



# ILO-UNHCR Joint Action Plan 2023-2025

JUNE 2023



International  
Labour  
Organization



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# FOREWORD

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In 2022, the number of people forcibly displaced by persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order grew by 21 per cent standing at an estimated 108.4 million at the end of the year. More than 1 in 74 people worldwide remained forcibly displaced as a result, almost 90 per cent of them in low- and middle-income countries. The end-year total represents an increase of 19 million compared to the end of 2021 and more than twice as many as a decade ago. In the context of increasing and protracted displacement situations, supporting access to decent livelihoods is essential to ensuring protection, resilience and self-reliance, and bringing dignity and purpose to refugees, other forcibly displaced persons (FDPs), and host communities.

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** have complementary mandates and expertise in supporting forcibly displaced people's access to the labour market, decent work conditions, and adequate social protection as part of the larger work on safeguarding their rights and supporting the communities that host them. With this, in July 2016, the ILO and UNHCR signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) to deepen and formalize our partnership through eight identified common priorities, including promoting inclusive and equal treatment in access to decent work and livelihoods, countering economic exploitation and eradicating child labour.

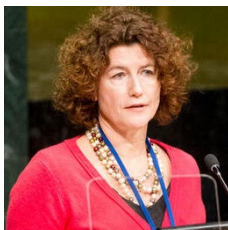
This 3<sup>rd</sup> **ILO-UNHCR Joint Action Plan (JAP)** for 2023 to 2025 reaffirms our commitment to operationalizing the MoU. This comes at an important time for the international community's efforts in responding to crisis situations, and moving towards durable solutions, and will help to inform the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Refugee Forum (GRF) taking place in December 2023.

The Joint Action Plan is a result of six regional consultations in (1) Asia and the Pacific, (2) Latin America and the Caribbean, (3) South, West and Central Africa, (4) East Africa, (5) Europe and (6) the Middle East and North Africa which took place from March to September 2022 and involved over 180 colleagues in field and global teams of both agencies. The JAP has three overarching goals framing our institutional collaboration:

1. Improved governance of access to the labour market and decent work.
2. Strengthened implementation of rights related to decent work.
3. Increased opportunities for jobs, skills and lifelong learning, income, and livelihoods.

Moving forward, it includes new thematic areas of work such as climate change and digital labour platforms to better respond to contemporary mobility challenges and the future of work. It also identifies cross-cutting priority areas that facilitate our joint work such as the meaningful engagement of refugees, other FDPs and host communities – with special attention to women, youth, and persons with disabilities – as well as employers' and workers' organizations.

With the context of forced displacement also changing very fast, the JAP is intended to be a living document that can be updated and adapted to needs following regular strategic dialogues. It also aims to inspire localized strategies in regional and country levels.



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# 1 – Improved governance of access to the labour market and decent work

## MAIN OUTPUT

Normative, policy and regulatory frameworks that enable enhanced access to labour markets and decent work.

### Mainstream evidence-based policymaking through joint monitoring and knowledge production

- Closely coordinate on designing and delivering the annual course on [Access to Decent Work for Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons](#) delivered by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO). (*running every year in March- April*).
- Establish a data sharing and management plan to:
  - Map and monitor the *de jure* and *de facto* right to work (including labor laws) for persons in need of international protection.
  - Disaggregate data (according to displacement type, legal status, age, gender and diversity [AGD], etc.) to update ILO's global social protection monitoring systems.
  - Support UNHCR's reporting against the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) indicator on decent work that focuses on legal standards (e.g., by providing country-level input on challenges for refugees to access the labour market) and statistics.
  - Promote improvements in the production of official labour market statistics on refugees, including those working in the informal economy, through participation in the [Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics](#), and the [Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement](#), to support countries to expand coverage of their labour statistics activities to include refugees.
- Develop guidance on how to undertake joint data collection for projects/programmes in displaced/host community settings.
- Explore possibilities for joint knowledge production, including country analyses related to labour market conditions and transitions (e.g., towards formality) and decent work deficits in law and practice in relevant forcibly displaced population hosting countries.

### Support implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees

- Building on our engagement around the first [Global Refugee Forum](#) (GRF), collaborate for the preparations of the 2023 GRF, including in relation to the [UN Common Pledge 2.0](#).
- Support country specific pledges by working closely with governments, providing technical support and advice, and identifying barriers and opportunities through systematic review (i.e., possibility to replicate PROSPECTS review of policies and practices<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), <https://www.ilo.org/global/programmes-and-projects/prospects/lang-en/index.htm>

## **Reinforce institutional capacities of governments**

- Based on joint rights and policy analysis, identify a set of priority countries where opportunities exist to enhance the Right to Work and the Decent Work agendas for refugees, and define and support joint UNHCR-ILO action and advocacy plans.
- Explore joint opportunities to provide operational guidance in developing/enacting policies that enhance refugee access to decent work and the formal labor market, labour mobility for refugees and those impacted by climate change and the labour market reintegration of those returning to their country of origin.
- Provide technical support for governments to be able to supply data on social protection for displaced persons, to monitor access to labor market interventions and other social protection benefits. (e.g., in Morocco exploring the possibility of collecting information about refugees' coverage by social security schemes).

## **Promote global frameworks within Regional Economic Committees (RECs) and other regional mechanisms**

- Support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa (IGAD) in the operationalisation of the [Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees, and Host Communities](#) and its Plan of Action, as in other regional initiatives like the East African Community (EAC) to ensure that linkages are made between regional and national policy frameworks (e.g., the [Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education](#) and the [Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions](#)).

## 2 – Strengthened implementation of rights related to decent work

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### MAIN OUTPUT

Mechanisms to strengthen fundamental principles and rights at work and improve working conditions and inclusion in social protection systems are promoted and made available.

#### Strengthen access to decent work and fundamental principles and rights at work

- Ensure that displaced and host communities are included in national government strategies to eliminate discrimination, taking into consideration AGD.
- Promote freedom of association and collective bargaining, including right to unionization of refugees in selected countries, e.g., through joint campaigns or statements.
- Collaborate on the implementation of the [UNHCR Guidelines on International Legal Standards on Decent Work relating to Refugees](#) with a possibility to develop proposals for country-level pilots
- Promote dissemination of information on labour market access and decent work for displaced persons in existing refugee, IDP and migrant workers support centres (e.g., in Myanmar).
- Improve working conditions of forcibly displaced people and their hosting communities when using digital labour platforms, and to mitigate associated digital risks, while working towards conducive and inclusive national and local employment strategies, under the [PROSPECTS Opportunity Fund Promotion, Inclusion and Protection of Refugees in the Gig Economy](#). Raise awareness among refugee and forcibly displaced youth of their right to/rights at work (using ILO's Training Package on Right to/rights to Work for Youth – *forthcoming*) and explore joint opportunities to develop their soft and job readiness skills (e.g., [PROSPECTS Regional Refugee Youth Leadership Training](#))

#### Implement inclusive social protection strategies

- Building on the ILO global guide on [Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees, and their Families](#), the [Intervention model for extending social protection to refugees and asylum seekers](#), and [UNHCR operational social protection experience](#), draw up and pilot in selected countries joint UNHCR-ILO guidance to strengthen and develop social protection systems inclusive of refugees (pending available resources from Development Cooperation projects and countries requests for technical assistance).
- Establish priority countries for joint support and advocacy on the inclusion of refugees in universal health protection programmes (e.g., in Pakistan) establishing links with labour market interventions to progressively support refugee contribution to these.

#### Prevent and address trafficking, child and forced labour

- Adapt and roll out existing programmes to prevent the risk of trafficking (like in response to the Ukraine displacement crisis), child labour, and forced labour, including through the use and dissemination of indicators in targeted regions and countries (e.g., Sahel and northern Africa [Tunisia, Morocco, Libya], Pakistan).
- Strengthen protection measures within camp settings and FDP clusters, and ensuring the issues of trafficking, forced labour/labour exploitation and child labour are better understood by protection practitioners and included within wider protection response plans and frameworks.

- Work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 needs to be stepped up and ensure that displaced populations are included within work addressing these exploitative working conditions.<sup>2</sup>

### **Develop capacities of local actors to ensure decent work**

- Develop country-specific trainings for judges, social protection agencies, local authorities, and labour inspectors on right to work and rights to labour law protection for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons which can be adapted and delivered at regional or national level.
- Strengthening OSH and awareness around the importance of safety and health through in-country training for displaced populations, local authorities, and the private sector/employers.

<sup>2</sup> SDG 8.7 - Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

# 3 – Increased opportunities for jobs, skills and lifelong learning, income, and livelihoods

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## MAIN OUTPUT

Programmes and projects to increase employment/job creation, skills and lifelong learning, income and livelihoods opportunities are developed.

### **Increase the knowledge of and support to market-based interventions, including the Approach to Inclusive Market Systems**

- Implement the annual joint UNHCR-ILO-ITCILO training course on [Market-based Livelihoods Interventions for Refugees and Host Communities](#) (*running every year in August-September*).
- Development of a joint study providing guidance to refugee livelihoods officers on how to apply more systemic and market-based approaches in forced-displacement settings and launch it jointly in a hybrid event also with other PROSPECTS partners and actors from the humanitarian-development nexus (*Study under completion, launch to be organized by Q2 2023*)
- In priority countries with opportunities to scale up access to formal labour opportunities, support a comprehensive socio-economic profiling/labour market and value chain analysis and skills matching package in partnership with the government to facilitate access of displaced populations to stable income opportunities.

### **Promote skills and lifelong learning for refugees and host communities**

- Promote pathways of learning from primary education to secondary, technical, and vocational education and training (TVET), up to tertiary levels, including through the [15by30](#) report to be prepared in 2023.
- Strengthen capacity of relevant institutions at national and regional levels to design and implement inclusive skills development policies and programmes and promote social cohesion through skills and lifelong learning.
- Jointly promote UNHCR, ILO, Fin Church Aid & GIZ (2022), "[Skills and Labour Market Transitions for Refugees and Host Communities: Case Studies and Country Practices on the Inclusion of Refugees in Technical and Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\) and Employment](#)" and develop follow-up advocacy guidance on skills for care workers for refugees and host communities.

### **Recognize and capitalize on the existing skills and experience of forcibly displaced populations**

- Joint advocacy for including refugees in existing skills recognition mechanisms and for creating/expanding country level mechanisms to recognize and certify prior learning and qualifications of refugees.
- Strengthen capacity of relevant regional and national institutions to facilitate the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and qualifications, including by using [RPL tools](#) and the ILO guide for employment services providers on [how to facilitate the recognition of skills of migrant workers](#).

## Expand EIIP and other initiatives to create jobs for refugees and host communities

- Promote employment-intensive approaches to generate immediate job opportunities for forcibly displaced and host communities through infrastructural development activities (e.g., under the PROSPECTS Opportunity Fund in Uganda)

## Cross-cutting priority areas

### Communication and knowledge/experience sharing

- Disseminate and run joint training or other knowledge sharing activities around the **UNHCR 101 Guide for ILO staff** and **ILO 101 Guide for UNHCR**. This document aims to enhance the understanding of field staff in each agency about the respective mandate and related key institutional concepts.
- More **systematic communication between country-level operations** (e.g., through bi-monthly exchanges with regional & headquarters colleagues as suggested in Latin America and the Caribbean).
- **Showcase examples of collaboration** across regions and thematic areas through a brochure on the ILO-UNHCR partnership: Joint action for decent work and long-term solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons (*suggestion to come up with an update of the [2019 brochure](#) in 2023*)
- Continue to share relevant publications related to **lessons learnt and good practices**, e.g. [Employment and decent work in refugee and other forced displacement contexts. Compendium of ILO's lessons learned, emerging good practices and policy guidance \(Dec. 2020\)](#), [Employment and decent work in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus \(Sep. 2021\)](#), and [Skills and labour market transitions for refugees and host communities \(May 2022\)](#)
- Exchange information updates on key products developed within the framework of the **UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement** and involve the ILO where

relevant around the objective of strengthening **data collection and knowledge sharing**. The latest assessments can be found in the [UNHCR Microdata Library](#).

### Resource mobilisation/fundraising

- Expand opportunities for **joint fundraising** in displacement contexts where ILO's work should be established or strengthened building on existing good practices of joint fundraising and implementation of joint projects (e.g., in Bangladesh).
- With the Afghan refugee situation, there are opportunities to work on joint fundraising, especially on livelihood and social protection issues.
- Take opportunity of **multi-year development funding** to initiate or strengthen the partnership (e.g., proposal made in relation to Mozambique).

### Strategic planning and collaboration

- Develop further the collaboration on new thematic areas like **climate change, displacement and mobility**, bilaterally and under existing wider collaborative frameworks i.e. both the ILO and UNHCR are members of the [Task Force on Displacement](#), and the [UN Network on Migration working group](#) on climate change and migration and jointly



involved in some projects (e.g., as in the Multi-Partner Trust Fund project in the IGAD region)

- Explore how to **address geographical gaps** (e.g., including in Central Africa, Mozambique).
- Collaborate closely in new displacement crises (e.g., Ukraine) to promote the **implementation of the Humanitarian, Development, Peace nexus model**.
- More systematic engagement with the business, employers' and workers' organizations, and trade unions among other partners.

### Meaningful engagement of forcibly displaced people and host communities, including youth, women, and persons with disabilities

- Strengthen capacity of ILO and UNHCR staff and stakeholders to engage effectively with forcibly displaced and host communities and advance participatory mechanisms and structures for their systematic engagement in programmatic decision making, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.
  - Collaborate on the development and operationalization, of tools and other

resources on meaningful refugee participation at global, regional and country levels, such as those developed under [PROSPECTS Opportunity Fund on Young People's Engagement and Meaningful Participation](#).

- Mainstream regular consultations in all stages of policy and programme cycles by strengthening or replicating existing refugee advisory mechanisms and structures (e.g., UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council, [PROSPECTS Youth Network Committee in Ethiopia](#)).
- Empower refugees and host communities to be effective leaders and drivers of sustainable development.
  - Identify opportunities to support refugee-led initiatives with technical assistance, resources, mentorship and coaching.
  - Facilitate refugee participation in relevant key policy dialogues and the preparatory processes (such as for the 2023 GRF) on topics including learning and training, decent work, and protection.

#### Next steps to facilitate joint implementation, monitoring and evaluation:

- Identifying monitoring indicators
- Establishing a steering committee representing regional and HQ staff
- Setting-up regular strategic dialogues, starting with a high-level meeting leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Refugee Forum