, UNHCR's urban refugee operations cite the importance of consistent engagement with government authorities including the provision of pro-active support for capacity development of the legal and technical aspects of registration and asylum procedures. It has become clear that the existence of domestic legislation that allows refugees to regularize their status is critical as long as it is financially accessible to refugees, widely implemented and translated into documentation that is easily recognized throughout the host country. It is only through obtaining these commonly recognized documents that refugees are then allowed to establish and sustain a formal sector livelihood, access services, and move freely. Documentation that is familiar, credible and for a long enough time period has a profound impact on the lifestyle of urban refugees.

¹ UNHCR Global Trends Report (2010)

Community Relations includes three objectives: *community outreach; fostering constructive relations with urban refugees; and maintaining security*. Connecting and communicating with urban refugees is difficult not only because they are scattered across sprawling cities, but also because poverty and fragile tenancy arrangements force them to move frequently. Almost all the operations surveyed reported that some refugees live where UNHCR does not have a presence and the organization relies heavily on partnerships for outreach. Not surprisingly, the respondents flag the importance and complications in outreach, the merits of promoting effective refugee community structures, and maintaining clear and consistent dialogue with the urban refugee populations. Although it is resource intensive, UNHCR offices emphasize the significance of active and regular outreach within refugee neighborhoods and clear, widespread messages to help manage expectations and a positive security climate. In addition to participatory assessments, they responded, across the board, that they support cultural, social and recreational activities to reach refugees.

Safe and sustainable existence for urban refugees includes the objectives: *addressing livelihoods; access to services; meeting material needs; freedom of movement; and durable solutions for urban refugees*. When it comes to providing a safe and sustainable stay in a city, the relationship between the government and the host community is again of the utmost importance. While the survey findings suggest that domestic legislation regulating refugee status -- including freedom of movement, documentation and access to services such as banking -- significantly influences an individual's capacity to establish and sustain a livelihood, the findings suggest that the socio-economic conditions of the country, the relevance of refugees' skill-set for the urban environment and their ability to connect with the local civil society are critical factors in determining their capacity to be self-reliant. The relationship with the civil society was especially noted as the most important one for urban integration and barriers to financial capital outpaced legal barriers as the biggest inhibitor to establishing livelihoods. These findings suggest that while UNHCR needs to continue to advocate for domestic legislation that allows refugees to work and access the country's basic social services along with education and health care, refugees need to continue to integrate within host communities to the point where they can also access financial capital.

In conclusion, urban areas provide a complex theater in which to promote refugee protection. While national authorities confer refugee status and pass domestic legislation regulating their rights, freedom of movement and access to services, it is municipal authorities who manage services and security. Refugees themselves live in marginal neighborhoods with the urban poor, use the same, often underdeveloped, services and are linked with them through local economic activity. In many contexts refugees, and the host communities, perceive that their stay is temporary pending resettlement. Many of the surveyed offices reported that resettlement is the primary solution for urban refugees and it is used to leverage protection space in the cities particularly in countries that maintain especially restrictive policies and practices toward refugees. Reliance on resettlement for urban refugee populations can create an unintended pull to cities and the offices also reported concerns about refugees refusing to invest in livelihood activities because of their "pending resettlement" status. Whereas, the countries that have more progressive domestic legislation have linked integration and permanent residence schemes to livelihood programs.

On a final note, five out of the twenty-four countries continue to maintain an encampment policy: Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Turkey and Zambia. Although the enforcement and practicalities of encampment varies from country to country, the principle of freedom of movement is one of the two core goals of the UNHCR urban policy. Along with their diplomacy efforts to provide the right to work and the provision of adequate documents, UNHCR offices continue to advocate stridently for freedom of movement for refugees.

As it stands, the survey indicated that the UNHCR offices are purposefully implementing many aspects of the urban refugee policy despite the magnitude of this population group and the complexities in reaching refugees distributed amongst the indigenous urban poor. Effective refugee protection in this complex urban context requires a multi-faceted approach, and an entirely different mindset from providing camp-based services and protection. In cities, the community-based

approach is all the more salient and effective protection sometimes requires outreach into slums and negotiations with unconventional actors who hold power in these neighborhoods.

The following are recommendations on how UNHCR could improve the protection environment for urban refugees:

Multi-level, systemic and holistic engagement with key government actors

- Invest strategically in government partners responsible for immigration, refugees and security where it is likely to work including the use of shared, online databases, biometric tools and standard operating procedures.
- Advocate for minor changes in policy and practices in countries with a very restrictive approach while supporting social capital within the refugee community and its immediate environs.
- Continue and expand advocacy and capacity development with line ministries responsible for key services, such as health, education and social welfare at the national, sub-national and municipal levels and local (neighborhood level).

Innovative and extensive approaches to community outreach and development

- Professionalize outreach and invest in national, professional social workers.
- Engage with local legal aid societies to help refugees acquire documentation for businesses, bank accounts, rental properties and other business transactions
- Use assessments, profiling or other tools to better understand and map refugee and asylum seeker populations and the nuances of the socio-economic and political positions of their neighborhoods
- Develop creative approaches, including expanded field outreach through non-traditional associations such as parent and teachers associations, sports clubs and religious groups combined with the use of modern communications technology.
- Develop innovative ways to empower refugee community groups so that they can take a more active role in socially and financially supporting their respective communities without creating ghettos.

Stronger linkages between material assistance, livelihoods/self-reliance, local integration and community development

- Develop new and more effective partnerships with civil society organizations that have expertise related to livelihoods, e.g., chambers of commerce, street vendors associations, neighborhood groups.
- Use technology, including ATMs, M-Pesa, Internet banking tech solutions, to support livelihood activities and access financial capital.

A Review of how UNHCR uses durable solutions strategically to enhance protection

- Review the approach to durable solutions in urban contexts
- Promote integration activities, e.g. economic self-reliance, formal education, and participation in language programmes, as pre-requisites for resettlement.

A Consultation with key actors on refugee protection in urban contexts

- Bring UNHCR staff with experience in urban contexts together with key government, UN, NGO and civil society actors to brainstorm and explore more effective and efficient ways to ensure refugee protection in urban areas.

I. Introduction

Over three billion people, over half the world's population, now live in urban areas worldwide and half of them – 1.5 billion – live in slums. These are informal, unregulated, crowded and under serviced settlements on marginal lands.² By 2050, it is estimated that 6.3 billion, 67 % of the world population will live in urban areas.³ Virtually all of the expected urban growth will take place in the less developed regions – particularly Asia and Africa.

The world's asylum seekers and refugees have also moved to urban areas. Of the 10.4 million refugees as of the end of 2011, an estimated 4.3 to 7 million refugees are residing in urban centers. Additionally, 90% of the world's asylum seekers are estimated to be in urban or peri-urban centers. Urban refugees are often confronted with a range of protection risks, including: the threat of arrest and detention, *refoulement*,⁴ harassment, exploitation, discrimination, vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), HIV-AIDS, human smuggling and trafficking. They are often forced by poverty to live in overcrowded accommodation in risky areas where they face difficulties in accessing basic health, education and protection services. Additionally, refugees are often blocked from legitimate employment opportunities and access to financial capital. They frequently compete with the indigenous urban poor for limited livelihood possibilities. From the perspective of municipal and national host country authorities, incoming refugees and asylum seekers further stress already inadequate urban infrastructure and services.

Urban Displacement: A challenge and an opportunity

By virtue of its Statute (General Assembly resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950), the role of UNHCR is to provide international protection to refugees and to seek durable solutions to refugee problems. To date, a traditional image of UNHCR's support to refugees has been endless rows of tents. UNHCR's managerial role in these large camp settings has included the provision of security, shelter, food, basic healthcare, primary education and psycho-social support, among other areas.

However, refugees' increasing presence in urban areas signifies a seismic shift in the way UNHCR operates and it presents both challenges and opportunities. Protection in an urban context demands engagement and partnership with a wide range of actors including municipal authorities, specific service providers, police, civil society actors and line ministries, as well as more traditional interlocutors. UNHCR has always been cognizant of the importance of providing support for both refugees and the host community and that becomes even more pertinent when refugees are sharing space and services in such close proximity with the urban host community. Thus, capacity development and technical support for institutions that serve both refugees and the local urban poor becomes even more imperative.

This report assesses current implementation of the *UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas* ("The Urban Refugee Policy") and suggests recommendations for future policy and practice.

² Roger Zetter and George Deikun, "Meeting humanitarian challenges in urban areas Need complete cite.

³ UN Economic & Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects the 2011 Revision Highlights* (New York, 2012), p.3.

⁴ *Refoulement* is a technical term for the forced return of refugees to their country of origin.

II. The Policy

The Urban Refugee Policy was adopted in September 2009 in response to recognition that a growing number and proportion of the world's refugees are found in urban areas; the awareness on UNHCR's part that refugees should be able to exercise freedom of movement; and the negative consequences of long term encampment. UNHCR considered it essential to reconsider the organization's position on the issue of refugees in urban areas and to adopt a more constructive and proactive approach than had been the case in the past.

The Urban Refugee Policy is based on the principle that the rights of refugees and UNHCR's mandated responsibilities towards them are not affected by their location, the means whereby they arrived in an urban area, or their status or lack thereof in national legislation.⁵ The policy recognizes that its objectives can only be achieved through effective cooperation, especially with the governments and city authorities that host urban refugees.

Thus, the two overarching goals of the policy are to:

- 1 Ensure that **cities are recognized as legitimate places for refugees** to reside and exercise the rights to which they are entitled.
- 2 Maximize the **protection space available to urban refugees and the humanitarian organizations** that support them.⁶

Urban Refugee Policy Objectives

The Urban Refugee Policy identifies 12 key objectives that the policy intends to attain and outlines protection strategies that country operations will employ to achieve them. Below is a brief summary of each of the objectives.

- 1 **Providing reception facilities:** UNHCR will establish accessible reception arrangements with appropriate facilities, efficient appointment and referral systems and the provision of relevant information.
- 2 **Registration and data collection:** UNHCR will support the registration and collection of data on all urban refugees, not just those in capital cities, and will strive to disaggregate the data in accordance with Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) principles. Registration is primarily a state responsibility, but in many instances has been left to UNHCR.
- 3 **Ensuring that refugees are documented:** UNHCR will ensure that documents attesting to their identity and status are provided to refugees. This is primarily the responsibility of the state, but in situations in which the authorities are unable to do so, UNHCR will issue its own documents to refugees. This includes birth registration, marriage and death registration.
- 4 **Determining refugee status:** In situations in which states do not undertake Refugee Status Determination (RSD) because they have not signed the 1951 Convention or its 1967 Protocol, or where national asylum procedures are not fully functioning, UNHCR continues to determine refugee status in accordance with its mandate. In doing so, UNHCR will establish transparent and consistent RSD procedures.
- 5 **Reaching out to the community:** UNHCR will adopt a variety of different outreach methods to reach refugee communities including those individuals with specific protection concerns, such as women, girls and children.

⁵ UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas, Section III, Respecting Key Principles (SEP 2009).

⁶ UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas, para (23) (September 2009).

- ⑥ **Fostering constructive relations with urban refugees:** UNHCR will establish constructive dialogue and positive partnerships with refugees in urban areas, this includes application of AGDM principles, use of the Community Based Approach and multi-functional teams (MFT) composed of UNHCR staff with varied expertise, e.g., a Protection Officer, Health Officer and Education Officer.
- ⑦ **Maintaining security:** UNHCR will seek to avert security incidents at UNHCR premises by working with refugees and their community representatives in a spirit of understanding and cooperation. This will be complemented with appropriate security and contingency plans, effective training of guards and capacity development for police and/or other security services.
- ⑧ **Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance:** UNHCR will support the efforts of urban refugees to become self-reliant—to the extent possible in respect of national laws—and will engage and advocate with authorities and other partners to realize that.
- ⑨ **Ensuring access to healthcare, education and other services:** UNHCR will pursue a three-pronged strategy of: 1) advocating for refugees to have access to public services; 2) monitoring refugees' utilization of health, education and social welfare services, with particular attention to those who are most vulnerable and have specific needs; and 3) augmenting the capacity of existing public and private services.
- ⑩ **Meeting material needs:** When self-reliance is not a viable objective, UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, will seek to meet the needs of urban refugees by other means including collective accommodation, subsidized housing, food assistance, non-food items and cash transfers.
- ⑪ **Promoting durable solutions:** UNHCR will work for the early attainment of durable solutions for all refugees and will strive to ensure that all refugees within a given country and region shall enjoy similar standards of treatment and have equal access to durable solutions opportunities, including: voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement.
- ⑫ **Freedom of Movement:** UNHCR will strive to ensure that refugees who travel to urban areas are provided with adequate documents and will advocate with the authorities and security services to ensure that they are not penalized for travelling and that they are allowed to remain in an urban area for as long as necessary.

NINE KEY PRINCIPLES OF UNHCR'S WORK WITH URBAN REFUGEES

- ① **Refugee rights:** Advocate for recognition of refugee rights under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and other refugee instruments and international human rights law;
- ② **State responsibility:** Encourage states to exercise this responsibility;
- ③ **Partnerships:** Collaborate with municipal authorities and mayors as well as national authorities, the police, judiciary, private sector, NGOs, legal networks and other civil society actors to realize protection;
- ④ **Needs assessment:** Ensure that refugees in urban areas are fully incorporated into country operations' comprehensive needs assessments;
- ⑤ **Age, gender and diversity:** Map and respond to the specific situations of groups, such as women, children, older persons, unaccompanied and separated minors, as well as ethnic minorities and be cognizant of special challenges that different groups may face in urban settings;
- ⑥ **Equity:** Ensure that refugees living in an urban area and those in other parts of the country are treated in a consistent manner and incorporate specific strategies tailored to the circumstances, vulnerabilities and needs of groups, families and individuals;
- ⑦ **Community orientation:** Pursue a community-based orientation and strive to mobilize and capacitate the refugee population to be engaged in their own protection and solutions;
- ⑧ **Interaction with refugees:** Establish mechanisms to reach out to urban refugees in their communities;
- ⑨ **Self-reliance:** Uphold the social and economic standing of refugees, particularly by means of education, vocational training, livelihoods promotion and self-reliance initiatives.

III. Methods: Measuring Implementation of the Policy

In 2012 UNHCR established an Urban Refugee Steering Group, which commissioned this study in order to assess the extent to which *The Urban Refugee Policy* has been implemented over the past three years. This study focused on a sample of 24 countries that have urban refugee populations of more than 5,000 persons or only have urban populations and no camps.⁷ The sample includes representation from all regions and the following countries. Table 1 indicates the ten most urbanized among the sample countries.⁸

Africa	Cameroon, Central African Republic Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia
Americas	Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico
Asia	India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Thailand
Europe	Macedonia, Ukraine, Turkey
MENA	Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen

This study is based on an extensive survey completed by a team of staff in each office during June and July 2012. The survey questions address a broad area of topics including health, protection, education, livelihoods and office administration. The survey itself was structured around the twelve objectives outlined in *The Urban Refugee Policy* and used multiple choice questions for which respondents could select all that apply as well as yes/no questions. Thus, many of the response percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could select all applicable answers and because they have been rounded off. Write-in questions asked respondents to provide specific information on “challenges” and “what works well” for each of the 12 objectives. The study also included a desk review of program data from Focus, UNHCR’s results based management software, drew on UNHCR country profiles and incorporated external economic and population data.

Notably, all 24 country operations responded fully to the survey and provided thoughtful and detailed answers to the write-in questions. The high quality of the survey responses is an important indication of UNHCR staff commitment to working effectively with urban refugees. At the same time, the inherent biases of staff self-reporting on their work should be kept in mind.

⁷ UNHCR 2011 Global Statistics (2011)

⁸ The data are estimates of urban refugees and asylum seekers for the sample countries. These data have been drawn from 2012 UNHCR country operations profiles and UNHCR Global FOCUS Excom 2012

Table 1: Ten most urbanized of the sample countries

Countries	% of the Country's Population Urbanized	Total Population of Country	Estimated number of urban refugees & asylum seekers
Lebanon	87%	4,259,400	10,726
Jordan	79%	6,330,200	455,984
Mexico	78%	114,793,300	1,567
Malaysia	73%	28,859,200	92,854
Iran	71%	74,798,600	854,715
Turkey	70%	73,639,600	22,000
Ecuador	68%	14,666,100	61,000
Costa Rica	65%	4,726,600	20,057
South Africa	62%	50,460,000	277,267
Macedonia	59%	2,063,900	2,673

IV. Implementation of the policy: Where we are now?

General Engagement with government authorities on urban refugees

On the basis of compliance with the 12 protection objectives, the survey responses indicate that UNHCR offices are implementing the policy at the rate of approximately 85%. Judging from the length of the answers in the survey responses, it is clear that the 24 offices have given substantial thought to how to identifying the main challenges to implementation and strategizing how to overcome these hurdles. The survey responses and related correspondence also indicated that the implementation of the policy is widely embraced as a corporate priority for UNHCR.

Two-thirds of UNHCR offices surveyed (16) report that they have shared *The Urban Refugee Policy* with the host government and one-third (8) have not. Almost all UNHCR offices (23) report that they encourage host governments to play a primary role and provide capacity building and/or technical assistance to support government their responsibilities in that regard. The majority of offices report that they have developed working relationships related to urban refugees with national host governments as well as with municipal authorities, police, judiciary, private sector, legal networks and other civil society institutions.

The following is an analysis of the implementation of the policy on an objective by objective basis. It includes a description of the challenges and ongoing good practices specific to each objective. Detailed survey findings on compliance, including country-specific information, and graphs are also provided under each objective.

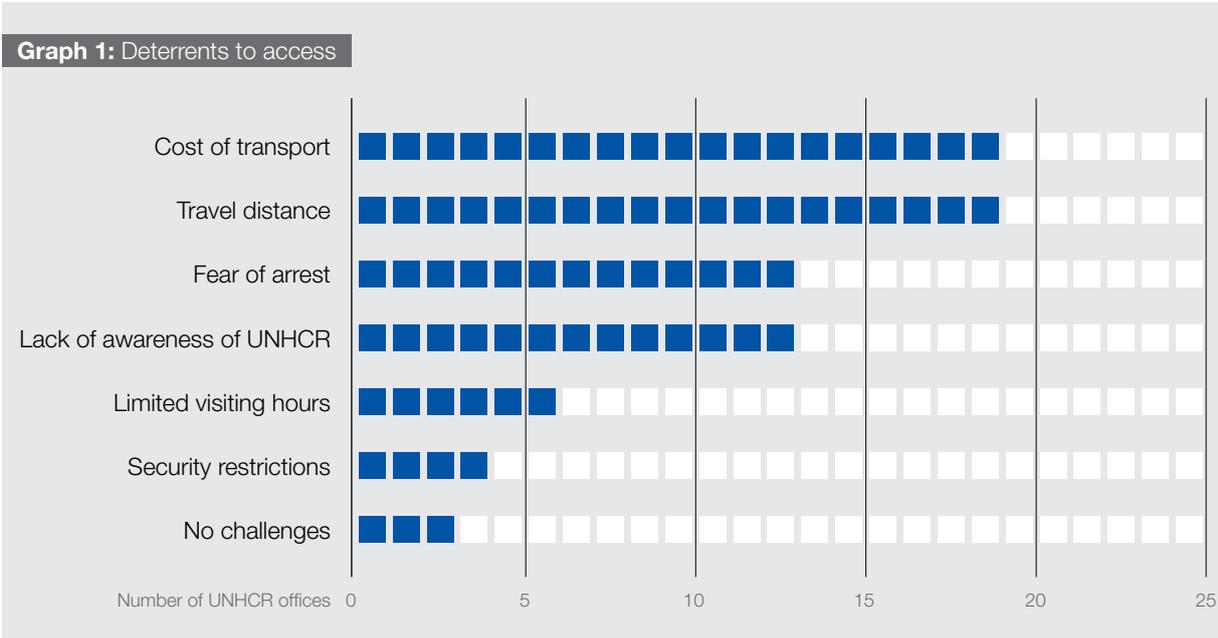
Documentation and Status Determination

Objective 1: Providing Reception Facilities

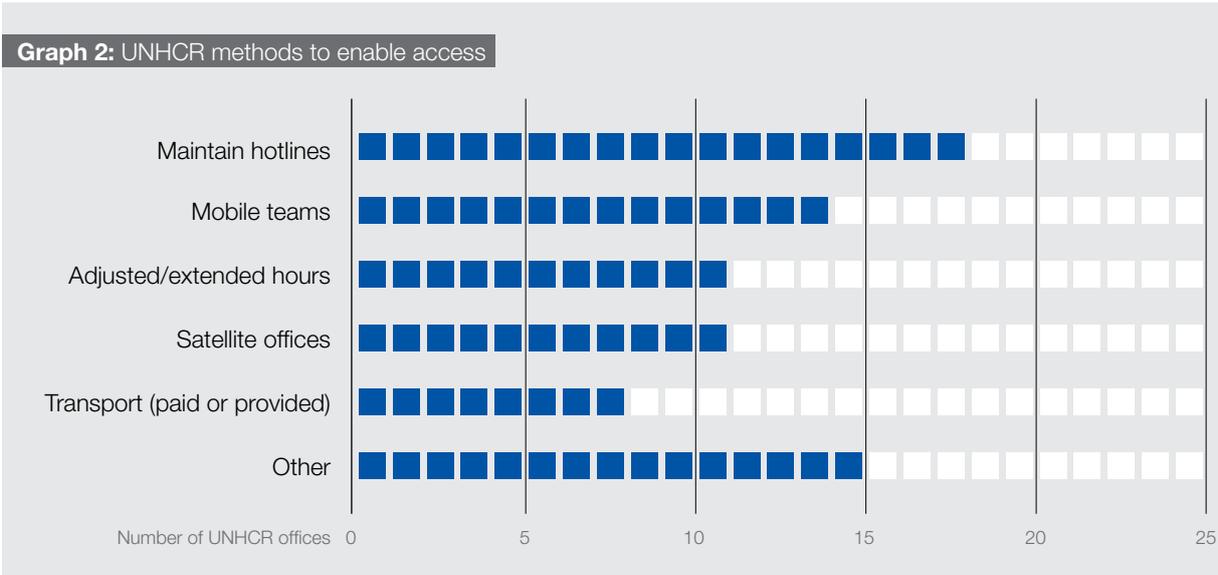
UNHCR operations report that they are largely implementing the policy in terms of providing reception facilities for urban refugees and asylum seekers despite challenges.

UNHCR offices are creative in using technology to reach out to the refugee community and in optimizing the limited reception spaces they have available. Most have fairly effective systems in place for appointments and referrals. A lack of appropriately skilled and sensitized staff in receiving refugees remains a concern for many offices. Respondents note that for refugees, the overriding challenges in accessing UNHCR are the travel distance and related time and costs of transport to the office.

Access to UNHCR: Deterrents & enabling efforts



In order to improve access to UNHCR, three-quarters of the offices (18) report that they maintain telephone information hotlines, more than half (14) use mobile teams and just less than half (11) adjust or extend visiting hours and/or maintain satellite offices in areas where refugees and asylum seekers live and/or work. Additionally, several offices report using email or bulk SMS messaging to facilitate contact with urban asylum seekers and refugees. The offices in Turkey and Ukraine ensure communication through a network of implementing partners (IPs). The office in Sudan keeps a window open for emergency inquiries at any time beyond the appointed counseling hours. Operations in Indonesia, Jordan, Cameroon and Kenya have staff posted in different locations to facilitate reception where refugees live.



Reception facilities

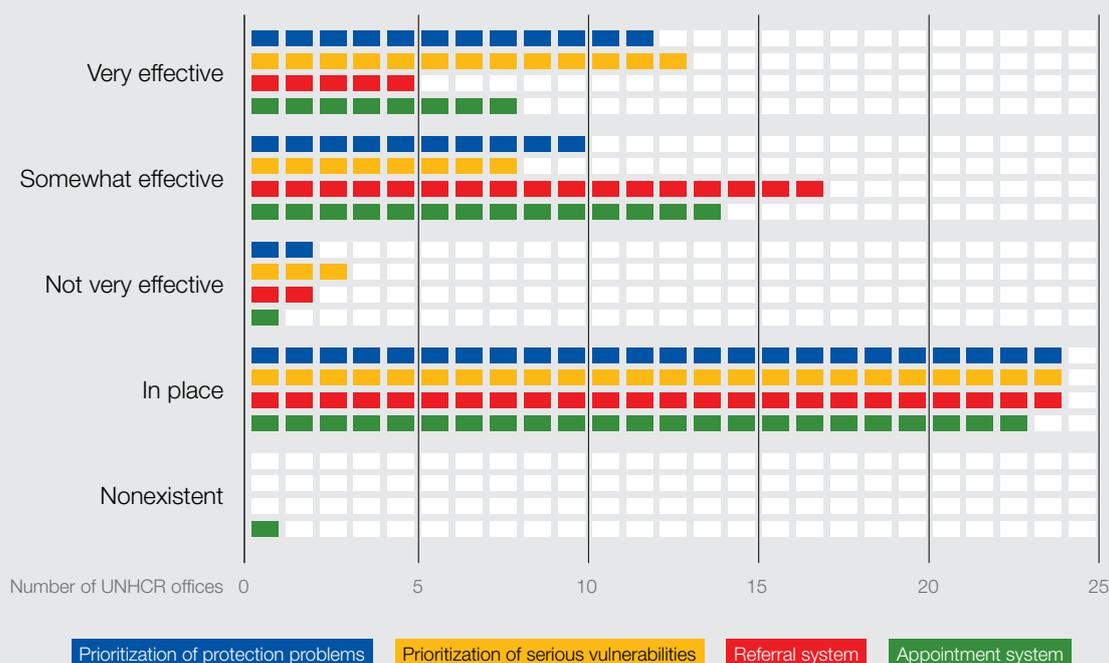
In terms of reception facilities themselves, all offices note that their waiting areas provide bathrooms and adequate shade or heat and more than three quarters of offices (20) note that they provide adequate waiting areas. Many offices provide special facilities for refugees and asylum seekers with specific needs: space for pregnant and lactating mothers (5), over half provide child friendly spaces (13), and one third provide facilities for persons with disabilities (8). Ecuador and Malaysia have a TV in the waiting area and Kenya has a cantina that provides snacks and drinks.

All respondents note that their offices provide information leaflets on the rights and responsibilities of refugees and asylum seekers and UNHCR's services, role and ethics.

Additionally, over three quarters of offices report that they use posters (19) and two thirds use a telephone information hotline (16) and some offices use videos in the reception area(7). Two-thirds of offices (15) note additional ways that they provide information, including focus group meetings, individual and group counseling, interviews and via the internet. More than half of offices (14) note that more than 80% of refugees and asylum seekers have access to information in their mother tongue.

Managing appointments, prioritization and referrals

Graph 3: UNHCR Offices Prioritisation, referrals & appointment systems



Essentially all the UNHCR offices have systems in place to manage appointments, referrals and prioritization, although they vary somewhat in effectiveness. Over one quarter of offices (7) report that the average length of time a refugee or asylum seeker waits for his/her first appointment is 1-3 weeks and a quarter of offices (6) report that it takes 4-8 weeks. Half of the offices (12) report that staff have as many as 50 appointments a day and five offices report that they see over 200 refugees a day. All UNHCR offices except one receive refugees and asylum seekers without appointments (walk-ins)—usually these are emergency cases with special needs such as, urgent medical problems, arrest or detention, or unaccompanied children.

Reception Challenges

Inadequate space is a major challenge for nearly half of the offices (11). UNHCR offices in Indonesia and Jordan report that persons of concern frequently spill into public space due to insufficient reception space. Additionally, offices note other difficulties with office space, including insufficient privacy and confidentiality, lack of windows, lack of appropriate areas for children and lack of easy access to bathrooms for persons with disabilities.

Similarly, lack of appropriate staff is a constraint for nearly half of the offices (11). They particularly note the need for trained guards with language skills and interpreters for the many language groups who approach the office.

Limited capacity among civil society organizations to provide accurate information on the right to asylum and registration at border points and among communities is a challenge in Ecuador, Kenya and Mexico, Malaysia, and Sudan.

RECEPTION: WHAT WORKS WELL?

Optimal use of reception space and a systematic approach to identification, prioritization, appointments and referral helps to facilitate effective reception.

- **Costa Rica:** Reception staff has been trained on key refugee protection concerns and identify walk-ins who have urgent problems.
- **India:** Reception staff identifies unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) at first approach for an immediate Best Interests Assessment (BIA) procedure and referral to Community Services and IPs for follow up action.
- **Indonesia:** Staff identifies and completes registration for vulnerable people at the first appointment.
- **Ecuador:** An interagency referral system with IPs and some public offices enables immediate referral for every case.
- **Iran:** A phone-in system operates 7 hours a day, five days a week and offers a 24-hour emergency hotline.
- **Cameroon and South Africa:** Designating different days of the week for different nationalities speeds up the process.
- **Uganda:** Daily information sessions allow refugees an opportunity to ask questions.
- **Syria:** Key reception staff and guards are trained to identify persons with special needs and refer them to the team leader to assess vulnerability and fast track those in need of immediate assistance.
- **Yemen:** Reception staff screen refugees and asylum seekers to identify vulnerable persons such as victims of SGBV, in order to prioritize processing of their case and to refer them to IP.

Objective 2: Registration and data collection

When it comes to registering refugees, the main challenges for refugees are the same as those detailed under providing reception facilities – the time and cost in traveling to the registration sites and fear of detention while traveling. Likewise, UNHCR is again challenged by limited office space and staff, especially interpreters, along with the limitations of government registration data. The survey has shown that the integrity of the government’s data is crucial since they are involved in refugee registration in the majority of the countries (14). Half of the UNHCR operations deemed the governments’ registration processes to not be as effective as they could be. UNHCR offices report that using mobile teams to register refugees in their own neighborhoods and community centers, along with other locations such as schools, clinics and detention centers, works well, although it is resource intensive.

Who registers urban refugees?

UNHCR only	Lebanon, Cameroon, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Syria, Thailand
UNHCR & IP	India
UNHCR, IP & Government	Costa Rica, Macedonia, Mexico, Turkey, Ukrain
UNHCR & Government	CAR, Ethiopia, Iran, Kenya, Turkey, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia
Government only	Ecuador, South Africa
Other	Sudan (no registration in Khartoum)

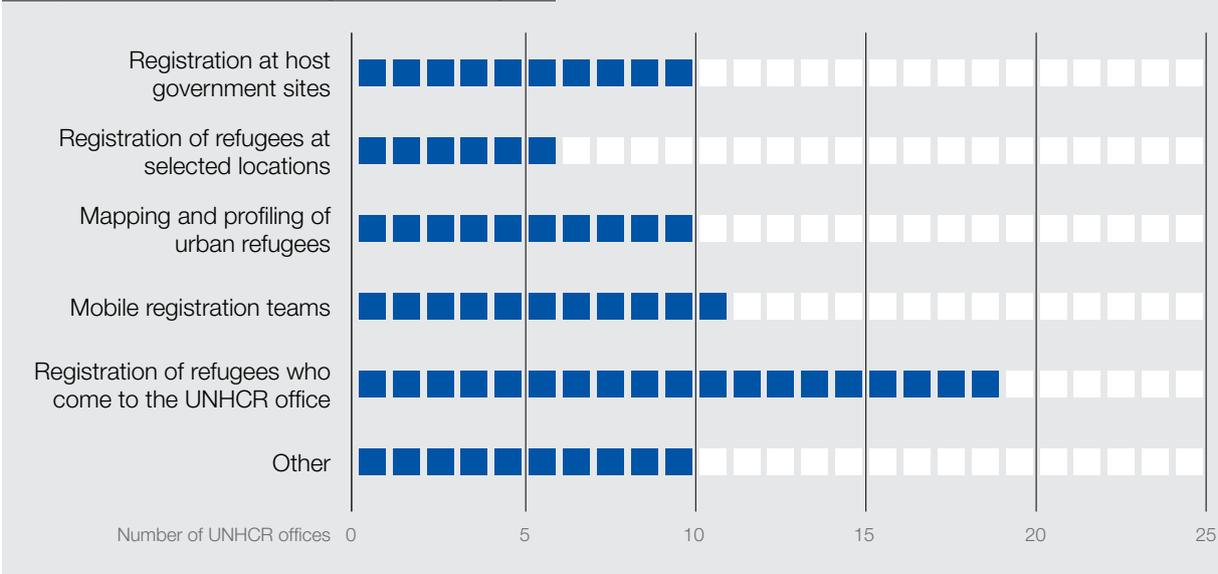
Perceptions on the effectiveness of government registration

Effectiveness of government registration is qualified. In the 14 countries in which the government does register urban refugees, a quarter of the UNHCR offices (6) find that government registration is not very effective, and five offices find it is somewhat effective. Only two offices find the government registration to be very effective.

Approaches and methods to register urban refugees

More than three-quarters of the UNHCR offices (19) register refugees who come to the office and almost half of the offices note that they use mobile registration teams, while 41% of the offices use mapping and profiling of urban refugees and registration at selected locations. Almost half of the offices note that registration takes place at government sites. Several offices note that they also register refugees at emergency transit sites, in detention, in hospitals and exceptionally at home.

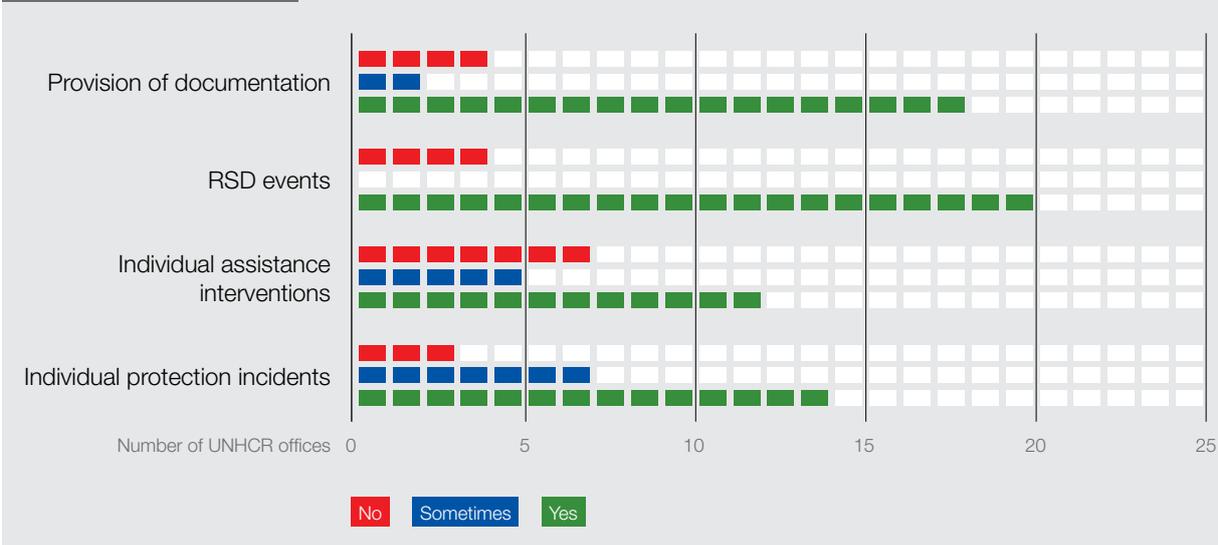
Graph 4: Methods used to register urban refugees



Using proGres for urban refugees?

UNHCR has developed a database called, “proGres” and uses it as a case management tool to enable staff to record and track individual protection incidents, RSD events, provision of documents and individual assistance interventions.

Graph 5: Use of proGres



As noted in Graph 6, over 80 per cent of the offices (20) report that they use proGres to record RSD events and three-quarters of the offices (18) record the provision of documents through proGres. Over half of the offices (14) use proGres to record individual protection incidents and half (12) use it to record individual assistance interventions.

Several offices note that ProGres or other online databases have been effective tools to support registration and data management.

- **South Africa:** proGres prevents fraud as caseworkers can verify case details without having to retrieve physical files and it also generate statistics on assisted cases.
- **Lebanon and Syria:** use a Registration and Assistance Information System (RAIS) that is more adaptable than proGres and enables IPs to record their interventions independently of proGres.

Registration Challenges

The number of asylum seekers approaching UNHCR offices far exceeds the capacity of offices to register them. In Malaysia, where the government is not involved in registration, UNHCR staff faces a capacity limit on how many individuals can be registered in one year and the UNHCR office there now faces a backlog of an estimated 30,000–50,000 individuals awaiting registration. Likewise in Indonesia, the number of asylum seekers approaching UNHCR goes well beyond the office’s registration capacity.

Nine of the countries included in this study were among the top ten countries globally in terms of number of new asylum claims lodged in 2011. Turkey received the most claims (16,000) followed by Malaysia (15,700 claims) Yemen (5,400 claims) Egypt (5,200 claims) and Jordan (4,600 claims).

From “A Year of Crises: UNHCR Global Trends 2011” (www.unhcr.org)

The increasing volume of asylum seekers and refugees in these urban areas is stressing the capacity of UNHCR offices. Nine of the countries in this study were among the top ten countries globally in terms of number of new asylum claims lodged in 2011.⁹ Table 2 below highlights the top ten countries among the sample in terms of number of registered refugees and the number of registered asylum seekers as of 2011.

Integrity of registration data is the biggest challenge for most offices. Inconsistency between UNHCR and government databases is a problem in many offices. The following are criticisms of host country data management systems expressed in the survey responses:

- Statistics are not processed in time and the data shared often contains inconsistencies and basic gender, age or nationality breakdowns are not reliable.
- The government registration process is too succinct and superficial and the Refugee Directorate does not enter special needs, family links or updated contact information.
- The government doesn’t adequately capture individuals’ specific needs. Also lack of Internet at the government registration centres and the absence of a data sharing agreement negatively affect communication.

⁹ UNHCR Global Trends 2011 (www.unhcr.org).

- Lack of a unified data management system impedes registration.
- UNHCR has limited access to the government database and the government has limited resources to update the database.
- The government is responsible for registration, but does not recognize most of the registration carried out by UNHCR and does not share registration information with UNHCR.

Table 2: The Sample countries with the largest populations of registered asylum seekers and refugees

Countries	Number of Registered Asylum Seekers
South Africa	219,368
Kenya	35,271
Uganda	23,453
Ecuador	21,558
Egypt	18,938
Thailand	13,357
Turkey	10,964
Malaysia	10,937
Sudan	6,912
Yemen	5,878

Countries	Number of Registered Refugees
Iran	886,468
Syrian Arab Republic	755,445
Kenya	566,487
Jordan	451,009
Ethiopia	288,844
Yemen	214,740
India	185,118
Uganda	139,448
Sudan	139,415
Ecuador	123,436

*Includes Sri Lankan and Tibetan refugees supported directly by the Government of India.

REGISTRATION: WHAT WORKS WELL?

A well-structured process, including the systematic use of mobile teams, careful scheduling and prioritization facilitates UNHCR registration for urban refugees.

- **India:** Schedules registration according to country of origin, and analyzes arrival trends on a weekly basis to enable adjustments.
- **Indonesia:** Uses a mobile registration team and new out-posted locations.
- **Kenya:** Registers all asylum seekers and prima facie cases on the same day they approach UNHCR and provides them with an appointment date to collect a Mandate Refugee Certificate.

Biometrics has worked well in Egypt, Ethiopia, Macedonia and Malaysia.

Accelerated registration with basic bio-data has been effective in Jordan and Thailand.

Cooperation with the government works well in Turkey, Uganda, and Yemen.

Implementing partnerships have worked well in several countries including Mexico where an IP has improved routines for registration and established an online database and the Ukraine where IPs complete registration forms and upload registration data to proGres at the UNHCR office.

Objective 3: Ensuring that refugees are documented

Documentation -- proof of identity and status -- is an essential prerequisite that enables refugees to realize the rights that they have in the host country including accessing services and obtaining additional civil documentation as well as travel permits or school certificates. Refugees and asylum seekers prefer government issued documents because they are more widely recognized by police, schools, landlords, employers, registry offices and service providers. However, not all governments issue status documents. Also, governments may not provide status documents on an individual basis; they may issue a document for a family instead. Government issued documents can be costly and difficult to obtain. Inconsistencies in issuance processes, renewal lengths and eligibility criteria for documentation are amongst the many complications in obtaining basic identity documents as well as with marriage, birth and death certificates.

Who provides documentation to urban refugees?

Government provides documentation	CAR, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Iran, Macedonia, South Africa, Zambia, Mexico, Uganda
UNHCR provides documentation	Lebanon, Cameroon, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Thailand, Syria, Malaysia, India
UNHCR & government provide documentation	Ethiopia, Kenya, Turkey, Ukraine, Yemen
Other	Sudan

Easily recognized, government issued I.D.s and permits are ideal. Yet, in 38% of the offices surveyed (9), UNHCR is the primary provider of documentation and in about half of those countries, UNHCR documents are generally recognized by the authorities. However, there are some problems with UNHCR documents in the following countries.

- **India:** The government does not formally recognize UNHCR documents, but authorities do respect them. Further, based on a recent Government decision, all refugees registered with UNHCR can apply for long term visas and work permits, though modalities for the issuance of these permits is being worked out.
- **Thailand:** Authorities do not recognize UNHCR documentation.
- **Malaysia:** UNHCR documentation has only limited recognition.
- **Lebanon:** UNHCR issued documents do not provide protection, but government issued residence permits, which are more widely recognized do, yet they are costly and are based on shifting criteria.

Are UNHCR documents valid for school enrolment?

In a quarter of offices (6), UNHCR issued documents are accepted for school enrolment in all areas of the country, although in one country they are only accepted in the capital and in 13% of countries (3), UNHCR documents are not accepted for school enrolment at all. In India, UNHCR documents are accepted in Delhi and other parts of the country, but not in a systematic manner. Sometimes, an implementing partner staff member in Delhi has to intercede on behalf of the refugee student. In Indonesia, UNHCR documents may be accepted after clarification of the issue with concerned school authorities. In Syria, UNHCR documentation did not allow children to register for school; they had to also provide a copy of their passport, proof of residency in Syria, evidence of their civil status and previous school records. In the Ukraine, UNHCR documents are accepted if a social worker accompanies the individual to explain. In Lebanon, non-Syrians can enroll in schools based on UNHCR documents, but Syrians can enroll without UNHCR documents.

Who receives documentation?

In 38% of UNHCR offices (9), documents are provided to each person individually, including each child. In Egypt and India, only children over 12 receive documents and in the Ukraine and Zambia, only children over 16 receive documents. In two countries only the head of the household receives documentation and in eight countries adults receive documentation, but children do not.

Nature of status documents

In three-quarters of UNHCR offices (18), countries present status documents in the official national language/s. A quarter of countries (6) present status documentation in the official language/s and English. No countries provide documentation in refugees' mother tongue if it is different from the local official language or English. In one-third of the countries (8), personal status documents list the rights to which the holder is entitled, but in the other two-thirds of countries (16), these documents do not provide any information about refugees' rights.

In less than half the countries (11) status documents are valid for one to two years and in seven countries they are valid for less than a year. By contrast, in 17% of countries (4) they are valid for two to five years and in two countries they are valid for more than five years.

Can refugees obtain personal documents from UNHCR or the government?

All respondents report that refugees can obtain death certificates from UNHCR or the government. Most offices, 88% (21) report that refugees can obtain marriage certificates, two-thirds of offices (18) report that refugees can obtain proof of any qualifications that they obtain, and over half (15) report that refugees can obtain travel documents.

Birth registration for urban refugees

All operations report working to ensure that all urban refugee children are registered and receive birth certificates. Over half of the operations report that over 80% of children born to urban refugees are registered and receive birth certificates. Among other activities, over three-quarters of offices (19) report working to raise awareness amongst refugee populations on the importance of birth registration and birth certificates; two thirds of offices (16) report advocating with the host government; 38% of offices (16) report advocating with municipal registry authorities and one-third of offices (8) report advocating with health clinics and hospitals. Three offices support technical assistance for registration such as an SMS system.

Successful advocacy for refugee birth registration

- **Cameroon:** Medical clinics fill in the birth declarations and bring them to the municipal authorities.
- **Uganda:** Authorities waive birth certificate fees for refugees.
- **Malaysia:** Birth certificates are provided to all refugees and asylum seekers who are born in hospitals or clinics.

Birth registration is an issue for urban refugees in some countries due to logistics, and/or administrative barriers related to other documents and/or refugees' lack of awareness about the importance of birth certificates.

- **Jordan:** Children born to parents without a marriage certificates cannot receive a birth certificate.
- **CAR:** Challenges include administrative and transport costs and refugees' lack of awareness of the importance of birth registration.
- **Iran:** The government prohibits UNHCR from being involved in documentation and it is difficult to estimate the rate of registration for refugee births.
- **Uganda:** Refugees lack of awareness or motivation to apply for birth certificates.

Challenges related to documentation for urban refugees

In countries where the government is the primary provider of documents, access and administrative inconsistencies are the significant challenges to being able to obtain the documents. When refugees need to travel within the urban area to obtain or renew documentation, they face protection risks such as detention. In Ukraine, domestic legislation is under reform and refugees do not receive residence registration and thus cannot access the full range of social and economic rights. In Iran, domestic law is restrictive on refugees and the government expressly prohibits UNHCR from issuing any documents or engaging in the documentation process. In South Africa, complex regulations and long waits result in refugees not applying for identity documents.

Renewal of documents: In Egypt, Cameroon and Kenya, it is challenging to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers renew their cards in a timely way.

The time and cost required for refugees to obtain status documents (refugee mandate certificates)

Recent research quantifying the time and cost for refugees in Nairobi to obtain refugee mandate certificates found that on average it takes 7.5 visits to UNHCR over the course of 13 months to obtain one new mandate certificate. At an average of 2.3 mandate certificates per household it takes a typical household 16.8 visits to obtain all of its certificates and 33.2 adult days are spent on these visits.

"The cost of living: an analysis of the time and money spent by refugees accessing services in Nairobi" by Martin Anderson (New Issues in Refugee Research, Research Paper No. 230 UNHCR, January 2012.

Many UNHCR offices report that refugees must pay fees for documents. In Ethiopia, refugees must pay fees applied to foreigners to receive marriage and birth certificates. In Jordan and Lebanon, refugees must pay high fees to obtain residence permits, which means that most do not secure them, and are thus residing illegally, making it difficult to obtain other documents. In CAR and Lebanon, there are high fees for marriage and death certificates.

In several countries where UNHCR is the primary provider of documentation, the host government does not issue status documentation, which leads to difficulties in obtaining other documentation. This is the case in Indonesia, Sudan, India, and Malaysia. In Malaysia, asylum seekers and refugees are not able to access any form of government documentation and most are deemed to be in the country illegally, which leads to security problems for them, including arrest and detention, and also prevents individuals from accessing services. In Lebanon, India and Egypt, UNHCR documentation is not always respected by authorities and does not, in and of itself provide protection, especially beyond the urban areas.

WHAT WORKS WELL RELATED TO DOCUMENTATION FOR URBAN REFUGEES?

Government actors willing to provide documentation

- **CAR:** National Commission issues refugee ID cards, travel permits and substitute birth certificates; refugees also have access to civil status documentation.
- **Kenya:** The government is adopting a policy of issuing documentation to children under 18 years of age.
- **Mexico:** Refugee legislation includes permanent legal residency, which enables eligibility for legal work.
- **Turkey:** Authorities provide documentation allowing access to services.

Engagement with the government is key to improving documentation and UNHCR advocacy led to following results

- **Costa Rica:** removal of the word “refugee” from ID cards to avoid discrimination; exoneration of refugees from the social security system, and adoption of ID cards valid for 2 years instead of one.
- **India:** Issuance of long stay visas for all the eligible refugees registered with UNHCR.
- **Ethiopia:** Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with the government on the issuance of documents.
- **Iran:** Information sharing related to the issuance of documents.

Support, including funds, technical support and training, to build or expand government capacity to issue documentation has been effective in **Ecuador** (especially decentralized offices in border areas), **South Africa** and **Jordan**.

Objective 4: Determining refugee status

This study found that in half the countries surveyed, Refugee Status Determination (RSD) took more than six months to be completed. The importance of RSD and who conducts it (the government or UNHCR) for a given country and the government's capacity is a critical variable. The survey confirmed a need to strengthen the legal and technical systems of governments who are performing RSD. When UNHCR performs RSD, the principal challenges are again related to sufficient staffing and office space to handle the volume of persons of concern approaching the office.

Who undertakes RSD?

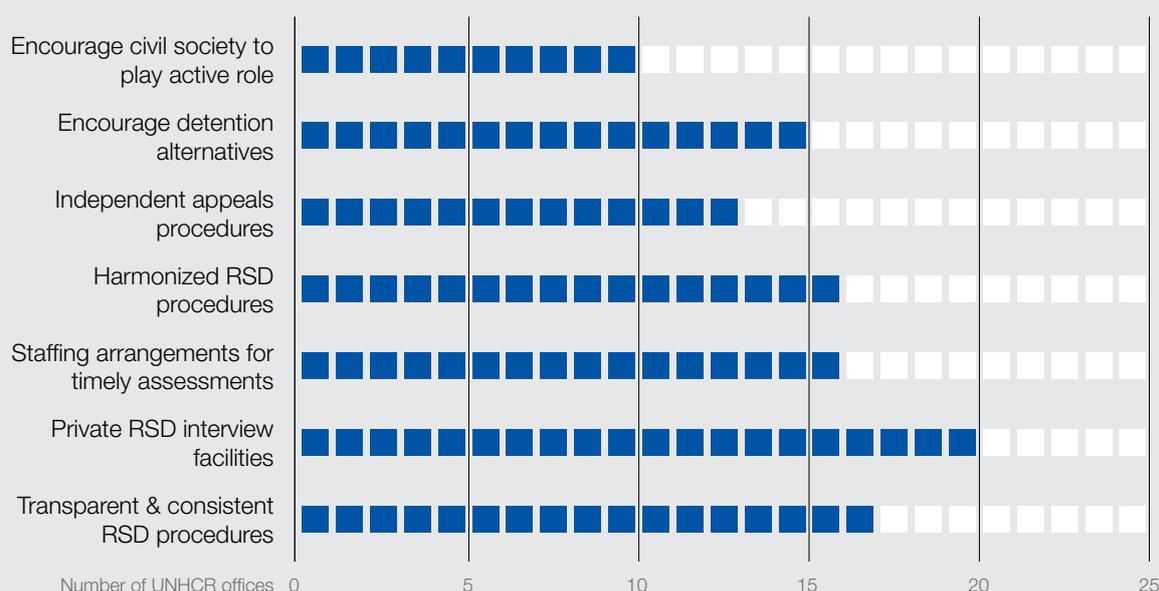


How long does the RSD process take for urban refugees?

In half the countries (12) it takes more than six months and in a quarter of the countries (6) it takes 2-6 months. In 13% of countries (3), it takes less than 1 week.

What do UNHCR offices do to facilitate RSD for urban asylum seekers?

Graph 6: What UNHCR offices do to facilitate Refugee Status Determination (RSD)



UNHCR offices also support government authorities to strengthen their own refugee bureaux and/or to develop their technical capacity around RSD. UNHCR in CAR has provided training to the members of the government eligibility commission and the government has adopted SOPs on registration, processing asylum requests and data management. UNHCR Indonesia encourages local NGOs, legal networks and human rights actors to promote Indonesia's ratification of the refugee instruments. In Macedonia, the office provides legal advice and written submissions to the authorities. In Sudan, UNHCR advocates for establishment of RSD in Khartoum. In Uganda, the government conducts RSD and UNHCR provides support.

Challenges related to RSD for urban refugees

Several countries have RSD processes that UNHCR can help develop. There is a need to strengthen the legal and technical capacity of the RSD system to ensure legal and technical decisions rather than political ones. In Ethiopia UNHCR often takes the lead in preparing meetings and producing interviews to augment government capacity. Training and capacity building has been cited as a potentially productive intervention for refugee offices in Mexico, Ukraine, Turkey and Zambia. These offices need help with the skills and resources required to ensure due process and overcome staff turnover issues.

Some government processes impede RSD

In Ecuador, the new Refugee Decree sets a 15-day period to request asylum and limits the period for appeals, which results in greater difficulty for refugees to access the procedure. Authorities in Iran have not shared information on their RSD system.

The Government of Sudan halted registration of refugees in Khartoum in 2010 and the absence of an agreement on the RSD process since 2007 has resulted in the interruption of RSD. In CAR, authorities have not processed an asylum request for three years.

Where UNHCR performs RSD, backlog and inadequate staffing are the main challenges.

The UNHCR offices in these 24 countries are facing rapidly growing populations of refugees and asylum seekers that stretch the capacity of offices and staff. The large number of different

RSD PRACTICES THAT WORK WELL FOR URBAN REFUGEES

Development of domestic legal frameworks:

- **CAR:** National refugee law adopted in 2007 encompasses the 1951 convention and 1969 OAU Convention.
- **Costa Rica:** New Migration Law created a RSD system, including a Tribunal as the second instance body for appeals.
- **Mexico:** New legislation provides for a resolution within 45 working days and relatively quick procedures.

Support for Government RSD efforts:

- **Turkey:** Capacity building for RSD officials.
- **Ukraine:** UNHCR shadows interviews and provides extensive comments on RSD assessments.
- **Uganda:** Training for the Refugee Commission has resulted in efficient and professional approach.

In countries where UNHCR conducts RSD, a structured and organized approach to staffing has been a key to effectiveness and efficiency. Some approaches that have worked include:

- **Lebanon:** Caseworkers specialized in specific countries of origin, a rotation system to prevent fatigue, RSD assessment forms for typical profiles; monitoring of processing targets and an exclusion focal point.
- **Egypt:** Extensive and efficient COI research, a fast track for vulnerable cases and accelerated procedures with simplified procedures for people from Darfur
- **India:** Procedures tailored for specific populations and a separate appeals unit.
- **Indonesia:** An expanded RSD capacity in 6 new locations outside Jakarta.
- **Jordan:** All applicants receive an appointment for receipt of results at their first interview and at that appointment an RSD team member explains results, and counsels applicants on the appeals process when applicable.
- **Kenya:** Regular UNHCR contact with IPs, human rights organizations and diplomatic missions facilitates information exchange and identification of cases requiring urgent follow-up.
- **Malaysia:** Division of the RSD unit into smaller teams that focus on particular groups of refugees, share COI and review individual cases.

languages and the scarcity of reliable interpreters also slow the process, in part because it is difficult to find appropriate interpreters without vested interests in refugee communities. UNHCR offices struggling with backlogs include the following:

- **Lebanon, India, Malaysia and Indonesia:** report difficulty with delays and a backlog of RSD cases.
- **Egypt:** Insufficient staffing and a high turnover rate make it difficult to process RSD for the Sudanese asylum seekers.
- **Jordan:** The RSD and exclusion units have difficulty retaining staff due to “RSD fatigue”, which makes it difficult for the office to clear the exclusion backlog.
- **Kenya:** The RSD unit has difficulty providing first instance and appeal decisions in a timely fashion (the waiting time for first instance decisions is 14 months).
- **Syria:** Applications to reopen appeals have increased exponentially as violence has escalated.
- **Turkey:** An increase in new arrivals since 2010 (Iranians, Iraqis and Somalis) plus the recent influx of Syrians has resulted in long wait periods (15 months until first RSD appointment).
- **Cameroon:** A high number of asylum applications without relevant claims, fraud and frequent no-shows at interview appointments create delays and disturb meaningful scheduling.
- **Cameroon, India, Thailand and South Africa:** Inadequate Country of Origin Information (COI) slows the RSD process.

The pilot practice of writing reasoned notification letters specifying reasons for rejection has also absorbed staff time and slowed RSD in a few countries. The office in Thailand notes that while this is a good practice for transparency, it is time consuming in part because staff encounters difficulties in drafting reasons especially when determination is based on internal policy papers, confidential COI or contradictions found among the accounts of family members.

Table 3 presents an overview of the sample countries organized by region and indicates, not surprisingly that countries that are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol are more likely to have progressive domestic legislation pertaining to refugees and to register refugees, undertake RSD and provide documentation for urban refugees.

- In Africa, most countries are signatories to the 1951 Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention, although Ethiopia, Sudan and Zambia have reservations. Many of these countries have domestic legislation and governments play a role in registration, RSD, and documentation, although as survey respondents note, there are problems in terms of government capacity and the quality of procedures.
- In Latin America and Europe, countries included in the survey are signatories to the convention, although Mexico and Turkey maintain reservations. The Latin American countries have quite strong domestic legislation pertaining to refugees, although in Ecuador the government practice has recently become more restrictive. In Turkey, Ukraine and Macedonia, UNHCR is working with governments to strengthen domestic legislation.
- Among the Asian and MENA countries, only Yemen, Iran and Egypt are signatories, although Egypt maintains reservations. In these regions, domestic legislation is not well developed or is quite restrictive. These governments do not play a constructive role in registration, RSD and documentation, with the exception of Iran, which does play an active role, but with only very limited coordination with UNHCR.

The existence and quality of domestic legislation that enables refugees to regularize their status and obtain documentation underpins their ability to establish and sustain a livelihood, access services, and move freely, as discussed in the subsequent sections of this report.

Table 3: Overview of convention status, status of domestic legislation, government engagement in registration and documentation. Countries grouped by regions.

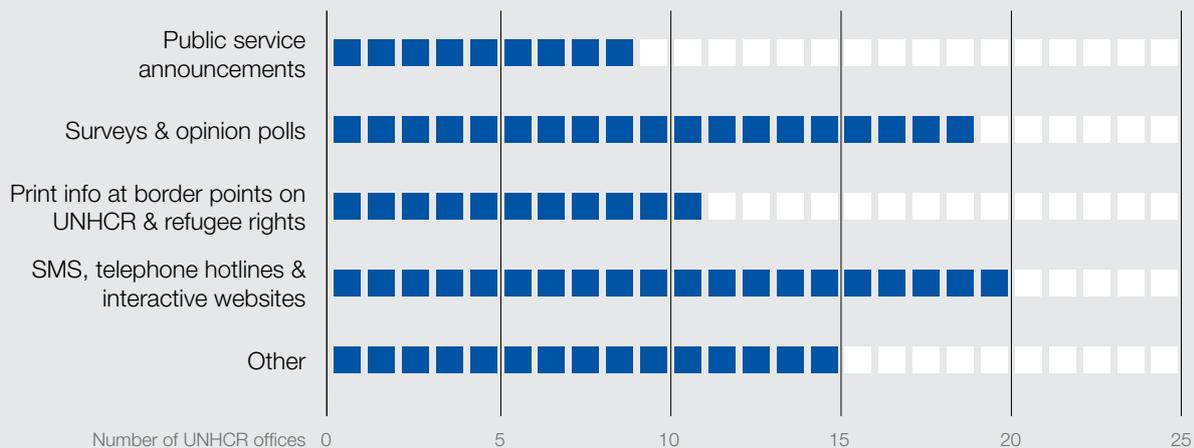
Country	Convention Signatory?	Status of national refugee specific legislation	Who Registers Refugees?	Who undertakes RSD?	Gov. provides documentation?
South Africa	Y	New & restrictive	Government	Government	Y
CAR	Y	Ok	Gov. & UNHCR	Government	Y
Uganda	Y	Yes	Gov. & UNHCR	Government	Y
Zambia	Reservations	yes, unsatisfactory	Gov. & UNHCR	Government	Y
Cameroon	Y	Legislation 2005, full application pending decree	UNHCR	UNHCR	Y
Kenya	Y	draft & MoU	Gov. & UNHCR	UNHCR	Y
Sudan	Reservations	Asylum Act 1974, unsatisfactory	No registration in Khartoum	Gov. & UNHCR	N
Ethiopia	Reservations	yes, reinforces provisions and reservations	Gov. & UNHCR	Gov. & UNHCR	Y
Mexico	Reservations	new	Gov. & UNHCR	Government	Y
Costa Rica	Y	new	Gov. & UNHCR	Government	Y
Ecuador	Y	Strong , but recently more restrictive (Resigned from Cartagena)	Government	Gov. & UNHCR	Y
Indonesia	N	No domestic legislation but engaged in the Bali Process	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
India	N	None	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
Malaysia	N	None, refugees treated as undocumented migrants	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
Thailand	N	None, refugees treated as illegal foreigners	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Y	No specific refugee legislation, refugee protection addressed under other legislation	Gov. & UNHCR	Gov. & UNHCR	N
Macedonia	Y	Needs to be strengthened	Gov. & UNHCR	Government	Y
Turkey	Reservations	Being developed	Gov. & UNHCR	Gov. & UNHCR	Y
Ukraine	Y	Needs to be strengthened	Gov. & UNHCR	Gov. & UNHCR	Y
Lebanon	N	None	UNHCR	Government	N
Jordan	N	MoU	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
Syrian Arab Republic	N	None,	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
Egypt	Reservations	Refugees treated as other foreigners & presidential authority	UNHCR	UNHCR	N
Yemen	Y	None	UNHCR	UNHCR	Y

Objective 5: Outreach to urban refugees

Urban refugees--of many different nationalities and ethno-linguistic groups--are dispersed across vast, congested urban areas, which makes it hard to reach them. Exacerbating the challenge of outreach, urban refugees are usually preoccupied with survival and livelihood activities. They often move frequently in a struggle to find affordable accommodation. In some contexts, refugees worry about arrest and detention and purposefully keep a low profile to avoid drawing attention to themselves and being pursued by authorities. As noted in previous sections, the distance, travel cost and resulting loss of work time required for refugees to register and obtain proof of their status and other documentation is a significant challenge. Thus, effective outreach is essential in order for refugees to register, understand their rights and responsibilities and comprehend the options available to them in terms of services and durable solutions. UNHCR is using a variety of tools to reach asylum seekers and refugees in urban contexts and technology is increasingly being called upon to bridge the communications gap.

How UNHCR reaches out to the refugee communities

Graph 7: Outreach tools



Almost all UNHCR operations (23) report that many asylum seekers and refugees reside in urban areas where UNHCR does not maintain a presence. A few operations noted that UNHCR has inadequate capacity to visit or engage refugees in multiple urban locations. To engage with asylum seekers and refugees in areas where UNHCR does not have a presence, UNHCR offices provide assistance, register them when possible and conduct outreach through field visits. Most offices facilitate assistance for urban asylum seekers and refugees through NGOs or other UN agencies. In Iran and Turkey, the government provides day-to-day assistance and protection.

Almost all UNHCR offices (23) report that they provide outreach and support for women and girls and most offices (22) report that they have programs to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) (22). Other support for women and girls includes: medical assistance, particularly pre and post-natal care; HIV prevention; life skills, self-reliance and violence prevention; and support for small-scale crafts and income generation projects.

Reaching out to children

Graph 8: Protection for children



Most operations report that they have measures in place to support protection for children, such as special efforts to identify children who are unaccompanied, separated or vulnerable for other reasons. Most operations also maintain partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations that work on child protection. Over three-quarters of the operations (20) report that they have Best Interests Determination (BID) panels in urban contexts and 19 report alternative care arrangements for children who are unaccompanied. Seven offices have programmes in place to prevent survival sex.

Objective 6: Fostering constructive relations with urban refugees

Fostering constructive and consistent relations with any urban population, especially such a transient group, is challenging. Understandably, refugees are often highly frustrated by the time they have reached the UNHCR office and any expectations around resettlement can make the situation all the more fraught. Thus, UNHCR offices stress the importance of providing clear and consistent messages to refugee communities, which they find help in building constructive relations. UNHCR and partners reach out to the refugee communities in their own neighborhoods to build and maintain a constructive dialogue. Offices stress the value of this community engagement, although it is resource intensive.

Efforts to foster constructive relations with urban refugees

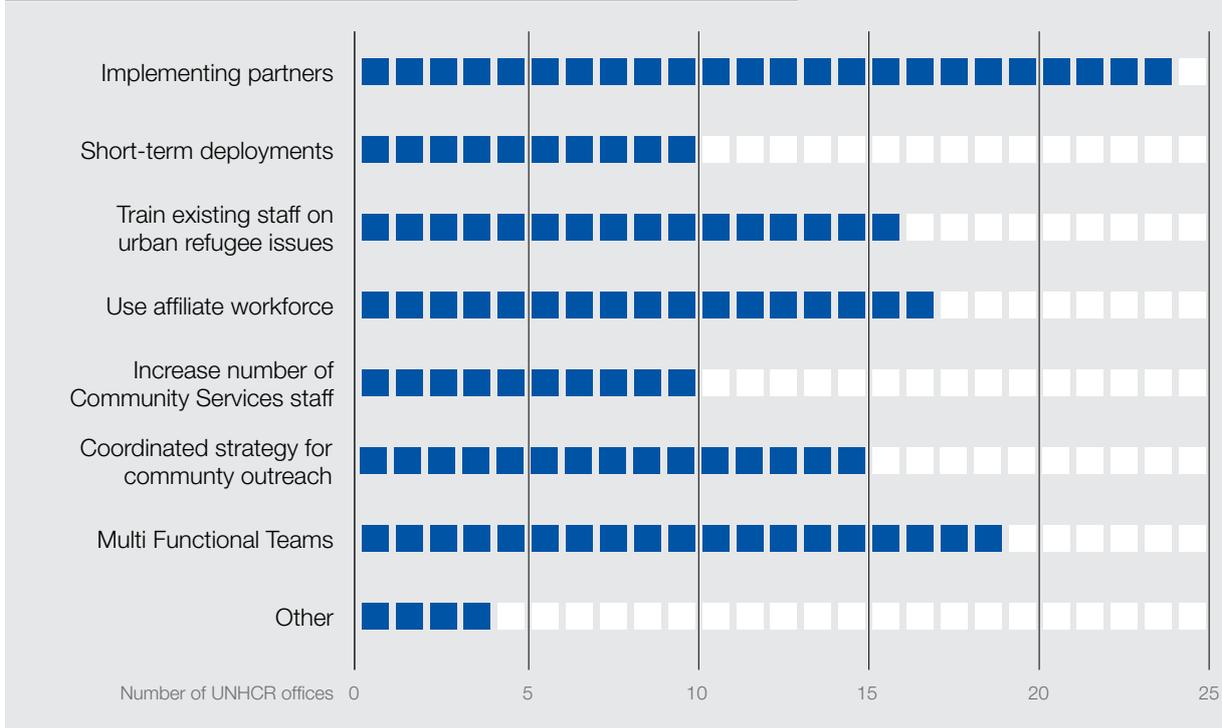
Graph 9: Efforts to foster constructive relations with urban refugees



Almost all offices (23) report conducting participatory assessments and supporting cultural, social, recreational, and other community activities to build relations with refugees in urban areas.

Most offices report significant challenges in covering all areas where refugees reside due to staffing constraints. UNHCR offices are employing a range of staffing approaches to enable outreach to urban refugees, including using implementing partners to reach out to refugee populations and build constructive relations. Several offices note that using refugee volunteer workers and locating outreach centers in areas with high concentrations of refugees are effective approaches.

Graph 10: Structuring staff to enable effective outreach to urban refugees



Challenges in fostering constructive relations with urban refugees

Most offices cite the dispersed, transient and diverse nature of refugee populations as the biggest challenge in terms of both outreach and fostering constructive relations. Many urban refugees do not engage with a refugee community or organize themselves due to fear of contact with authorities and a desire to maintain a low profile or because they are preoccupied with survival and livelihood activities. Also, because refugees sometimes share community centers and services with the local population, it can be difficult to identify and organize them. As a result, community structures are weak and it is hard for UNHCR offices to identify legitimate community leaders to work with. High expectations among urban refugees around resettlement also create a challenge for productive communications.

Objective 7: Maintaining security

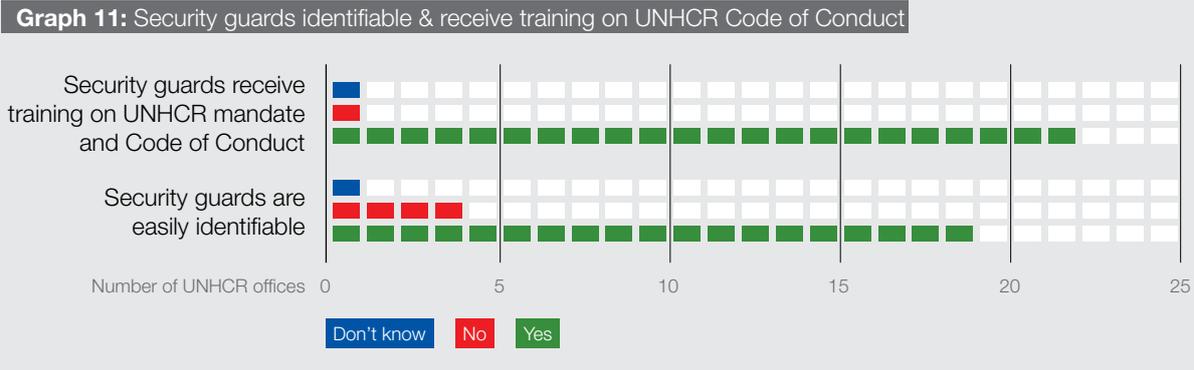
Over a third of the offices surveyed noted security challenges to UNHCR staff and premises. Being both accessible to asylum seekers and refugees and maintain a safe premises is a challenge for offices in urban areas. Although the issue was not addressed in the survey questions, over half of the UNHCR offices also commented with concern on the vulnerability of individual urban refugees and noted physical protection issues related to tensions with the host community, including SGBV, generalized criminality or the risk of terrorism.

Nine offices report security incidents involving UNHCR premises and/or staff over the last two years. These include angry individuals refusing to leave the premises, unruly refugees, small protests and in Sudan, a sit-in demonstration of refugees lasting over half a year. The office in Thailand received written threats in 2011, which it reported to UNDSS, and which in turn led to security restrictions that dramatically limited the number of asylum seekers and refugees that they can attend to. In Egypt, lack of a police presence and response around the office has caused increased incidents of violence by refugees and asylum seekers against staff.

UNHCR Egypt uses psychosocial workers to diffuse tense situations with disruptive individuals, those threatening self-harm and those with mental health problems.

UNHCR India has found having female police on the premises to be helpful.

Most offices invest in training police and/or security forces on human rights and refugee protection principles; Over half of the offices (13) train both police and security forces; one-third of offices (8) train just police; and one office trains security forces. However the Iran operation notes that the security apparatus in the country is insular and hence there is little contact or engagement with UNHCR.



Challenges in maintaining security at urban offices

Over a third of the offices (9) noted security difficulties in regards to UNHCR staff and premises. Several offices note that it is challenging to balance being open, accessible and responsive with the need to maintain secure premises and firm and consistent policies. UNHCR offices in India, Kenya, Malaysia and Turkey note that protests and other security incidents are often related to frustration about resettlement or long waiting periods and stem from refugees’ desire to gain attention for their case and a quicker response. Offices in Kenya and Indonesia also note a general threat of terrorism as a security issue for their offices.

Security problems for urban refugees are also a concern. Over half the offices (14) commented on security and protection issues for urban refugees, often related to SGBV, tensions with host community, generalized criminality or the risk of terrorism.

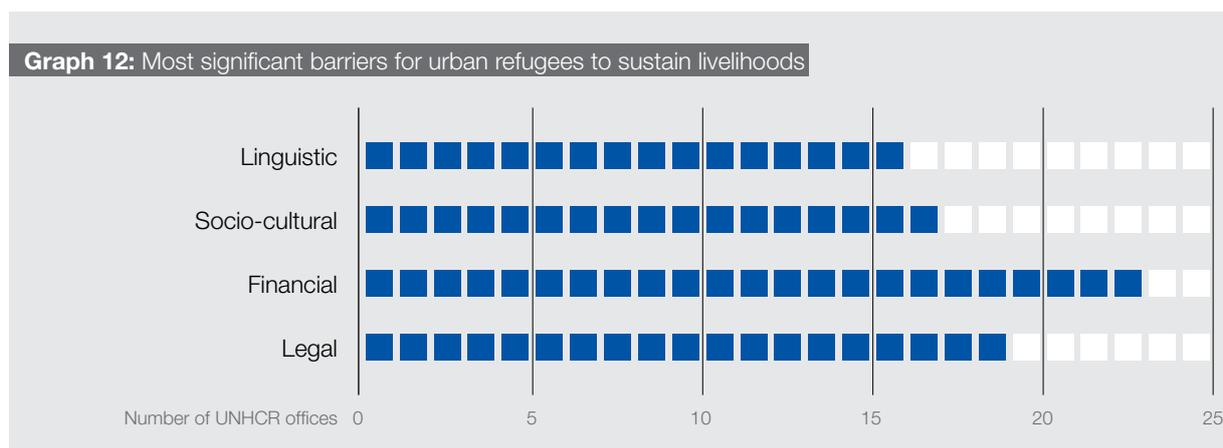
MAINTAINING SECURITY AT URBAN PREMISES: WHAT WORKS WELL?

- **Maintaining dialogue with refugee communities and leadership** through information campaigns, consistent messaging, and effective outreach helps to prevent security incidents at UNHCR premises in Lebanon, India and Kenya.
- **Building relationships, providing capacity building, and establishing SOPs with police and security** forces has been effective in maintaining security in Lebanon, Egypt, India and Jordan and Kenya.
- **Coordinating with UNDSS** to ensuring that UNHCR offices are compliant with Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) has been important in Costa Rica, Kenya and Turkey. UNHCR Thailand has also provided Basic Protection Training for UNDSS security guards.

Objective 8: Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance

Many would argue that the key factor in establishing well-being or even just survival for urban refugees is their access to viable livelihoods. Often this debate focuses on whether or not the host government provides refugees with the legal right to work. However, the survey responses indicate that access to financial capital is perceived as the most salient factor. UNHCR offices also emphasize consideration of the socio-economic conditions in these urban areas—areas with extensive and extreme urban poverty may offer only very limited opportunities for refugees even if they have a legal right to work. Several respondents note that many refugees from rural agrarian regions arrive in these cities without skills relevant for the urban economies, which makes it difficult for them to find formal or formal work. Survey responses suggest that access to banking services, including credit; contextually specific training, including language training; refugees' ability to regularize their status and obtain documentation and their links with civil society may be more useful than the legal right to work per se.

Barriers to sustainable livelihoods for urban refugees



Almost all offices (23) cite financial barriers as significant in inhibiting refugees in their efforts to establish sustainable livelihoods. Two-thirds or more of the offices cite legal barriers (19); socio-cultural barriers (17); and linguistic barriers (16). The risk of arrest and detention also deters refugees from livelihood activities in countries such as Thailand, where they have no legal status, limited freedom of movement and no right to any type of gainful employment.

What does UNHCR do if urban refugees are legally denied the right to gain income?

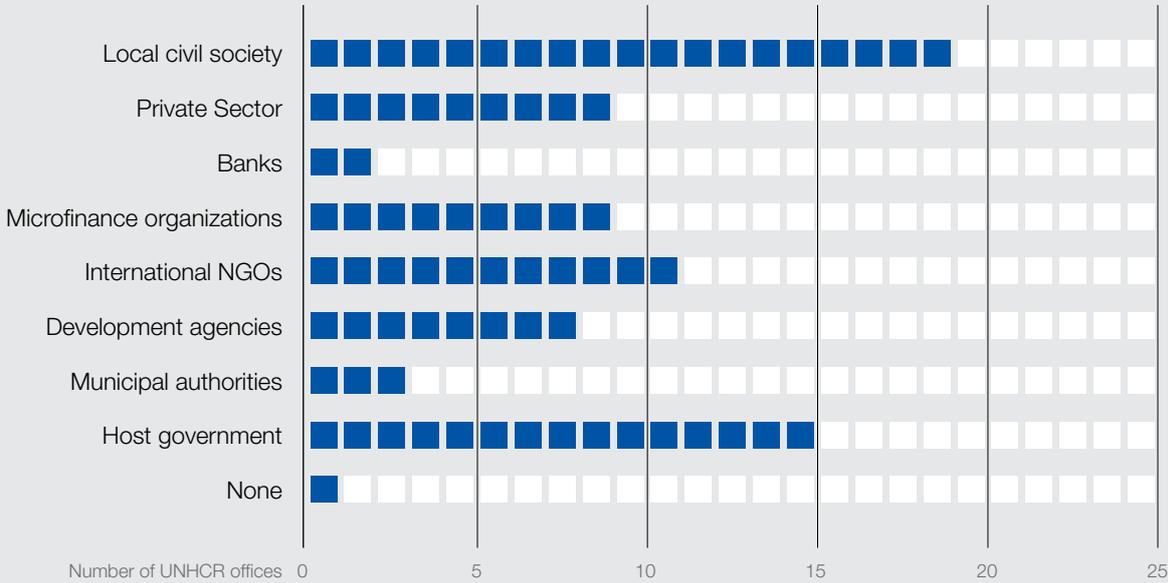
Sixty-three percent of offices (15) advocate with the government and provide livelihoods training; over half (13) provide support for unobtrusive livelihood activities; and a quarter (6) advocate with municipal authorities. However, in Thailand, where the government has expressed its concern regarding the increasing number of urban refugees, the UNHCR operation has determined that it would be counter-productive to advocate for access to employment at this time.

What does UNHCR do to support livelihood activities for urban refugees?

Half of the operations have a Livelihoods Strategy in place and a quarter of the offices (6) are currently developing a strategy.

Most offices collaborate with a range of organizations to support self-reliance for urban refugees, including local civil society and the host government, and with municipal authorities, international NGOs, development agencies, micro-finance organizations, banks and the private sector.

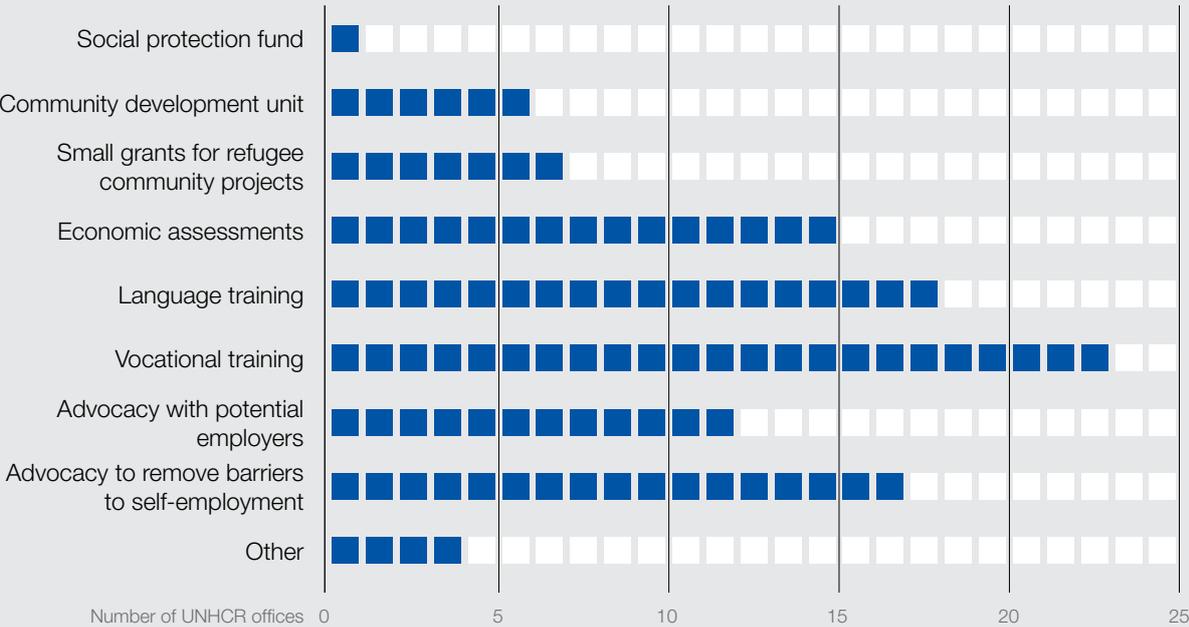
Graph 13: What organizations does UNHCR collaborate with to support urban refugees' self reliance?



UNHCR support for urban livelihood activities

In most countries, UNHCR supports vocational and language training, conducts assessments, advocates for removal of legal barriers to self-employment and provides small-scale grants to support refugee community projects. UNHCR also pays fees related to work permits in Lebanon and advocates removing practical barriers to refugees receiving work permits in Sudan.

Graph 14: Support for urban refugee livelihood activities



Challenges related to livelihood support for urban refugees

Some countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Ethiopia, **do not permit refugees to work.**

Other countries do not expressly deny refugees the right to work, but nonetheless maintain policies that make it difficult for refugees to obtain work permits.

- **Ecuador:** The Ministry of Labor limits work permits for refugees and municipal regulations impede informal businesses.
- **Iran:** The government perceives that livelihood support will make refugees want to stay in the country and impede repatriation and so in practice limits their ability to work.

The difficult socio-economic situation and high unemployment in the host countries severely constrains livelihood opportunities for refugees. This is the case in Lebanon, CAR, Macedonia, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen, Cameroon and South Africa and Egypt. **This competitive environment may encourage discrimination or xenophobia**, as is the case in Costa Rica, India, Kenya, Mexico, and South Africa.

Reluctance among refugees or an absence of relevant skills, including languages, is another challenge. The operation in CAR notes that refugees have difficulty in organizing themselves to implement income-generating activities and rely on UNHCR. The office in Syria notes that refugees see no prospects for local integration and are not motivated to undertake income generation activities. Operations in India, Kenya, Uganda, Ukraine and Cameroon note that many refugees come from rural zones and lack skills relevant for income generation in an urban environment, particularly business skills. In South Africa and Ukraine the lack of language skills is a barrier. Concern among refugees that livelihood activities might impede resettlement possibilities is an issue in CAR, Jordan, and Cameroon.

Financial constraints, including lack of access to credit, also impede refugees' efforts to be self-reliant. Operations in Kenya, Mexico, Uganda and Costa Rica note that limited access to loans or other sources of start-up capital--even fees for a license--is a constraint for refugees wanting to start a small business.

Urban refugee adolescents in India, Jordan and Kenya explained how difficult it is to survive in the city. They noted cramped accommodation, frequent moves-- sometimes in the middle of the night--due to rising rents, and difficulty to get enough to eat or to afford health care. They feel compelled to work, but can only access informal work situations that are often dangerous and exploitative.

"It is difficult to go to school when you haven't eaten and it is a very big problem to go to hospital when you don't have some money"

(Burundese girls, Nairobi).

LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT FOR URBAN REFUGEES: WHAT WORKS WELL?

- **A favorable legal framework** allowing refugees to work can make an important difference.
- **Supporting refugees to work in the informal sector when a legal right to work does not exist has been effective** in Ethiopia, Egypt, Indonesia and Malaysia.
- **Financial support**, including grants, small business loans, access to micro-credit and income supplements, has been used in Ecuador, India, Mexico, Turkey, Uganda, Yemen and South Africa.
- **Vocational, language and computer training works well** in Lebanon, Uganda, South Africa, Yemen, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia and CAR and Zambia. In Ecuador, a training program called "Let's make your business work" has benefited 600 refugees and is linked to seed capital.

Problems with residence and other documents can make it difficult or impossible for refugees to use banking services.

Limited resources and expertise to support livelihoods activities within UNHCR Offices and appropriately skilled partners is another constraint cited by UNHCR offices in Lebanon, CAR, India and Mexico.

Right to work and size of national economy by region

Table 4 summarizes the size of the economy, the estimated number of urban refugees and asylum seekers and host countries' policy and practice as regards refugees' right to work.

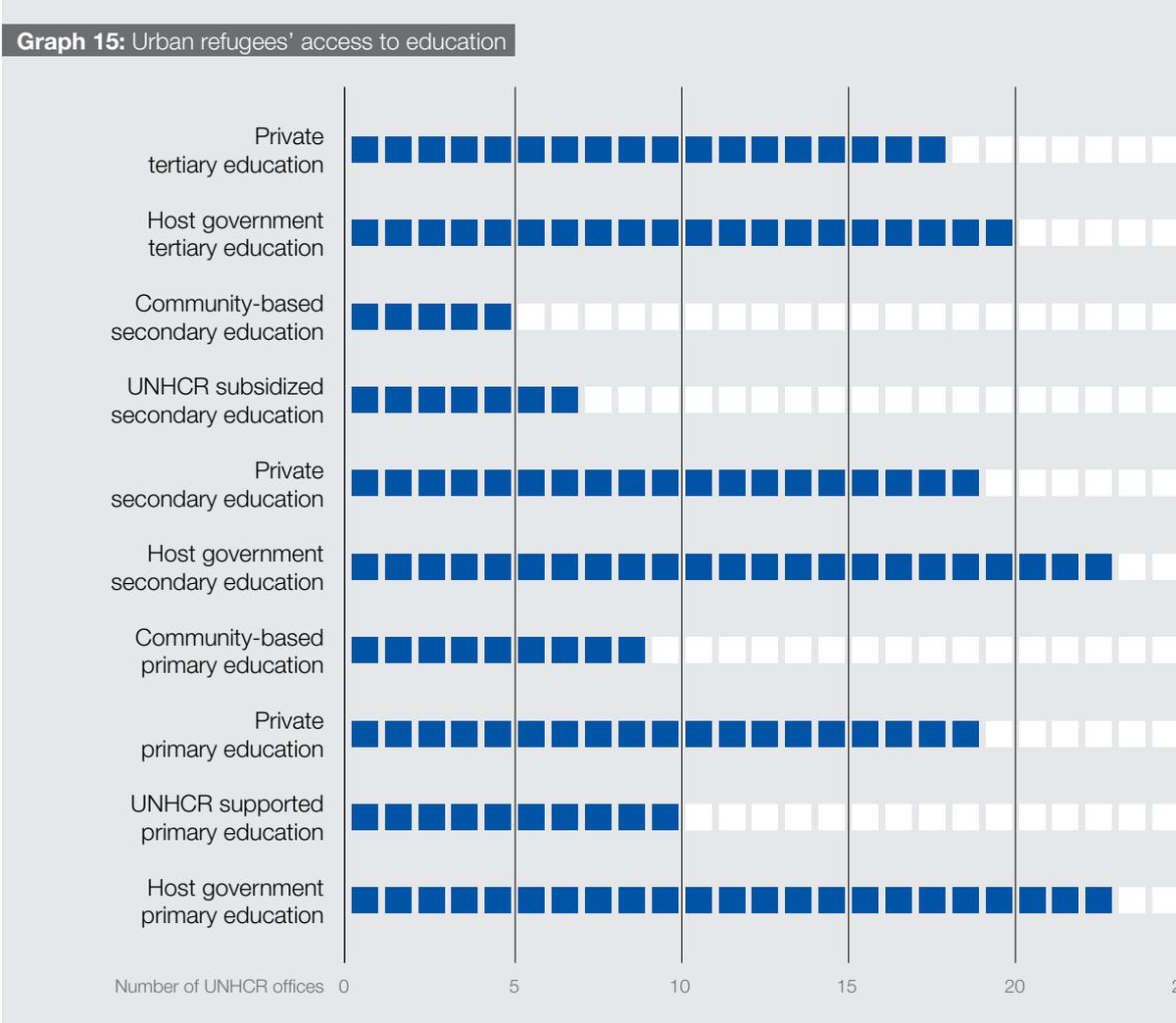
Table 4: Size of economy and refugees' right to work			
Country	GDP in current USD	Estimated nr. of urban refugees & asylum seekers	Comments on Right to Work
India	1,847,981,853,637	88,567	Legal right to work recently authorized. Not a signatory to instruments
Mexico	1,155,316,052,667	1,567	New legislation (2011) guarantees right to employment
Indonesia	846,832,283,153	1,800	No legal right to work and not a signatory to instruments
Turkey	773,091,360,339	22,000	No legal restrictions stop foreigners from accessing work permits, but the process of obtaining a work permit is slow and there are fees. Only one case in 30,000 is reported to have received the permit.
South Africa	408,236,752,338	277,267	Refugees have limited access to business permits
Thailand	345,649,290,736	2,203	No legal right to work and not a signatory to instruments
Malaysia	278,671,114,816	92,854	No legal right to work and not a signatory to instruments
Egypt	229,530,568,259	109,359	Refugees are treated as other foreigners and are required to obtain work permit which is very difficult to obtain
Ukraine	165,245,009,991	6,800	Refugees have the right to work. Depending on the status of their claims, asylum seekers may have the right to work
Ecuador	67,002,768,302	61,000	Work permits granted to refugees, but not asylum seekers
Sudan	55,097,394,769	24,899	No legal right to work
Lebanon	42,185,230,768	10,726	No access to formal work, women unable to access work permits
Costa Rica	41,006,959,585	20,057	Work permits granted to refugees, but not asylum seekers
Yemen	33,757,503,322	85,904	Limited access to employment; costly fees for work permits. Small business owners required to have a Yemeni partner.
Kenya	33,620,684,015	46,607	Refugees Act provides for right to work, but it is not applied in practice
Ethiopia	31,708,848,032	2,822	No legal right to work
Jordan	28,840,197,018	455,984	Some possibility for Iraqis to regularize their stay and apply for work permits in professions that are open to non-Jordanians. Syrians have access to the labour market and can apply for work permits. No right to work for asylum seekers
Cameroon	25,464,850,390	213	Restrictions on refugees' right to work
Uganda	16,809,623,488	37,820	Yes
Macedonia	10,165,373,218	2,673	Refugees have the right to work and asylum seekers have the right to work in the reception center.
Central African Republic	2,165,868,600	5,792	Yes
Syrian Arab Republic	n/a	757,000	No legal right to work
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	n/a	854,715	No legal right to work

Objective 9: Ensuring access to education, healthcare & other services

Almost all UNHCR operations (23) report that urban refugees technically have access to primary and secondary education provided by the host government and to primary health care at government clinics. However, most operations also note practical barriers that complicate and limit refugees’ ability to fully use those services. The additional costs associated with these “free” services deter access—for example the cost of books, uniforms and registration fees necessary to go to school. Other significant deterrents include discrimination, language barriers, insufficient documentation, logistics and a lack of awareness among refugees that the services exist.

“When I was in Somalia, my mother said that when we got to a safe place I could study. Now we are here, but I still don’t have my dream [to study]. It is like a jail for me [sitting at home all day],”
 Somali girl, Amman

Urban refugees access to education



Although host government primary and secondary education is technically available in most operations, UNHCR and IP staff often has to advocate with authorities and specific schools to ensure enrollment for refugees. In some countries, refugees have access to community-based education in their own language. However, certification from these programs is not always recognized. Private education is available in most host countries for those who can afford it, but few refugees have the financial means to provide their children with private education. Even for public education, the cost of school supplies, books, uniforms and parent contribution fees can limit access for refugees with limited means. Tertiary education, including university as well technical and vocational education, is available to refugees in most operations (20), but is limited due to the cost of tuition. In some countries, access to tertiary education is complicated; for example in Iran a refugee is expected to exchange his/her refugee card for a student visa.

Urban refugees access to health care

Graph 16: Urban refugees’ access to health care



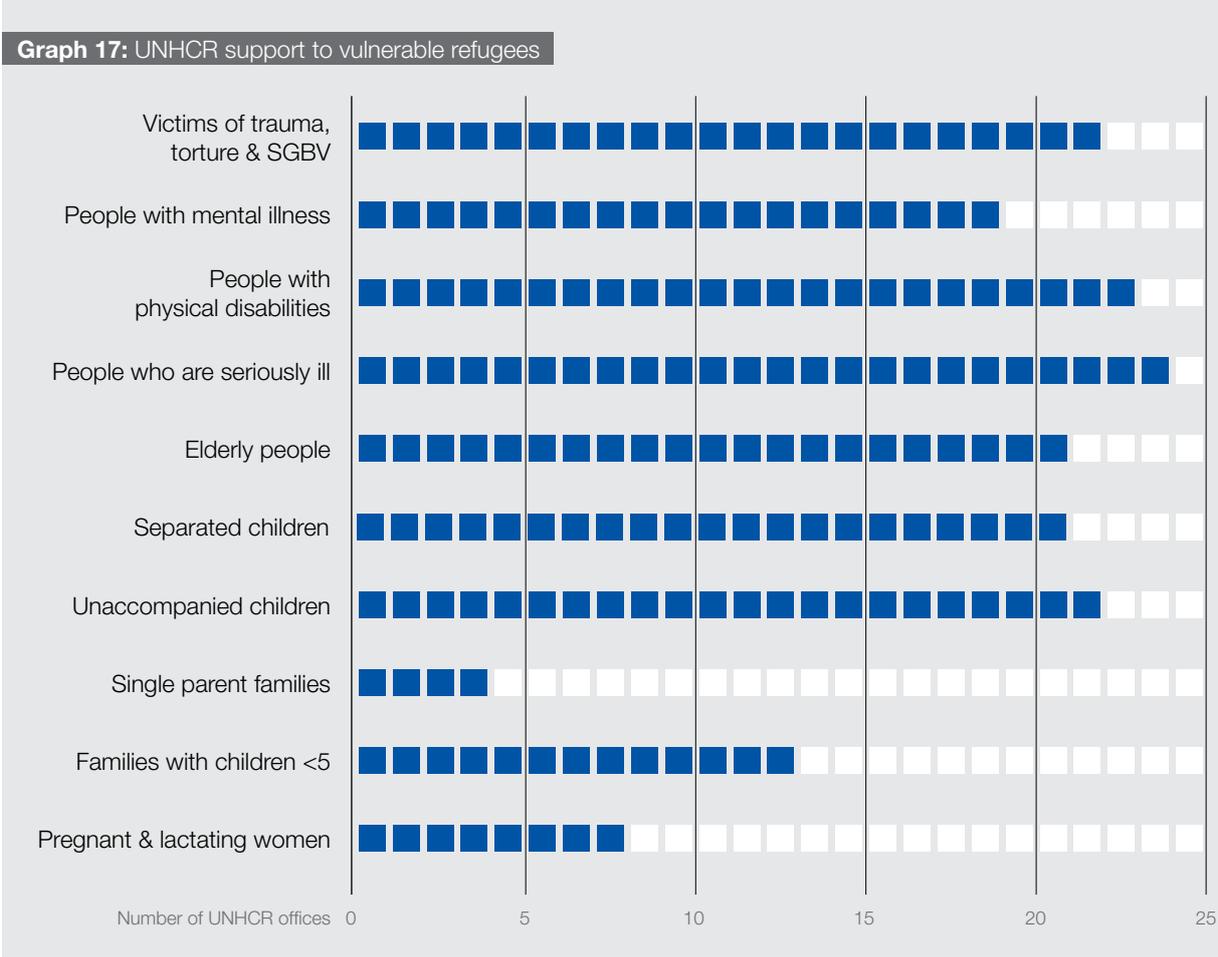
In most operations, urban refugees technically have access to primary health care at public clinics and in just over half the operations (13) pregnant women and young children have access to free healthcare, as noted in Graph 16 above. In many operations, refugees are also allowed to access secondary and tertiary healthcare at public hospitals. However, the cost of hospital treatment, especially procedures such as cardiovascular operations and cancer treatments, is often too expensive for refugees to afford.

A third of operations (8) report that urban refugees have access to national health insurance schemes. In Turkey, the national health insurance scheme includes refugees, but not asylum seekers. In India and Iran, UNHCR is working to facilitate refugees’ access to government health insurance schemes.

How does UNHCR monitor urban refugees' general welfare and identify those with special needs?

All offices report that they use participatory assessments and interviews with refugees at UNHCR offices to monitor refugees' welfare and identify those with special needs. Most offices (22) use household visits, either by staff (19) or implementing partners (22), and half of the operations (12) work with refugee incentive workers to monitor households within their communities and neighborhoods. A third of operations (8) use tools such as household level surveys, Heightened Risk Identification Tools (HRIT), and /or the UNCHR Health Information System (HIS) to monitor refugee welfare. UNHCR offices also use education information shared by the Ministry of Education, the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Refugee Assistance and Information System (RAIS) and health information shared by the Ministry of Labour, as well as monthly reports from implementing partners to monitor refugee welfare.

UNHCR support for vulnerable persons



All offices report that they provide specific services to people who are seriously ill (HIV and TB) and for those with other diseases requiring specialized care. As noted in Graph 17 above, almost all offices (23) provide specific services to people with physical disabilities; unaccompanied children and victims of trauma, torture and SGBV (22); separated children and elderly people (21); people with mental illness and single parent families (19); pregnant and lactating women (18); and just over half of the offices (13) to families with children under age five.

UNHCR OPERATIONS' ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND RESULTS

- **Lebanon:** Meets regularly with line ministries and also provides support and capacity building that has resulted in access to schools, health care and social services on the same basis as nationals.
- **Costa Rica:** Maintains strategic contacts with key staff within institutions where refugees have faced difficulties to access services and has received mixed results so far.
- **Ecuador:** Advocated successfully for birth registration for asylum seekers.
- **India:** Addresses language barriers and sensitizes specific service providers—schools, health centers and police—resulting in better access to health care and legal aid.
- **Iran:** Advocated to extend health insurance coverage for refugees, which was achieved in 2011.
- **Kenya:** Collaborated on a concept for a five-year plan to include refugees in education and engaged the Ministry of Health to ensure access to facilities and services for refugees. This has resulted in refugees' ability to access city public schools and designated public clinics and hospitals.
- **Malaysia:** Advocates for access to services that exclude refugees, such as education, but the government's unwillingness to improve the legal/administrative framework limits results.
- **Mexico:** Advocates on aspects of national legislation, which has resulted in access to free healthcare and education as outlined in the new asylum legislation as well as special procedures to validate foreign studies certificates.

UNHCR advocacy for access to services

Most UNHCR offices are currently involved in advocacy efforts to expand urban refugees' access to services. Over three quarters of offices (21) report that they advocate with national host government authorities; over half (14) advocate with municipal authorities; and three quarters (18) advocate with specific service providers.

UNHCR investment in capacity building for existing service provision systems

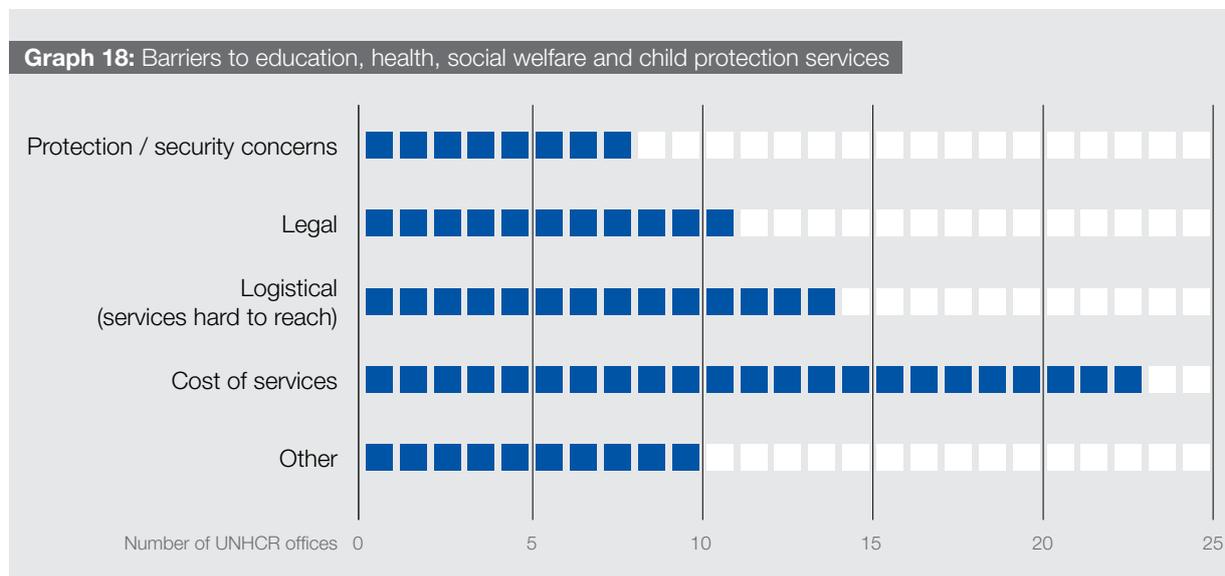
Over half of UNHCR operations (15) report that they are engaged in capacity building for existing systems that provide health, education, child protection and social welfare services for refugees and host populations. Efforts include training and provision of equipment to key ministries and services providers.

Refugees' access to the judicial system

Most UNHCR operations (19) report that refugees do have access to the judicial system. Twenty-one percent of UNHCR offices (5) report that refugees have access to the judicial system, but face discrimination. In Lebanon, victims who have not regularized their status may be deemed to be in the country illegally and may be subject to detention. In Ecuador, refugees are often supported with legal assistance by NGOs; however in many cases it is difficult for them to complete the judicial processes. In Malaysia, refugees are classified as illegal migrants and thus have limited standing in court. In Sudan, they have to obtain a valid refugee ID card from the area where they live to access the judicial system. Finally, In Ukraine, refugees lack interpretation for court proceedings, which makes it difficult for them to understand or participate effectively in proceedings.

Challenges and barriers to ensure access to services for urban refugees

UNHCR operations note financial and practical barriers in addition to legal obstacles for urban refugees trying to access services.



Almost all UNHCR offices (23) emphasize the direct or indirect cost of services as a significant challenge for urban refugees trying to access health care and education. In some countries refugees are using private services, which are expensive, as is the case with health services in Lebanon and Egypt. In some countries refugees pay foreigners' rates for medical services; this is the case for Somali and Sudanese refugees and Jordan. Refugees in Malaysia pay 50% of the foreigners' rate. Despite the right to free primary education in most countries, many refugee families cannot afford the costs of school registration fees, school materials, uniforms and transport.

Over half (14) of operations note logistical obstacles, such as distance and related transport costs, as a significant barrier. In Egypt, refugees often resort to costly private services because of logistical difficulties to access public services. In Iran, public services are often far away and refugees must pay for the cost of transport and travel documents in addition to the services themselves.

Quality and capacity of services available is a challenge in several countries. UNHCR Offices in Yemen and Sudan note that the limited quality and availability of service providers poses a challenge. In Ecuador, services, especially education and health, are weak even for the host population in the areas where refugees live. In Mexico, the inefficient national welfare system is a broad constraint. In Lebanon, emergency services have been denied to refugees on the basis of to the lack of bed capacity. In India, refugees have been reluctant to send their children to public schools, due to concerns about quality. In some countries, corruption within public services is an issue for refugees and nationals alike, but refugees may be particularly vulnerable given their irregular documents and limited social connections.

ENSURING ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR URBAN REFUGEES: WHAT WORKS WELL?

- **Interagency referral systems are effective in guiding urban refugees to appropriate services.** UNHCR Kenya coordinates through the Urban Refugee Protection Network. UNHCR Sudan and Syria refer refugees to specific services providers within the community and facilitate their access. In Zambia and Jordan, IPs manage a clinic and refer persons in need of additional care to government hospitals.
- **Engagement with government authorities has increased understanding of refugees' rights and provision of services.** This engagement includes capacity building, advocacy, provision of equipment, and formal or informal collaboration.
- **Strong partnerships with service providers and IPs are effective** in India, Thailand, Zambia, Mexico, Indonesia and Egypt and Jordan.
- **Outreach and support for urban refugees is important in helping them to understand the services available and what they need to do to access them.** UNHCR operations in CAR, Iran, Kenya, Syria and Thailand use counseling, education materials, sms messaging and other outreach tools to inform refugees of available services.
- **Complementary education:** UNHCR India facilitates admission to government schools and provides tutoring to encourage retention. UNHCR Thailand offers Thai language training to help refugees access schools.

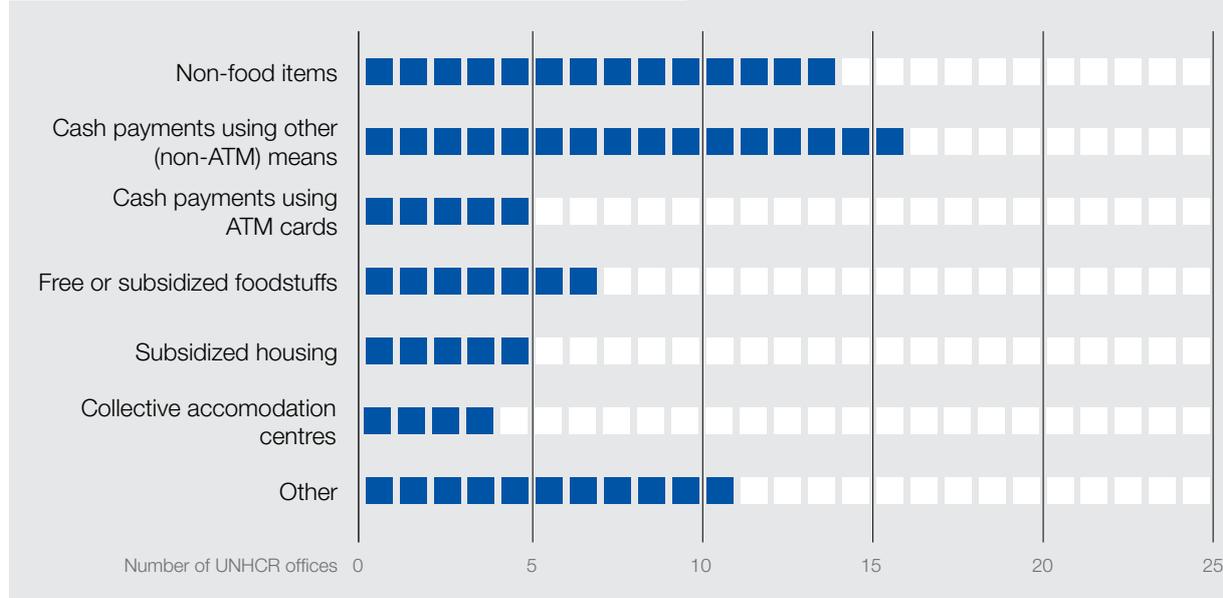
Lack of awareness among service providers of refugee status and rights to services is a problem in some countries. Refugees encounter problems with their documents not being recognized in several countries. This is an issue in Costa Rica, where the office notes increasing discrimination against foreigners, especially Colombians. In Ecuador, local institutions may not recognize the refugee visa and thus limit access to basic services. In Thailand, which does not legally recognize refugees, refugees fear **arrest and detention** when they try to access services, which is a significant deterrent.

Refugees' lack of language skills and understanding of services available to them is also a challenge. Some refugees have difficulty understanding the information they receive concerning services. Translation services are usually not available at schools or health clinics. Offices in India, Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand, Uganda and Cameroon cite lack of language skills as a challenge. UNHCR operations in Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, and Macedonia note that refugees often don't know how and where to access services.

Objective 10: Meeting material needs

The survey has shown that cash payments directly distributed to refugees continue to outstrip all other forms of assistance, despite the innovative approaches to delivering assistance that have been implemented in a few urban refugee operations. Although cash assistance is frequently criticized for undermining self-reliance, a few countries were able to link material support to self-reliance yet cautioned that it takes time. As regards cash payments, UNHCR's budgetary constraints, along with ethical and logistical concerns in reaching the most vulnerable members of urban refugee communities, are significant challenges for the agency.

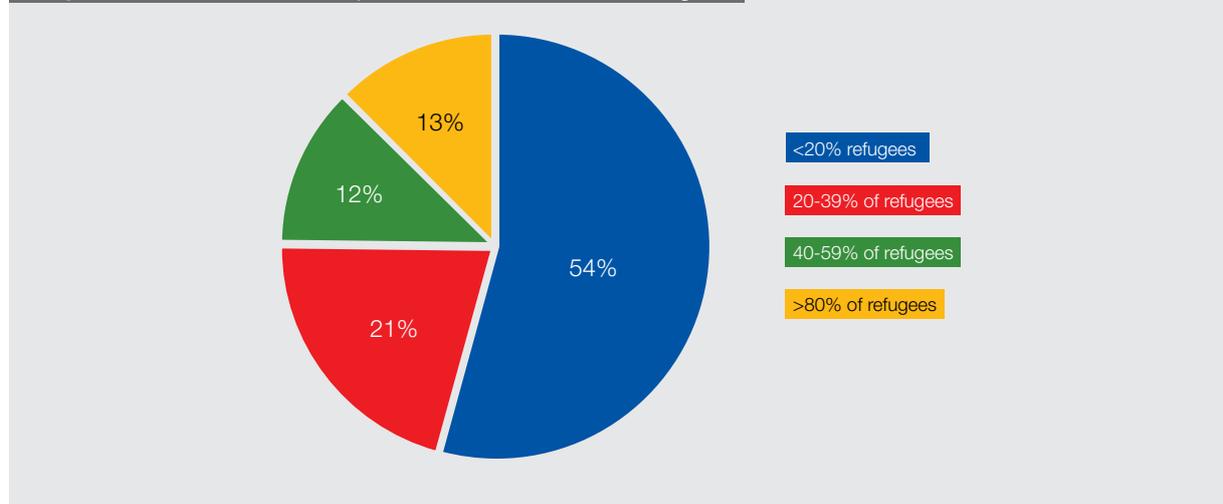
Graph 19: Measures to meet material needs of urban refugees



UNHCR offices use a range of measures, including provision of cash, to meet the material needs of refugees.

Cash Assistance

Graph 20: UNHCR Offices that provide cash assistance to refugees

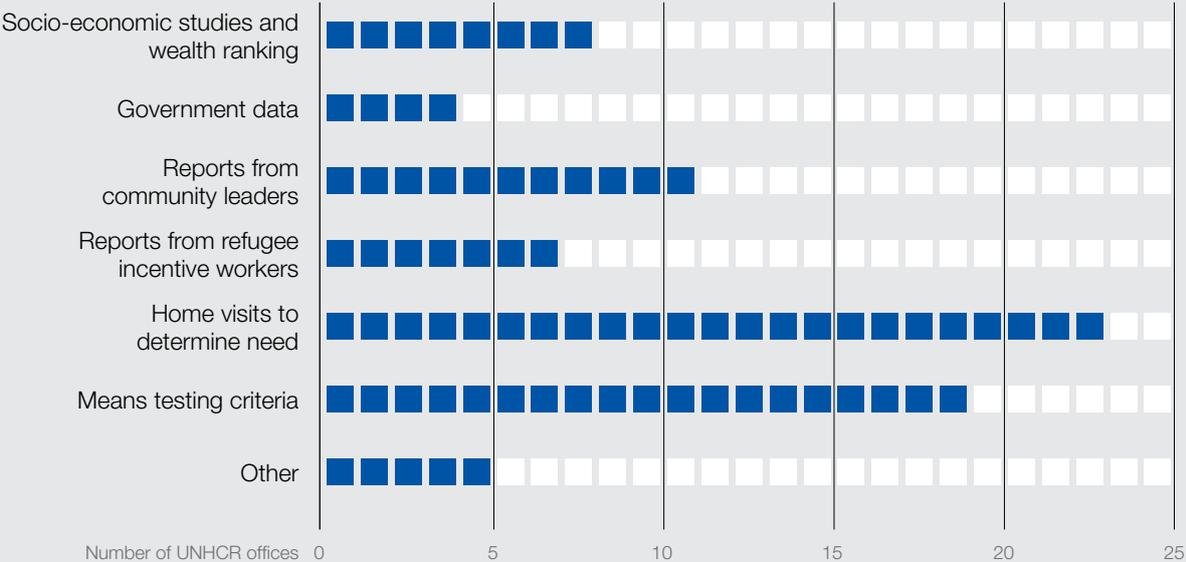


As shown Graph 20 above, just over half the offices (13) report that they provide cash assistance to less than 20% of urban refugees; less than a quarter of offices (5) provide cash assistance to 20-39% of refugees; three offices provide cash assistance to 40-59% of urban refugees; and three offices provide cash assistance to more than 80% of urban refugees. Other means of meeting material needs include advocacy for fee exemption, vouchers for clothes, support for transport and support for education.

In Ecuador the office provides Non-Food Items (NFI) vouchers to provide material assistance in a way that allows for more flexibility, dignity and decision-making power for refugees to assess and respond to their needs.

Assessing vulnerability and determining eligibility

Graph 21: How does UNHCR assess urban refugees' eligibility for material support?



Most offices (23) use home visits to determine needs. As noted in Graph 21 above, over three-quarters of operations (19) use means testing criteria; and just under half of operations (11) use reports from community leaders. Other methods include: reports from refugee incentive workers, socio- economic needs assessment, poverty line indicators, identification of vulnerable cases through counseling, vulnerability assessments, reports from NGOs, case management meetings, and analysis of information on access to assistance provided by other stakeholders at the local level.

Challenges related to material support for urban refugees

Budget constraints limiting the material assistance that UNHCR can provide to urban refugees is the challenge most commonly noted by offices, including CAR, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Cameroon and South Africa. Several offices note that the material support provided is not nearly adequate to meet the real needs of urban refugees. Furthermore, assistance tables have not been updated to reflect increases in the cost of living.

Outreach and difficulty identifying the most vulnerable persons to receive material assistance is also a challenge for most offices. Given the limited resources, it becomes even more essential to ensure that support goes to those who are truly the most vulnerable. However, the diverse and transient nature of the urban refugee population makes it difficult to gain access to the communities and understanding of who most needs help. Offices in Kenya, Iran and CAR express concern that assistance is more likely to go to refugees who approach the office and express their need while the most vulnerable refugees may be the least vocal and least visible. UNHCR India notes that it is difficult to establish the real requirements of persons with special needs.

The logistical aspects of distributing material assistance in the urban context can be challenging, which has heightened the appeal of cash transfers. However, cumbersome banking practices have delayed payments in some countries. UNHCR Macedonia cites that as a problem and UNHCR India notes that it has not yet been able to use ATMs for cash transfers.

MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR URBAN REFUGEES: WHAT WORKS WELL?

- **Linking material support to self-reliance programs has worked well** in Lebanon, Costa Rica, and Ecuador. This includes micro-credit, income generation and entrepreneurship activities, vocational technical and skill training.
- **Including refugees in state social programs is underway in some countries.** In Ukraine, Turkey and Macedonia, refugees with legal status who meet the criteria can access existing services and assistance including material support.
- **A rigorous system to identify the most vulnerable** – including outreach, systematic prioritization, SOPs, regular home visits, case-by-case reviews and continuous needs assessments – helps to target material assistance efficiently.
- **Vouchers and ATMs have worked well** in Egypt, Ecuador, Jordan and Syria to distribute cash transfers in a manner that respects the dignity of recipients and enables them to use assistance in a manner consistent with their priorities.

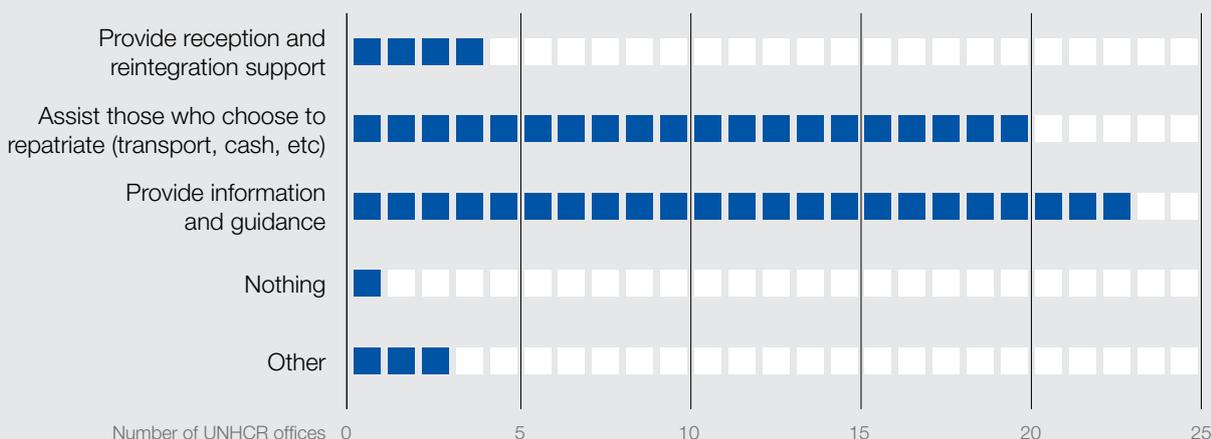
Objective 11: Promoting durable solutions

All UNHCR offices support voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Many offices report that resettlement is the most accessed durable solution for urban refugees. However, this runs the risk of creating or exacerbating a pull factor into these urban areas. In countries with more favorable domestic legislation, the possibility of local integration and permanent residence has been linked to livelihood programs, which is a promising practice.

Over a third of offices (10) note that urban refugees and those living in camps have the same access to all durable solutions. However, four offices report that there are differences in the durable solutions that are available to refugees living in urban areas as opposed to those in camps. UNHCR CAR notes that durable solutions, particularly voluntary repatriation is less available on an individual basis in the camps. UNHCR India reports that refugees living in camps may only have access to repatriation, whereas Hindu/Sikh Afghan refugees, who live in urban areas, have preferential access to local integration as they may become Indian citizens. UNHCR offices in Kenya and Sudan make an effort to prioritize protracted cases, who primarily live in camps, and this results in different approaches to identifying resettlement cases between camps and the urban areas.

What does UNHCR do to enable voluntary repatriation for urban refugees?

Graph 22: What does UNHCR do to enable voluntary repatriation for urban refugees?

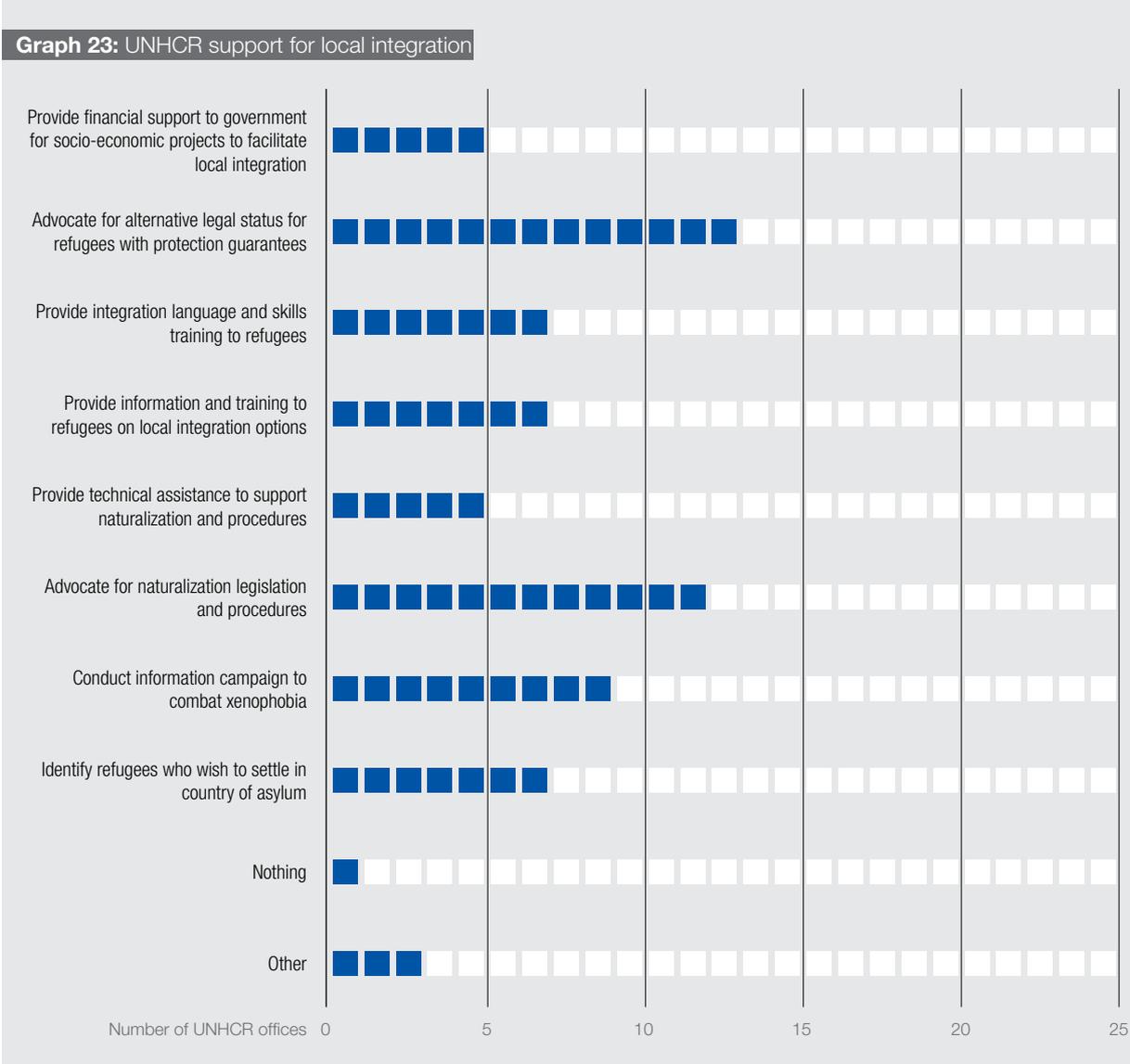


In Graph 22 above, “Other” types of support for repatriation include “go and see” visits and liaison with IOM to facilitate travel.

Political support and funding facilitates voluntary repatriation in Malaysia, CAR, Macedonia, Uganda, and Zambia. In Cameroon, UNHCR increased the cash grant from 100 to 150 per adult.

What does UNHCR do to support local integration for urban refugees?

Half of the offices advocate with authorities to provide naturalization legislation and procedures and 13 offices advocate for alternative legal status for refugees with protection guarantees.



UNHCR also supports local integration in other ways. In Macedonia, UNHCR facilitates the naturalization process through provision of free legal assistance and funds for administrative fees for documentation. In Sudan, UNHCR supports nationality applications for individual cases. In Ukraine, the office is in the second phase of an EU funded local integration project. In Lebanon, where the issue of integration is taboo due to the unresolved presence of over 400,000 Palestinians, the office provides support to refugees to obtain work permits through sponsors and in that way legalize their stay. In Jordan, which also does not support local integration, the office provides information to women eligible for nationality through marriage and payment of nationality fees where applicable. In Thailand, Kenya and Turkey, government policy precludes local integration in most or all cases.

UNHCR HAS DEVELOPED LOCAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMS TOGETHER WITH GOVERNMENTS AND LINKED THEM TO LIVELIHOOD EFFORTS

- **Costa Rica:** The new Migration Law envisions an integration unit, a National Integration Plan and creation of a Social Integration Fund.
- **Mexico:** IPs provide social support and orientation to facilitate refugees' integration, including social and cultural adaptation.
- **Ukraine:** UNHCR disseminates integration success stories and uses integration grants.

What does UNHCR do to manage resettlement for urban refugees?

Many of the offices note that resettlement remains the primary durable solution for urban populations. Nearly all UNHCR offices (22) report that they establish veracity of reported security incidents to identify individuals who are at risk and may be in need of resettlement. Over eighty percent of offices (21) prioritize the most vulnerable refugees for resettlement in a non-discriminatory manner and liaise with resettlement countries and host government. Most of the offices (20) keep refugees fully informed about resettlement prospects and procedures and encourage refugees in the resettlement process to remain actively engaged in self-reliance and educational activities (19).

Graph 24: UNHCR manages resettlement for urban refu



Challenges in enabling durable solutions for urban refugees

Voluntary repatriation is not a realistic option for most people due to ongoing insecurity or other specific obstacles in the country of origin. However, in some countries, the lack of up-to-date country of origin information (COI) and guidelines make it difficult to adequately counsel refugees on return. Lack of cash grants in some countries limits the attractiveness of voluntary return. Likewise, one respondent notes that inability to cover excess luggage expenses discourages refugees to apply for voluntary repatriation.

The government in many countries restricts local integration and where naturalization is allowed, it is often limited in practice by cumbersome procedures and limited socio-economic prospects. In Iran, Egypt, Malaysia and Turkey, the government strictly restricts local integration. In India, local integration is only available for Hindu/Sikh Afghans, but the process is lengthy and bureaucratic. In Kenya, local integration is available for some refugees who marry nationals. In Sudan and CAR, local integration is very limited due to difficulty to obtain work permits and government restrictions on naturalization.

In Mexico, Ecuador, and Costa Rica, local integration is not prohibited by government restrictions, but is nonetheless difficult in practice. In Mexico, the difficult security situation and limited economic prospects motivate most refugees to continue to the US or Canada. In Ecuador, restrictive policy and practice and the prohibitive cost and requirements of naturalization process limit integration. In Costa Rica, increasing discrimination and xenophobia as well as the declining socio-economic situation has hampered local integration efforts.

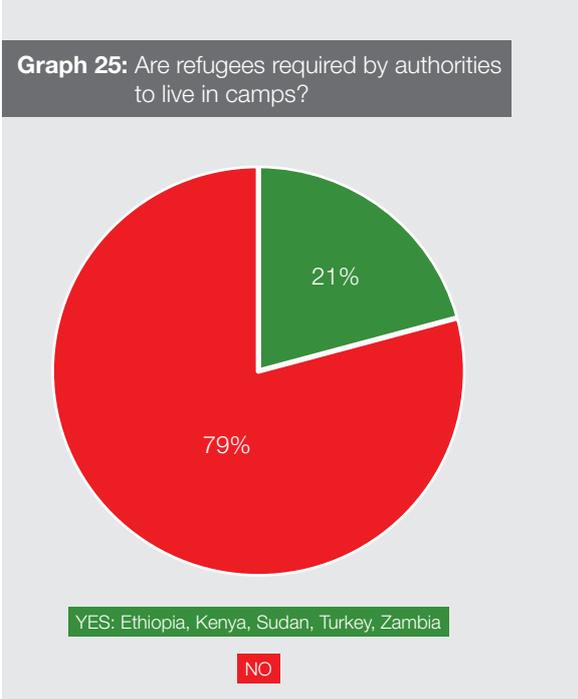
Effective management of resettlement activities is very challenging for UNHCR offices working with urban refugees due to high expectations among the refugees and the limited number of resettlement places available. Resettlement is the primary durable solution available in Kenya, Malaysia, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, and Jordan. However, in all of those countries the needs outpace resettlement places available. Additionally, operations are faced with a challenge where the resettlement needs of refugees often do not match the criteria of resettlement countries.

Inadequate systems and capacity to conduct Best Interests Determination systems for children hinder processing of resettlement cases in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Cameroon and Kenya.

Objective 12: Addressing the issue of freedom of movement

In many regards, this objective is the crux of the policy. Along with the right to work and the provision of meaningful documents for refugees, UNHCR offices advocate most strenuously for the principle of freedom of movement to be respected, despite the contrary opinions of governments. This objective requires a significant amount of humanitarian diplomacy and patient and persistent advocacy.

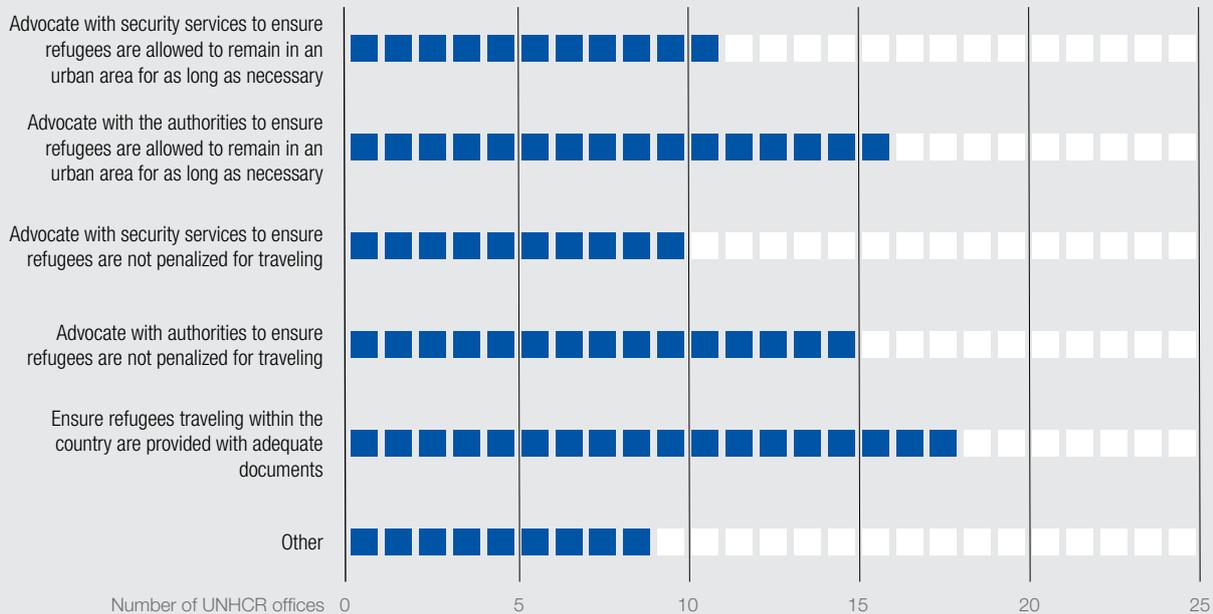
Encampment policies



Over three-quarters of UNHCR offices surveyed (19) report that refugees are not required by authorities to live in camps. However, operations in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Turkey, Zambia and Thailand report that authorities do support encampment for refugees. The Ethiopian government has a strict encampment policy for all refugees except those from Eritrea who have met specific criteria. In Kenya, the majority of refugees live in camps and the Government supports an encampment policy despite the large number of refugees in Nairobi. Syrian refugees who have Temporary Protection in Turkey have been accommodated in camps since April 2011. In Thailand, refugees from Myanmar have been confined to nine closed camps since they began arriving in the 1980s. According to Thai Law, refugees found outside the camps are subject to arrest and deportation. In Zambia, the National Refugee law provides that refugees should reside in designated sites. This is congruent with Zambia’s reservation to Article 26 governing the freedom of movement in the 1951 Convention.

What does UNHCR do to facilitate freedom of movement for refugees within the country of operation?

Graph 26: UNHCR manages resettlement for urban refu



Freedom of movement with the country of operations

UNHCR offices in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Jordan, Egypt, Macedonia and South Africa report that refugees generally enjoy freedom of movement throughout the country.

In several countries refugees may be able to move within the country if they have special travel passes. In Ethiopia, UNHCR advocates with authorities to provide travel passes when necessary. Turkish authorities assign refugees to satellite cities based on a number of considerations, including the absorption capacity of the urban area. When a refugee wishes to live in a different city--due to protection, assistance or family reasons--UNHCR advocates with authorities to allow movement to another urban location.

Challenges to freedom of movement within the country of operation

UNHCR offices report that harassment impedes movement in over a quarter of the countries surveyed (7).

- **CAR:** Refugees complain of policy and army harassment.
- **Ecuador:** Security forces request documents at checkpoints before asylum seekers have access to RSD procedures and sometimes prevent passage.
- **Ethiopia and Turkey:** Irregularities in issuing internal travel passes makes it difficult for refugees to reach appointments.
- **Cameroon and Ecuador:** Authorities do not always recognize Refugee ID cards.
- **Yemen and Mexico:** Generalized insecurity and violence impedes movement.

In addition to more formal harassment by authorities, UNHCR offices repeatedly note refugees' fear-- related to irregular documents and potential arrest and detention or due to racism or xenophobia—as a constraint on freedom of movement at a practical level and a reason for not approaching UNHCR, registering with UNHCR or the government, obtaining documents or accessing key services.

Detention is a problem in about a quarter of the sample countries, particularly Lebanon, Kenya, Sudan, Syria, and Thailand. Sudan is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but maintains the reservation for freedom of movement and the authorities are increasingly restrictive; refugees who travel without a travel permit are at high risk of arrest and detention and subsequently deportation. In Syria, refugees face difficulties with freedom of movement and possible detention when they are in the country without legal documentation.

Freedom of movement between countries

Convention Travel Documents (CTDs)¹⁰ are problematic in several countries. In Costa Rica the CTDs issued by the government do not meet International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and thus refugees encounter difficulties when using them to travel by air. In Egypt, CTDs are very hard to obtain. In Ukraine, draft legislation would have the CTD valid for only 6 months, which does not meet international standards. Many countries are unwilling to issue visas on the Ukrainian CTD. Cameroon issues CTDs, but countries are increasingly reticent to recognize the documents because they don't include biometric parameters.

Iranian law does not recognize refugees as official residents in the country and thus, they are not covered by the law regulating the entry and stay of foreigners in the country. To move from Iran to another country a refugee must obtain a national passport and visa and sometimes must exit for international travel through their countries of origin, which clearly poses serious protection concerns.

Smuggling and trafficking activities are a challenge and risk for refugees in In Jordan, Malaysia and Sudan.

UNHCR ADVOCACY TO ENSURE MOVEMENT WITHIN COUNTRY OF OPERATION

- **Lebanon:** UNHCR advocates with the government to issue circulation permits.
- **Ecuador:** UHCR advocates with authorities for safe passage and accompanies refugees from insecure areas to safer places.
- **Ethiopia:** UNHCR maintains good relations with the government; advocates for refugees to be issued with pass permits; and jointly reviews transfer of cases for the urban program together with the government.
- **India:** UNHCR liaises with authorities to ensure their familiarity with UNHCR documentation and intervenes promptly whenever need to ensure freedom of movement.
- **Iran:** UNHCR advocates on a case-by-case basis in situations in which freedom of movement is very limited.

Travel Documents. In Jordan, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda and Zambia, UNHCR operations facilitate travel documents for refugees who need to travel for medical series, study abroad or to have an interview for family reunification.

The Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (the Bali Process) was initiated in 2002 and brings together participants to work on practical measures to help combat people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime in the Asia Pacific region. Recently, there has also been progress on incorporating a regional cooperation framework on refugee protection in the Bali Process which goes way beyond the people smuggling and trafficking issues. The Process is co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia and involves 46 members including UNHCR and International Organization for Migration.

¹⁰ A Convention Travel Document (CTD) is a travel document issued to a refugee by the state in which she or he has residency and that allows him or her to travel outside that state and to return there States which are parties to the 1951 Convention are obliged to issue CTD to refugees who lawfully reside in their territory.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Analysis & Discussion of gaps and promising practices

The advent of the Urban Refugee Policy three years ago definitively changed UNHCR's approach to working with urban refugees and established clear protection objectives. Despite the new policy's radical departure from its predecessor, operations are reporting that they implementing the policy to a large extent. At the same time, they also highlight very real gaps, challenges and constraints in working with urban refugees. The Division of Program Support Management has issued specific guidelines on implementing the livelihood, health and education aspects of the policy and technical support missions have taken place in a few locations. The findings of the 2010 pilot studies and the five published urban refugee evaluations in 2011 (Kenya, Tajikistan, Bulgaria, Malaysia and Costa Rica) have contributed to an exchange between HQ and the field on the local, prevailing impediments in implementing the policy along with the sharing of innovative and promising practices that have worked. This information from this survey was intended to contribute to this research and attempt to provide UNHCR with an initial attempt at a global analysis of implementation. Although the plight of urban refugees is most deeply understood on the regional level, universal themes have emerged from this global analysis. All the themes point to 1) the necessity of employing new methods with more innovative tools such as interactive websites and mobile messaging; 2) engaging diverse actors such as neighborhood chairmen and local merchants societies, and 3) advocating for urban refugees on the basis of their potential added value as opposed to on the basis of human rights.

Documentation and Status Determination

The survey responses indicate that many urban refugees are often unable to formalize their status and obtain documentation due to distances to government or UNHCR offices, related travel costs, fees, a lack of awareness of the registration process among urban refugees and fear of arrest. Because of these vulnerabilities, UNHCR operations should continue to explore methods that provide registration, documentation and status determination in a more efficient manner. This is especially critical in urban areas where the lack or non-recognition of documentation is linked to the provision of basic human services. The survey showed us that ongoing good practices include: the use of mobile teams, enhanced neighborhood and municipal partnerships, the exploitation of appropriate communication technology, and, training of government officials involved in protection documentation. In light of the across the board findings that the operations had insufficient space to receive refugees and asylum seekers and not enough staff who spoke their languages, it is recommended that they invest in a concerted effort to increase their use of communications technology, capacitate partners and streamline registration, documentation and status determination processes.

Constructive Community Relations and Security

As the survey findings repeatedly flag both the importance and difficulty of reaching out to urban refugees, new approaches could be tried to both foster effective refugee community structures and provide programs that are mutually beneficial for refugees and host neighborhoods. To date, there have been good results with the use of sms messaging, question & answer sessions, participatory assessments, partnerships with community-based organizations, recreational and cultural activities and educational programs to help refugee communities coalesce. These good practices are consistent with the survey finding that revealed that it is the relationship with civil society, at large, as opposed to a specific government entity, that is the key to expanding the protection space for

urban refugees and asylum seekers. Pro-active outreach is essential for refugees to be aware of the protective mechanisms, services, livelihood opportunities and durable solutions available to them--through UNHCR, government or civil society--and to understand how to access them. When one considers how resource intensive grassroots community work is, new and non-traditional partners (mosques, churches, merchants associations, city social workers, etc.) could be enlisted to help promote integration and protection for refugees.

Survey findings also clearly reinforce the link between effective outreach and communication with refugees and prevention of security incidents. Paradoxically, survey findings indicate that many offices find that the defensive security protocols prescribed to help keep UNHCR property and staff safe, actually make it harder to be accessible and responsive to refugee needs and to build the rapport with refugee communities, which in turn helps to keep the office safe.

A safe and sustainable existence for urban refugees

Survey findings support the assertion that urban refugees' access to viable livelihoods is the key factor establishing their well-being or even just survival. If urban refugees can secure a livelihood and meet their basic material needs, they can better manage (and afford) to access services like education and health. Often this debate around livelihoods focuses on whether or not the host government provides refugees with the legal right to work per se. However, the survey findings indicate that the access to financial capital, credit and banking services is in fact more salient. Other factors – the socio- economic situation in the host country, refugees' skills relevant for the urban economy, freedom of movement, the status of refugees' documents and perceptions about resettlement--also significantly influence whether urban refugees can be self-reliant or not. These survey findings enable UNHCR operations to explore other avenues when the advocacy for the right to work is blocked or detrimental to negotiations for safeguarding the larger protection space.

UNHCR should continue to invest in the ongoing efforts to support refugees' self-reliance beyond the advocacy for the right to work: targeted training programs, support for small-scale informal market activities and collaboration with established civil society programs. However, the survey findings indicate a sense among some staff that UNHCR does not possess adequate expertise internally or among traditional partners to creatively and holistically address livelihoods for urban refugees. Most survey respondents indicated that they would welcome the continued development of innovative livelihood programs that link to cash transfers and durable solutions within the context of civil society partnerships.

Survey findings indicate that resettlement is the primary durable solution for urban refugees. By necessity, resettlement continues to be an important strategic tool used to leverage protection space in those countries that maintain restrictive legislation and practice regarding refugees. However, this clearly runs the risk of creating or exacerbating a pull factor into these urban areas. Furthermore, offices report that refugees may be reticent to invest in livelihood activities in their country of displacement for fear that it might undermine their chances for resettlement. Finally, resettlement drives UNHCR registration and RSD efforts, which are already stretched past capacity. When operations send clear messages to refugees about the actual likelihood of resettlement, it can motivate refugees to invest more in their livelihoods and education.

In several countries patient advocacy and diplomacy has resulted in more progressive domestic legislation specific to refugees. In these countries, the possibility of local integration and permanent residence has been linked to livelihood programs, which is a promising practice. However, it is important to recognize that some countries with restrictive refugee regimes are not likely to loosen their migration and refugee policies in the foreseeable future. In these cases the best course may be to advocate for minor changes in policy and practice that can function as protective mechanisms rather than wholesale improvement of the legal framework.

The survey findings indicate that constructive engagement with host country governments and development of those governments' capacity to assist in addressing refugee issues are important tools.

Looking beyond the scope of this review

Finally, by nature, this review focused on assessing implementation of the Urban Refugee Policy. It looked at what UNHCR offices are currently doing to implement the policy and asked offices to report on the challenges they face, gaps in implementation and what they do that works. The review did not ask: “What else could or should UNHCR do to facilitate protection for urban refugees?” “How could UNHCR more effectively collaborate with development actors?” “How could UNHCR more effectively leverage investments in capacity development for service providers” or “Should we examine and assess the strategic use of durable solutions in the urban context.” There is a need to:

Bring UNHCR staff with experience in urban contexts together with key government, UN, NGO and civil society actors to explore and brainstorm how to more effectively and efficiently ensure protection for refugees in an urban context. The results of the survey should provide a good foundation for undertaking such explorations and developing effective policies and practices.

Where do we go from here? Summary of Recommendations

Urban areas are expansive and intricate environments in which to promote refugee protection. While national authorities confer refugee status and pass domestic legislation regulating their rights, freedom of movement and access to services, municipal authorities manage services and security. Refugees themselves live in marginal neighborhoods with the urban poor, use the same (often underdeveloped) services and are linked with them through local economic activity. In many contexts refugees (and the host communities) perceive that their stay is temporary pending resettlement, thus resettlement oriented refugees are reticent to invest in community structures, livelihood activities, learning the language and other integration efforts, which leaves them more reliant on UNHCR, and, on the other hand there are untold numbers of refugees and asylum seekers who are trying to stay concealed from the government and UNHCR so that they may remain unnoticed for a long time. It is possibly, this uncounted, unregistered population that has made greater strides toward integration. Thus, the survey results corroborate that effective refugee protection in this complex context requires a multi-faceted, open approach.

The following section outlines recommendations for a way forward and suggests that UNHCR should pursue:

Multi-level, systemic and holistic engagement with key government actors

- Invest strategically in government partners responsible for immigration, refugees and security where it is likely to work including the use of shared, online databases, biometric tools and standard operating procedures.
- Advocate for minor changes in policy and practices in countries with a very restrictive approach while supporting social capital within the refugee community and its immediate environs.
- Continue and expand advocacy and capacity development with line ministries responsible for key services, such as health, education and social welfare at the national, sub- national and municipal levels and local (neighborhood level).

Innovative and extensive approaches to community outreach and development

- Professionalize outreach and invest in national, professional social workers.
- Engage with local legal aid societies to help refugees acquire documentation for businesses, bank accounts, rental properties and other business transactions

- Use assessments, profiling or other tools to better understand and map refugee and asylum seeker populations and the nuances of the socio-economic and political positions of their neighborhoods
- Develop creative approaches, including expanded field outreach through non-traditional associations such as parent and teachers associations, sports clubs and religious groups combined with the use of modern communications technology.
- Develop innovative ways to empower refugee community groups so that they can take a more active role in socially and financially supporting their respective communities without creating ghettos.

Stronger linkages between material assistance, livelihoods/self-reliance, local integration and community development

- Develop new and more effective partnerships with civil society organizations that have expertise related to livelihoods, e.g., chambers of commerce, street vendors associations, neighborhood groups.
- Use technology, including ATMs, M-Pesa, Internet banking tech solutions etc. to support livelihood activities and access financial capital.

A Review of how UNHCR uses durable solutions strategically to enhance protection

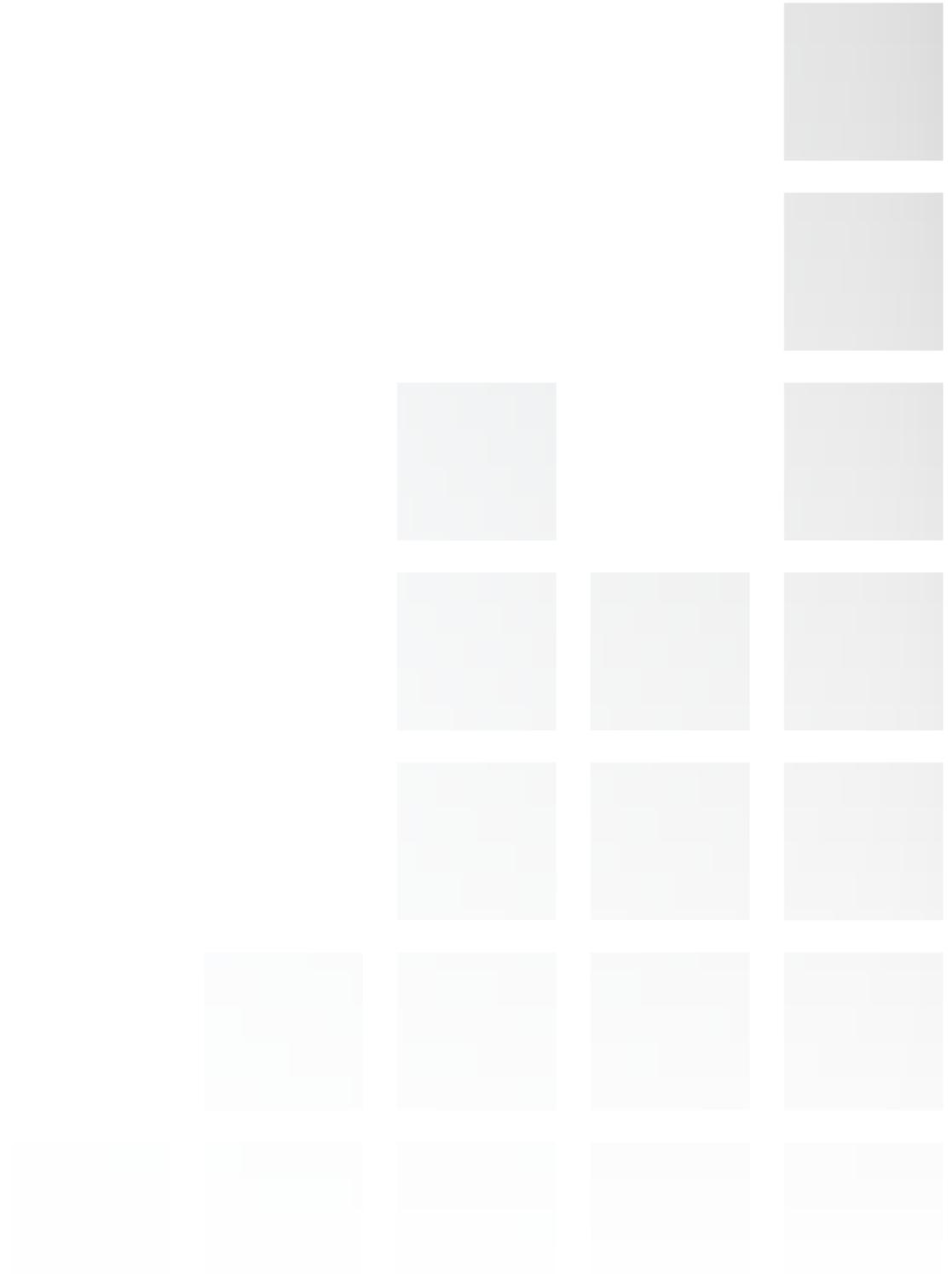
- Review the approach to durable solutions in urban contexts and critically consider, in particular, how refugee's perceptions about opportunities for resettlement and local integration may affect their efforts to be self-reliant.

A Consultation with key actors on refugee protection in urban contexts

- Bring UNHCR staff with experience in urban contexts together with key government, UN, NGO and civil society actors to brainstorm and explore more effective and efficient ways to ensure refugee protection in urban areas.

Annex I: List of Acronyms

AGDM	Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming
BIA	Best Interests Assessment
BID	Best Interests Determination
CAR	Central African Republic
COI	Country of Origin Information
CTDs	Convention Travel Documents
DRA	Department of Refugee Affairs (Kenya)
EU	European Union
HIS	Health Information System
HRIT	Heightened Risk Identification Tools
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
MFT	Multi-functional Team
MOSS	Minimum Operating Security Standards
NFI	Nonfood item
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PoC	Person of Concern
RAIS	Refugee Assistance and Information System
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security



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