UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees

Americas Regional Workshop Report

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FINDINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil

This paper is the third in a series of five reports on workshops designed to broadcast and replicate good practices for urban refugee programmes. The workshops are the result of the *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* project funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM). A workshop has taken place in each of the five geographic regions. In addition to the workshops, there will be a roundtable event in a particular city in each region.

The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo hosted 37 participants (15 UNHCR staff, 22 partners) from 11 countries as well as three refugees. There were a total of 17 panels on urban refugee related topics including: residence and naturalisation, social protection initiatives, and cross-cultural and livelihoods programming, among others.

The **overall findings from the workshop's good practice presentations** are anchored in one simple concept: support, starting with the notion of supporting governments in their efforts. Governments across the region have committed to establishing more sophisticated reception and assistance mechanisms by strengthening coordination structures amongst different levels of government, with a special emphasis on the municipality, as well as to promote quality asylum procedures. UNHCR's role in bolstering these efforts cannot be emphasized enough. This general goodwill amongst host governments in the Americas is evident in the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in social protection schemes that promote their gradual integration. Achieving full legal integration is critical in this process and, to assist in this, many governments in recent years have begun introducing more flexible procedures that provide refugees access to national services. The panel of refugees only validated the need for such initiatives.

Support to refugee organisations also surfaced as a necessary part of UNHCR's work, to promote dignified outcomes for refugees. Cross-cultural programmes that promote refugee integration also lead to supporting the rebuilding of communities. Mapping and sound assessments, as always, surfaced as critical to activities in reaching refugees, engaging partners old and new, and effectively targeting programmes for refugees.

The good practices in providing livelihoods support all pointed to the successes that come when organisations invest in scaled, multi-sectoral interventions that consider the cultural and psychosocial dimensions of finding work. Appealing to the private sector through their corporate social responsibility platforms also emerged as a useful entry point for partnerships. Similarly, the sensitisation, or educating and training on refugee issues, of relevant actors, including financial institutions such as banks and microfinance institutions, can facilitate refugees' access to capital and other financial services.

BRAZIL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION **– Driving progress and solutions through direct services**

1. *Government-run reception and information centres allow host governments to adequately welcome refugees and asylum-seekers.*
2. *Strategies and plans for local integration are critical to implementing refugee policies and should be spearheaded by the federal government.*
3. *UNHCR's technical expertise and support can greatly enhance the work of governments where the political will to help refugees already exists.*

This section describes the good practices presented in the opening panel on Government Coordination in Brazil. Three panellists represented the City of São Paulo, the São Paulo State Government and a federal government initiative. The São Paulo city and state representatives each spoke about initiatives being supported to improve coordination and the quality of reception for refugees. The panel closed with a presentation about a series of high-level meetings that took place to draft national and state-level integration plans, delivered by UNHCR Branch Office (BO) Brazil.

The City of São Paulo has also improved existing mechanisms to better serve refugees and other foreigners residing within its jurisdiction. As early as 2007, the City organised the first municipal meeting for the protection of refugees in the entire country at the request of refugee and migrant communities resulted in a multi-sectoral public policy that included a map of the communities and their needs. The City also provides free Portuguese classes to refugees and migrants, sensitisation and other training to municipal authorities to prevent discrimination. The city manages the Reference and Reception Centre for Immigrants (CRAI, *Centro de Referência e Acolhida para Imigrantes*). The CRAI is the first access point to municipal services. More than 80 individuals pass by the centre every day, seeking support (psychosocial or other); the Centre hosts evening information sessions and helps asylum-seekers prepare for immigration procedures. The City of São Paulo maintains a strong stance on the importance of adequately preparing for the implementation of immigrant policies, particularly in neighbourhoods with large concentrations of refugees.

The Federal Government of Brazil and the State of São Paulo's greatest challenge today is to effectively coordinate their response to the recent refugee influx.

At the state level, the Government issued an official decree to designate the funds needed to ensure the protection of refugees in São Paulo. Although the 1978 Constitution makes no distinction between the rights of nationals and foreigners, new arrivals are not treated accordingly and human trafficking is a concern. Having the largest international airport in the country presents challenges for the identification of persons in need of protection, uninformed about their rights and thus unable to exercise them. The State of São Paulo's response led to establishing the Terra Nova shelter (*Casa de Passagem Terra Nova*) and the Immigrant Centre for Integration and Citizenship (CIC,

Centro de Integração da Cidadania do Imigrante). The CIC is centrally located and easy to reach using public transportation. At the centre, refugees can access information about the laws concerning them and other state-sponsored programmes. In addition, the São Paulo Police headquarters will soon be transferred to the CIC premises so as to make them more accessible to refugees. Thus far, the State has invested R$2.5 million[1] for the two projects and estimates needing R$6 million more to continue funding them. The State is committed to providing these services, especially since those they serve are the most vulnerable: women and children, infants, persons with serious illnesses, disabilities, etc.

The Federal Government of Brazil is currently working to design and implement a National Plan on Local Integration to fulfil this purpose. The National Conference on Migration and Asylum (COMIGRAR), a series of local and regional meetings held throughout Brazil, began in 2013 and culminated in a national event in São Paulo in May 2014. During these conferences, representatives from the government, international organisations, civil society members, and migrants and refugees discussed migration issues and formulated the main points to be included in the Migration and Asylum Policy and National Plan. These consultations were carried out using an expanded version of UNHCR's participatory assessment, with UNHCR's support. Despite being primarily an eligibility body, delivering decisions on refugee status determination (RSD) claims, it was the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) who assumed full ownership of the process and pledged to implement a National Plan on Local Integration. Two State Committees for Refugees (in Rio de Janeiro and Paraná) have already established Local Integration Plans for Refugees and Migrants. COMIGRAR was a first step in this critical process and, most importantly, it allowed migrants and refugees' voices to be heard.

The conclusions of this panel are three-fold: 1) reception and information centres, as shown in the examples shared by the municipality and state of São Paulo, enable host governments to welcome refugees and asylum-seekers, providing a central place where they can seek material and other support; 2) such centres should be included in local integration plans so as to facilitate the implementation of public policies for the protection of refugees. Most importantly, a national integration policy and plan that is coordinated down to the state and municipal level is essential; and 3) UNHCR can play a key role in enhancing the capacities of governments by providing technical expertise where needed. It is clear that the Government is Brazil is doing all that it can with its limited resources to help the many refugees arriving in the country and is becoming an important leader in the region.

[1] Foreign exchange rate for December 15, 2014 (inauguration date of the CIC): 939,991USD.

WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS **– Not just supporting but complementing municipal efforts**

1. *Inserting refugee concerns into local or municipal plans ensures that their needs are met alongside those of the host community.*
2. *UNHCR should promote good practice exchanges between municipalities in a country and throughout the region.*
3. *A comprehensive approach to integration should be based on an honest dialogue with municipal authorities.*

The Working with Local Governments Panel featured three speakers from Chile, Brazil and Venezuela. UNHCR Chile and the Antônio Vieira Association (ASAV, *Associação Antônio Vieira*) from Brazil discussed how working closely with local governments strengthened their efforts to integrate and resettle refugees in Quilicura, Chile and in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. UNHCR Venezuela described how its various cooperation agreements with state of Zulia have promoted the integration of refugees and improved access to national systems.

In 2008, the municipality of Quilicura, located in the Santiago metropolitan region in Chile, approached UNHCR in the hopes of better understanding the refugee population that resides in the city. The coordinated efforts with the municipality began with a profile assessment of the population carried out by the University of Los Lagos with UNHCR's funding and technical support. The study, in turn, led to the creation of a reception plan for the municipality of Quilicura that also focused on addressing the initial obstacles to refugees' integration as well as the challenges they face after settling into the city. Due to the lack of a baseline, and the language barrier with Palestinians and Haitians, gathering the necessary information was the greatest challenge. The reception plan is continually monitored and implemented through the municipality's reception office. At the office, refugees and other foreigners are informed about education and health services, employment and training opportunities. UNHCR, the University of Los Lagos and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) continue to provide technical and financial support to the reception office. The aim is to replicate the Quilicura model in other Chilean municipalities. Thus, UNHCR and IOM have convened a series of inter-municipal discussions to promote these exchanges.

The Antônio Vieira Association (ASAV), based in the city of Porto Alegre, has a large network and contacts within municipalities all over the state of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil. The organisation focuses on four key aspects: 1) identifying and maintaining support networks through sensitisation and training sessions; 2) developing personalised plans for local integration; 3) distributing families throughout different cities in the state; and 4) spearheading the "municipalisation" of assistance. ASAV works arduously to seek out and sensitise service providers and other partners in the host cities about refugee issues, preparing them to continue providing comprehensive and efficient services after ASAV's one year resettlement programme support comes to an end. ASAV has fostered committees within the municipalities to address the diverse needs of the resettled. By working closely with municipal

service providers, including lawyers, state authorities and school officials, ASAV promotes refugees' inclusion in the life of the city and their progressive integration.

When the Government of Venezuela committed to funding public programmes for refugees in 2011, UNHCR Venezuela saw this as an opportunity to be more proactive with local governments, knowing full well, as the presenter stated, that "the refugee issue does not end in the national governments' policies". Thus, UNHCR and the Government of the state of Zulia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2014 to institutionalize a longstanding coordination formerly based on spoken agreements. Through the MoU, UNHCR Venezuela has established official partnerships with the Zulia Secretariat of Education, Public Health, Culture and Security as well as the Governor's Office. The agreements aim to: increase refugees' access to the public education and health care systems and promote their inclusion in the innovative FundaMusical programme (see the Cross-Cultural Programming Panel on page 29) among other government programmes. UNHCR's approach was key to arriving at a mutually agreed upon MoU. The Office opened the talks by reassuring the Zulia State Government of its intention to support its initiatives, which did not have to suffer or be stalled because of the presence of refugees. UNHCR Venezuela has shown a genuine interest in helping the Zulia State Government tackle general social problems, bridging efforts to meet the needs of the local and refugee community.

In all three of the examples above, UNHCR and its partners enhanced the capacity of host municipalities and states to plant the seeds of integration and expand the protection space for refugees. In Quilicura (Chile), refugee needs were incorporated into the municipal reception plan, facilitating their access to services and beginning the integration process upon arrival. Exchanges with other municipalities to replicate this approach throughout the country are currently underway. In various cities in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), ties to the municipality were strengthened and contacts mobilized to ensure refugees' smooth transition into their communities. Finally, in the state of Zulia (Venezuela), UNHCR essentially rebranded the provision of assistance and programmes for refugees as part and parcel of the ongoing government initiatives to strengthen Venezuelan communities in the state. The three practices illustrate that integration begins in the community, at the local level, and can only be catalyzed by the recognition and inclusion of municipalities.

REFUGEE STATUS DETERMINATION (RSD) **– Quality assurance initiatives (QAIs) support the work of governments**

1. *Reviewing and strengthening the refugee status determination procedure can result in more favourable decisions for asylum-seekers.*
2. *Conducting a thorough interview is critical to ensuring a quality status determination procedure.*
3. *Decentralisation can lessen the burden on overwhelmed decision-making bodies.*

This section examines recent initiatives to improve upon existing refugee status determination (RSD) procedures in Panama, Costa Rica and Brazil. A regional legal expert began by introducing the evolution of the legal context in the Americas and referred participants to the online repository of legislative good practices (30 in total) located on UNHCR's website.[2] This introduction set the ground for discussions on the experiences of the Governments of Panama, Costa Rica and Brazil in implementing UNHCR's Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI).

Through the QAI, UNHCR offers technical support and guidance to the different national bodies responsible for making refugee status determination decisions.[3] The initiative involves an evaluation of the current RSD system and the four stages of the RSD procedure (registration, proceedings and interview, decision, and appeals).

In Panama, the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR, *Oficina Nacional Para la Atención a los Refugiados*) has been actively engaged in the QAI, convening joint meetings with UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Panama. Registration has improved through the establishment of a database containing applicants' information, which made it possible for ONPAR to provide receipts upon the submission of applications. In addition, ONPAR has made their waiting areas more hospitable by asking partners, such as HIAS and NRC Panama, to be permanently present so as to orient applicants on the determination procedure, available services, psychosocial support, etc. To improve the quality of eligibility interviews, ONPAR has also created a new interview manual. The recommendations made after each step of the initiative have been reviewed and incorporated

[2] Available at (in Spanish only): http://www.acnur.org/t3/que-hace/proteccion/proteccion-de-refugiados-en-america-latina-buenas-practicas-legislativas/

[3] This national body is usually referred to in the Americas as the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE, *Comisión Nacional para Refugiados*) although the name varies across countries. In Honduras, it is the Directorate-General for Migration (*Dirección General de Migración*) who carries out the procedure. In Costa Rica, this responsibility falls under the Committee for Visas and Refugees (*Comisión de Visas y Refugiados*) and in Panama, to the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR, *Oficina Nacional Para la Atención a los Refugiados*), while in Mexico the procedures are followed through by the Mexican Committee of Assistance to Refugees (COMAR, *Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados*). All of the countries in Latin America have established national refugee status determination procedures with the exception of Cuba. In the Caribbean, these procedures also exist in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic; in the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago they are performed in an *ad hoc* manner.

into the procedure. At the time of the workshop, ONPAR was in phase 3 and had received 65 recommendations in total.

Meanwhile in Costa Rica, UNHCR has partnered with two government agencies to carry out the QAI, the Committee for Visas and Refugees (*Comisión de Visas y Refugiados*) and the General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs (*Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería*). Both eligibility bodies have taken full ownership of the process, which have also been endorsed by the President of Costa Rica. Following revisions brought on by the QAI, applicants' information is recorded at the time of registration in a database, guaranteeing their access to the procedure and *non-refoulement*. In as little as three days, applicants receive an interview appointment allowing the decision-making body enough time to gather the necessary information to conduct a thorough interview, e.g. country of origin information. This process has helped authorities reduce the time needed to finalize decisions and improve the recognition rate. Since engaging in the QAI, the rate of recognition has increased by 28 per cent in Costa Rica.[4] Sixty-eight recommendations later, the Government of Costa Rica remains committed to the continually strengthening the determination procedure, even after reaching the final phase of the QAI.

The National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) in Brazil began the QAI in July 2014 and, although initially finding many gaps, has worked steadfastly to promote sustainable improvements in RSD. After conducting 200 interviews during the proceedings and interview phase of the initiative, CONARE strengthened the interview process by revising its survey to improve the quality of the interview and optimize time. In the third phase (decisions), CONARE realized the importance of being more transparent and therefore began to explicitly state in their decision letters the reasoning behind the decision. Applicants are now provided with detailed responses on why their requests were approved or denied. CONARE has also established a new budgeting system, so as to be able to manage the increasing number of asylum requests.

In addition, during the week of the workshop, CONARE began a decentralization initiative to reduce waiting times. This was a first step in CONARE's efforts to provide local responses; the National Plan on Local Integration is now the committee's greatest priority. CONARE hopes to build the structure, protocols and tools needed to replicate the successes of the QAI at the state and, eventually, the municipal level.

These three examples show the importance of having a robust system for determining the eligibility of asylum-seekers. Strengthening these systems, either by reviewing its components, creating new guidance or building the capacity of authorities, can lead to more favourable decisions. As seen in Brazil, when an eligibility body is suddenly flooded with requests, the burden

[4] In some months, the rate of recognition has been at 0 per cent but, on average, it is 38.5 per cent. In May 2015, the rate was as high as 48 percent and in June 2015, 72 per cent.

can be shared by decentralizing the eligibility function to the state and the municipality, ensuring thorough reviews and timely responses.

DOCUMENTATION **– Host governments prioritise refugees' access to education through granting the documentation they need**

1. *Gaining support from the relevant ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Education) can facilitate refugees' access to their services.*
2. *Sensitisation and capacity-building can promote more flexible regulations that can benefit refugees.*

The Documentation Panel focused on three good practices from Panama, Mexico and Costa Rica in which greater access to education has been obtained through the "flexibilisation" of documentation requirements by national governments.

The National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR, *Oficina Nacional Para la Atención a los Refugiados*) in Panama, with the technical support of UNHCR and other humanitarian aid organisations, set out to work more closely with the Ministry of Education (MEDUCA) to promote the inclusion of refugee boys, girls and adolescents and their retention in public schools. ONPAR and UNHCR's concerted efforts enabled two initiatives: first, ONPAR held training and sensitisation sessions for MEDUCA officials, dealing with the problems of access and retention (the existing legislation at the time presented serious obstacles for refugee children and adolescents wishing to enrol in school); second, as the result of the creation of a working group, ONPAR, MEDUCA and UNHCR drafted a ministerial decree to regulate the recognition of academic diplomas. With time, more high-level officials from the Ministry became involved. The decree has been brought to the presidency and is pending approval. The decree's passing represents a significant step in aligning MEDUCA's policies with the principles enshrined in various international instruments. Pressure from both ONPAR and UNHCR allowed for the meetings with the Ministry to take place on a monthly basis and prompted the Ministry to commit and take full responsibility for the process.

In a similar effort, the Mexican Commission of Assistance to Refugees (COMAR, *Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados*) has made it possible for foreigners, including refugees, to obtain national recognition for their primary, secondary and university-level education. COMAR began by addressing international protection principles in their sensitisation efforts for the authorities with the help of UNHCR and civil society, and celebrated the new alliances through partnership agreements with the Secretariat of the Interior (SEGOB, *Secretaría de Gobernación*) and the Secretariat of Public Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*). The agreements came into force in 2009, and refugees were formally incorporated into the scheme in 2012.

Now, those who cannot present the original, certified document obtained from a degree-granting institution have three other options for obtaining recognition for their studies: they can either 1) present a copy of the original document, 2) present documentation proving the last grade level completed, or 3) take a general knowledge exam in order to be placed at the correct educational level. Those who obtain recognition for their university-level education also receive a nationally recognised document that is on par with what is granted

to Mexican nationals and therefore facilitates their access to employment in the formal sector. Thus far, 122 individuals have benefited from this scheme and COMAR is working to disseminate information so that more refugees can benefit from it.

After conducting a participatory assessment in 2012, UNHCR Costa Rica found that many underage refugees faced discrimination in class. In addition, at the time of the assessment only three per cent had their studies successfully recognized by the Costa Rican authorities; likewise, only 3 per cent had access to studying at universities and only about 7 per cent to technical training. The hard data collected in the assessment allowed UNHCR to confidently approach the relevant authorities to carry out its advocacy work. After much close work and negotiation, UNHCR and the Ministry of Public Education (MEP, *Ministerio de Educación Pública*) sensitised 500 teachers and 300 students in the province of Desamparados, where the majority of refugees reside, on refugee issues and cross-cultural education. That same year the system for recognizing foreign degrees was established. Thus far, nineteen individuals have benefited from this mechanism. These small initiatives culminated in a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the MEP in 2014. The Office notes the invaluable role of the General Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs (*Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería*) in establishing a good working relationship with the MEP.

In 2015, UNHCR extended its cooperation through a second MoU with the National Institute for Learning (INA, *Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje*) to extend INA's technical certification programmes to refugees. INA has 50 centres in the country that provide more than 1,780 certified technical programmes and 8,300 in-person and distance courses. So far, 140 refugees and asylum-seekers have enrolled in these certification courses. Those who have had their studies revalidated by the MEP are also eligible to participate in these programmes.

In Panama, Mexico and Costa Rica, the efforts of the host governments to promote brighter futures for refugees led to initiatives that endorse their inclusion in the education system at various levels. The role of UNHCR in sensitizing and reminding authorities of the difficulties that refugees face figured prominently in these advances. These exchanges, which in turn promote stronger working relations with host government ministries, lead to policies and legislation with a certain flexibility, grounded in the will to help refugees.

RESIDENCE AND NATURALISATION **– Pathways to full legal integration**

1. *UNHCR can work towards ending statelessness by working closely with governments to naturalise stateless persons of concern, including children.*
2. *Loosening documentary proof requirements for naturalisation procedures can greatly increase access for refugees.*
3. *Legislation that upholds international protection standards for refugees should be duly lauded and promoted worldwide.*

The Residence and Naturalisation Panel focused on three different case studies: one good practice example from Panama where permanent residence was made more available, and two examples, from Costa Rica and Chile, in which refugees were able to obtain citizenship.

Until recently, refugees residing in Panama for years could not become permanent residents. However, with the passing of Law 74 in 2013, Panama joined the ranks of countries that grant refugees the right to become permanent residents in an effort to promote their full legal integration. The implementation itself of Law 74 is dependent on the coordination, complementarity and information sharing amongst various government entities, namely the National Migration Service (*Servicio Nacional de Migración*), the Supreme Electoral Court (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral*) and the National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR, *Oficina Nacional Para la Atención a los Refugiados*). Before the law was drafted, UNHCR participated in a parliamentary debate to advocate for refugees in Panama; a refugee was also present at the debate and shared his own experience.

Once the law was approved, the challenge was to disseminate information about the new law. UNHCR supported ONPAR in hosting two general information sessions for the refugee population and also published information on the application process and its requisites in two national newspapers. ONPAR and UNHCR then partnered with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to disseminate more information and jointly publish an information booklet. Law 74 is exemplary legislation, wherein more rights are bestowed upon refugees and none are taken away. Law 74 specifically states that a refugee should not renounce refugee status when acquiring permanent residency, a clause that maintains their right to international protection.

Through its resettlement programme, the Government of Chile has welcomed Palestinians, Colombians and other refugees hailing from the former Yugoslavia to be resettled in Chile. Two-hundred and nineteen Palestinians refugees have resettled in Chile. In 2014, UNHCR and civil society assisted the Ministry of Interior of the Government of Chile to initiate a naturalisation process for stateless Palestinian refugees that were resettled in Chile in 2008.[5] The naturalization process was made more accessible by making

[5] In 2008, at least 55 individuals would be eligible for citizenship, having met the minimum five-year residency requirement.

documentation requirements more flexible and allowing stateless Palestinian refugees to use their resettlement application forms as proof of documentation for the process.

Thus far 150 Palestinian refugees have been granted Chilean nationality. Some challenges remain, namely that Palestinian refugee children not born in Chile and still under the age of 18 are not yet eligible to apply for Chilean nationality. However, the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR are actively supporting a law that is set to pass in Congress that would lower the minimum age requirement to apply to 14 years of age. UNHCR Chile and the Ministry are hopeful that the law will pass, promoting the full legal integration of refugees in Chile.

According to the Costa Rican constitution, foreigners can request citizenship after residing in the country for seven years; for Spaniards and other Latin Americans, the minimum requirement is just five years. To capitalize on this opportunity, UNHCR worked together with the Supreme Electoral Court of Costa Rica (*Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones de Costa Rica*) to relax the documentary proof required of refugees for the naturalisation procedure, culminating in a MoU in 2013. The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has been a key partner by helping refugees prepare for the history and Spanish language components of the exam. Despite being able to apply for naturalization, these examinations still pose a serious obstacle for many refugees. They can be especially difficult for those who do not speak Spanish or never received a formal education. UNHCR Costa Rica uses the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) for refugee status determination (RSD) to determine who is eligible; of the 242 that have had their paperwork processed through the QAI, 73 are eligible for naturalisation and 23 have already passed the history and Spanish language components of the exams.

In conclusion, laws and regulations that allow for refugees to become legally integrated are decisions of host governments and, when approved, stand as a testament to their generosity. The Government of Panama has extended the right to permanent residence to long-established refugees living in the country. Most importantly, it continues to honor the safeguards put in place for refugees through the international protection system, allowing them to maintain refugee status. In Chile, the Government helped put an end to many cases of statelessness and is working to expand this process for many children left in this vulnerable situation. Loosening requirements for specific documentation is another example of how the Government of Chile promotes the availability of integration. Lastly, in Costa Rica, UNHCR and its partners are supporting the government's concession by enabling refugees to meet the government's expectations regarding the competencies it believes every Costa Rican citizen should possess, working knowledge of the Spanish language and an understanding of the country's rich history.

***MAPPING* – Targeted assessments shared for a broader knowledge base and stronger networks**

1. *Refugee needs across sectors can be quantified through an index for more efficient and effective assistance interventions.*
2. *Mapping to establish networks is only the first step in a continual relationship building process promoted by exchange amongst practitioners.*

The panel on Mapping featured two initiatives from Ecuador and Brazil. The Ecuadorian example involved a mapping of needs that culminated in an index that can be adapted and used across operations and contexts. The example from Brazil focuses on grassroots mapping and engagement to establish a network of service providers that are connected and equipped with the tools required to serve refugees in Rio de Janeiro.

The Comprehensive Solutions Initiative (CSI) team asked the question, "Where does integration begin for refugees in Ecuador"? As a result, UNHCR Ecuador established a Local Integration Index. The Index's development began with a large data collection effort[6] in which 3,671 Colombian refugee households (9,447 individuals) were surveyed about their migratory status, legal documentation, access to work, education and health services and their links to the host community, among others. The answers to the survey provided UNHCR Ecuador with descriptive statistics that were later translated into a formula that measures local integration, taking three main dimensions into account: refugees' legal, economic and socio-cultural integration. Using the Local Integration Index, UNHCR Ecuador was able to determine that 25 per cent of refugees currently live below the Ecuadorian poverty line and that another 15 per cent live below the extreme poverty line. In essence, 41 per cent of refugees are living in situations of poverty.[7] More importantly, as a result of this initiative, UNHCR Ecuador has been able to improve its targeting efforts and set specific indicators that inform the prioritization of its activities.

Across the continent, Caritas Rio de Janeiro (Caritas RJ) uses mapping to not only map the services in the city but as a means through which to reach out to service providers and establish an active, informed network. Caritas RJ's methodology for finding and adding partners to the network involves a six-step process beginning with the mapping of resources and institutions providing services to refugees. Next, Caritas selects institutions and assesses their relevance to refugees. Those institutions that provide services valuable to refugees are contacted and invited to sensitisation and training sessions. The completion of the sensitisation and other trainings lead to partnerships and inclusion in a broader network of institutions serving refugees in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Reaching service providers on the ground can be difficult, as higher-level management can restrict initial communications. To remedy this

[6] UNHCR Ecuador used an internationally recognized methodology to study hidden populations known as Respondent Driven Sampling. An initial group of persons or "seeds" were chosen to contribute to the data collection effort by referring additional participants.

[7] These figures are compared to the 22 per cent of Ecuadorians who live below the national poverty line and another 8 per cent live below the extreme poverty line (30 per cent in total).

issue, Caritas RJ has collaborated with institutions such as the Regional Social Service Council of Rio de Janeiro (CRESS-RJ, *Conselho Regional do Serviço Social do Rio de Janeiro*), a respected local authority on migration and refugee issues, to publish a short piece in their bimonthly newsletter and organise a series of talks titled “Migration and Refuge in Rio de Janeiro: The Work of Social Workers in this Context”. Over the years, Caritas RJ has engaged an increasing number of stakeholders (15 in 2010; 17 in 2012; 25 in 2013) and counts on the participation of 55 partners in its network today.

The examples from Ecuador and Brazil, although seemingly quite different, illustrate the importance of using sound methodologies for assessment work. In the Ecuador example, the quantitative assessment that was carried out allowed UNHCR to make an intangible concept such as integration, quantifiable and more achievable. In Brazil, Caritas RJ showed us how finding and vetting partners, through a structured methodology, can allow us to build stronger, better equipped networks that ultimately better serve refugees.

INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS **– Reaching refugees can be a challenge but it can be done**

1. *When governments lack the means to reach refugees, and vice versa, UNHCR and its partners can serve as the link between the two.*
2. *Refugee contributions to information campaigns should never be underestimated.*
3. *Both refugees and the host community need to be better informed and interventions should target both.*

The Information Campaigns Panel explored different outreach practices that have been in use in Ecuador, Costa Rica, and in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil. These range from door-to-door mobile outreach activities, to national awareness campaigns, monthly briefings for new arrivals and a web and video-based project organized by refugee youth.

Since 2012, Asylum Access Ecuador has been working closely with the communities of San Lorenzo (Esmeraldas province), using mobile brigades to facilitate access to the refugee status determination (RSD) procedure. The Refugee Administration, the government entity that carries out the RSD procedure, does not have an office in San Lorenzo. Therefore, when refugees and asylum-seekers wish to renew their documents or apply for asylum, they can submit their applications to Asylum Access Ecuador, who then transmits the applications to the Refugee Administration as part of a bilateral agreement. Transportation for the interview phase is then coordinated amongst and provided by HIAS Ecuador, UNHCR and Asylum Access Ecuador. In theory, refugees and asylum-seekers can submit requests for document renewals and applications for asylum to police officials but, in practice, this right is not always guaranteed.

By offering to connect the Refugee Administration with refugees and asylum-seekers, Asylum Access Ecuador has made it possible for those with limited economic means to travel to the nearest Refugee Administration office in the provincial capital and this effectively access the RSD procedure. On average, there are five children per family, resulting in exorbitant travel costs. This arrangement has been particularly useful in ensuring that refugees follow through with the RSD procedure; some may change their phone numbers or may not have a number at all. By getting closer to the communities where refugees and asylum-seekers reside, Asylum Access Ecuador also passes along information about the decisions made for their cases. Recognising the need for representation in other parts of the province of Esmeraldas, the Refugee Administration has opened an office in San Lorenzo but only one individual staffs it. Thus, Asylum Access Ecuador's support continues to be necessary and welcome by the Government of Ecuador.

Asylum Access Ecuador has also worked tirelessly to reach refugees in Guayanquil (Guayas province), a city of more than 2 million inhabitants. In the city and surrounding areas, Asylum Access Ecuador has been going door-to-door to reach refugees and applying novel outreach techniques, reaching refugees and asylum-seekers in strategic places such as health centres,

bakeries, Colombian businesses and the doors of the Refugee Administration's office in the city. The organization has also established a "chain call" mechanism whereby Asylum Access Ecuador contacts a few refugees and who in turn reach the rest of their community to disseminate any new information. Most importantly, the organisation has established a strong working relationship with the municipal government to identify and refer refugees and asylum-seekers to the Refugee Administration and other NGOs.

The door-to-door modality also requires the constant presence of legal advisors in the city. This presence, in particular, has helped to build trust in the organisation. Refugees reached by Asylum Access Ecuador are briefed on access to legal assistance, their rights, and the RSD procedure, often conducting small information sessions in the refugees' own homes. Asylum Access Ecuador informs refugees of different paths to legalization, namely the Mercosur[8] visa for which some may be eligible. In the past, asylum-seekers were expected to submit their applications for asylum within the first 15 days of arriving in Ecuador; thankfully, this window has been extended to three months, with important benefits to affected populations.

In Costa Rica, UNHCR set out to locate the Colombian refugee population in a protracted situation to inform them about how to request Costa Rican citizenship (for those eligible) and other socioeconomic integration services. In addition, the Office set out to confirm the population's presence and need for international protection. To carry this out, UNHCR Costa Rica established three mobile teams that go door-to-door to refugee homes and businesses throughout metropolitan areas and other parts of the country. The following aspects were key to this outreach campaign's success: 1) staff maintained a certain level of visibility by wearing a particular shirt, vest, cap or carrying a UNHCR ID card or banner to confirm their affiliation; 2) they worked extended hours, not only during working hours but also in the evenings on weekdays and during weekends; 3) the teams also took into account mobility issues related to access, climate, distance, and security; 4) they maintained a certain level of flexibility, being ready to make home visits, leading meetings, and visiting businesses; 5) the teams conducted an initial mapping of the refugees' whereabouts using any and all information available to structure their efforts, using census and partner data, information about migratory fluxes, case files, etc.; and, finally, 6) the mobile teams worked closely with the government, religious centres, and telephone companies to disseminate information through text messages. UNHCR Costa Rica also created informational materials disseminated through information stands that are set up in strategic locations such as the Immigration Office, health clinics, hospitals, and other public institutions where assistance is provided to refugees and asylum-seekers. These efforts had a snowball effect.

[8] Mercosur (MERcado COmún del SUR) is a customs union of four Southern-cone countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) established under the 1991 Treaty of Asunción. Formed on the pattern of the European Community's Treaty Of Rome, it allows duty free inter-Mercosur trade and levies a common external tariff (0 to 20 per cent) on non-member countries. Its associate countries are Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador.

To go hand-in-hand with its door-to-door outreach efforts, the Office in Costa Rica also commissioned an information and sensitisation campaign. Oftentimes, refugees cannot benefit from their rights because of a lack of awareness. The video series "*Ser refugiado es como ser tico*" ("Being a refugee is like being a Costa Rican")[9] tackles xenophobia and empowers refugees and asylum-seekers about their rights. The videos were produced jointly with the Government of Costa Rica's Immigration Board (within the Ministry of Foreign Service), UNHCR Innovation (at UNHCR's Headquarters in Geneva), the advertising firm McCann-Erickson and the refugee community. The information and sensitisation campaign consists of three linked strategies: 1) the "*Ser refugiado es como ser tico*" videos shown in cinemas, outdoors advertisements, and publicized through traditional printed materials; 2) a website dedicated to refugees where refugees can find information on their rights, duties and the services available to them, in their native language;[10] and 3) a two-way SMS communication system, piloted in Costa Rica in April 2014.

Caritas Rio de Janeiro (Caritas RJ) reaches asylum-seekers in the city, mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo, by hosting monthly orientation meetings led by lawyers and social workers on the refugee status determination procedure, documentation and their rights and duties under Brazilian law. More specifically, Caritas RJ reviews the procedures, the relevant laws and coaches refugees for their interviews. Many are afraid to divulge personal details that can often help their case, such as being afflicted with HIV, their sexuality or religion, because of the persecution they may have experienced in their own country of origin. Caritas RJ assures them that confidentiality is upheld throughout the process. Although the organisation still works with refugees and asylum-seekers on an individual basis, reaching a wider audience at once became a priority after the various influxes in recent years.

Initially, after developing the content for the briefings, Caritas RJ found translation and communication to be the greatest challenge. Now that these hurdles have been overcome, the focus is on continuing to enrich the content and the communication dynamic. Thus, Caritas RJ always ensures that at least two or three recognized refugees attend the meetings, allowing for a richer and more informal exchange of information, in which the organisation can help to dispel doubts. In the long term, Caritas RJ hopes that refugees will lead these exchanges themselves and become more active in helping others in similar situations.

When Caritas São Paulo (CASP) learned of UNHCR's Youth Initiative Fund, the team at CASP set out to identify refugee youth leaders and organize a meeting where they explored two key questions: 1) What is the main problem that refugees face in Brazil?; and 2) What can be done about it, as a group?

[9] The campaign videos can be found on the UNHCR Americas YouTube page (in Spanish only): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnLNN8A_C2k&list=PLcWbnvGj8a451NBwVPo9H-7E6JbRd1a_F

[10] Available at: http://help.unhcr.org/languages/en/

The refugees identified misinformation and prejudice as the biggest issues and decided to conduct a sensitisation campaign, anchored in a video. CASP staff and volunteers – a diverse group of students, journalists, filmmakers, musicians, actresses and other professionals – attended the meetings but the entire project was conceived and carried out by a group of 50 refugees and asylum-seekers of 15 different nationalities. Finding the time and day to convene these meetings was a challenge; eventually the meetings took place on the weekends. Almost one year of continued efforts later, the video was launched on World Refugee Day, receiving significant media attention in Brazil. Apart from the video, the refugees also maintain a website (www.refugeesinbrazil.com) where they share their own stories, advice about living in Brazil and information about their countries of origin to dispel myths and misconceptions about them.

Conducting information campaigns in urban areas can be a challenge as refugees are often dispersed across a city, or at least that's what the prevailing narrative states. Asylum Access Ecuador and UNHCR Costa Rica have illustrated in their good practice examples how older strategies can still bring about some success in these contexts, through their door-to-door work and the efforts of their mobile brigades. Similarly, UNHCR Costa Rica's video campaign coupled with CASP's own video and website show how we can reach refugees and host communities in more novel ways, through audiovisual material and technology. Still, the approaches of the two Caritas, CASP and Caritas RJ, whereby they invited refugees to come to them, to participate in an open information exchange and dialogue, are equally as powerful and effective methods. Thinking more globally, we can identify three important takeaways: first, that UNHCR and its partners should be the link between refugees and governments when necessary; second, refugees' own inputs are invaluable and should be honored at every step of the planning and implementation process; and finally, these examples may shed light on the need for disseminating good information. In an age when we are more inter-connected than ever, when more resources are made available to the masses, misunderstandings and misinformation are still rampant.

SOCIAL PROTECTION – For refugees, social protection begins with inclusion

1. *Government sponsored social protection programmes afford refugees and asylum-seekers the security they need most.*
2. *The inclusion of refugees in government subsidy programmes decreases refugees' chances of falling prey to predatory lending and other forms of exploitation.*
3. *When governments have not yet established official standard operation procedures (SOPs) for processing cases, UNHCR and partners can offer their support and guidance to help mechanisms be established.*
4. *Beginning conversations with governments by expressing a desire for dialogue and complementarity is a good starting point for including refugees in social protection programmes.*

Social protection, as defined in the *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees: Asia Regional Workshop Report*, refers to public policies and related actions that are designed to address poverty and economic shocks, including the social vulnerability and exclusion that can emerge as a result. Increasing access to essential services such as health care, education and adequate nutrition is a form of social protection that can keep refugees and asylum-seekers from becoming more vulnerable. The examples discussed during the Social Protection Panel illustrate how Bolivia, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela have promoted social protection to mitigate vulnerability by enrolling refugees in health, housing and other programmes.

Just one year ago, the Government of Bolivia's social housing programme, administered through the Ministry of Housing (*Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Servicios y Vivienda*) was only available to Bolivian nationals. This meant that to buy land, build homes or renovate existing homes, refugees had to find ways to obtain credit, usually through informal arrangements and with abusive, high interest rates. In turn, this made it very difficult to access dignified housing. A participatory assessment revealed this to be a huge obstacle to local integration. With the support of its partner agency, Pastoral de Movilidad Humana (PMH) Bolivia, UNHCR Regional Representation for Southern Latin America in Argentina was able to advocate successfully for refugees' inclusion in the social housing scheme. The MoU was signed in late October 2014. Inclusion in the programme means that refugees can now access public credit with low interest rates (between four to five per cent interest) and avoid extortion and abuse by creditors. Thus far five individuals and families have been able to access these benefits; UNHCR is working on an information dissemination strategy so that others can benefit from the programme. The National Committee for Refugees (CONARE, *Comisión Nacional del Refugiado*) of the Government of Bolivia was also involved in strong sensitisation efforts, with UNHCR's technical support.

In a related effort, UNHCR's Regional Representation for Southern Latin America in Argentina has worked closely with the Government of Bolivia and its partner PMH to increase refugees' access to the universal health insurance

scheme through a supreme decree. Four programmes have been established as a result, targeting: 1) minors and pregnant mothers; 2) elderly adults; 3) persons with disabilities; and 4) the general refugee population. Those belonging to the first three groups, considered the most vulnerable, are exempt from paying the medical fees in public hospitals across the country. Those in the fourth group, should make a partial payment that is relative to their household income. The Government of Bolivia's CONARE worked with PMH to carry out various training sessions to ensure that the decree was implemented by the various institutions providing services directly to refugees.

The Government of Chile has been a pioneer in the region in social protection programmes. The Government of Chile recognizes the state's central role in the development of public policies that promote durable solutions for asylum-seekers and refugees. This commitment was solidified with the creation of the Refuge and Resettlement Section (*Sección de Refugio y Reasentamiento*) in 2005. Three programmes form the basis of its social protection initiatives: 1) the "Basic Humanitarian Subsistence" Programme, which is focused on providing asylum-seekers with shelter, food, housing, basic materials, documentation and transport; 2) the "Integration of Refugees" Programme, an initiative centred on providing support for training, employment and livelihoods more generally, studies, health (physical and mental), medications and technical help for language learning; and 3) the "Vulnerable and High Complexity Cases" Programme. This last programme is run through the Technical Committee for Vulnerable Cases (*Mesa Técnica de Casos Vulnerables*), a group coordinated between the Ministry of Interior and Public Security (*Ministerio del Interior y Seguridad Pública*), UNHCR and the partner FASIC (*Fundación de Ayuda Social de Fieles de las Iglesias Cristianas*), which meets to discuss vulnerable and highly complex cases. The focus is on promoting the adequate social integration of refugees and those resettled through an intersectoral coordination. The three programmes are financed annually through the Budget Law of the Public Sector (*Ley de Presupuesto del Sector Público*) which guarantees the transferal of 1,000,000USD to the Ministry of Interior and FASIC. In 2014 alone, the Government of Chile provided assistance to 465 refugees, asylum-seekers and resettled individuals.

The Living Water Community (LWC) of Trinidad and Tobago has been heavily engaged in efforts to ensure that refugee and asylum seeker children are provided with the psychological support they need in the country. Working closely with the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, a nascent government institution charged with the care and protection of children, LWC has been able to establish an informal referral system. Prior to the system's establishment, LWC conducted sensitisation sessions with the legal officer at the Children's Authority, highlighting laws that are both non-discriminatory with regard to nationality and that emphasize the care and protection of all children. When LWC encounters a vulnerable case today, the organisation coordinates with the legal officer at the Children's Authority by email. At the moment LWC prioritizes the most vulnerable cases but is advocating for an inclusive referral mechanism and plans to continue sensitising other practitioners who work directly with refugee children. Recognising that refugee

parents are also in need of psychological support, LWC is working so that a referral system can be established to attend to their needs in the future.

UNHCR Venezuela has found that working closely with governments has been the key to the success of its partnerships for social protection. The nature of this work is founded on three main pillars: 1) education and training of government professionals; 2) mechanisms of direct coordination; and 3) having specific protocols for assistance and referral. The Office also promotes roundtable discussions and working groups at the municipal, state, national and regional level. UNHCR Venezuela collaborates with the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE, *Comisión Nacional para Los Refugiados*), the Ombudsman Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*) and the migratory authority to promote the inclusion of refugees in state plans for the general population.

Overall, it is clear that various governments in the Americas are leading the way in mainstreaming refugees into national systems. In Bolivia, the government is promoting this through housing and health. Likewise, the interests of children and their psychosocial wellbeing are being prioritized by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. In Chile, the Government is taking the leading role in assisting refugees and asylum-seekers from the moment they enter the country. The Government of Venezuela is also working with UNHCR to help refugees, based on a relationship based in honesty and complementarity. These initiatives begin at the national policy level and need to be channeled through to states and municipalities in their implementation.

REFUGEE VOICES **– Refugees' personal experiences remind us of what is most important**

1. *The orientation upon arrival and the assistance in obtaining documentation is what refugees consider the most helpful.*

Three refugees living in Brazil agreed to join the workshop and share their stories. Their own personal testimonies were delivered in English and Portuguese. They were also asked to provide comments and recommendations at the end of the Supporting Refugee Organisations Panel that followed.

Dana Al Balkhi, from Syria, remained in her home country until many of her female relatives started to disappear. Although she had family in many countries such as Canada, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, she could not get a visa to travel to any of those countries. She ended up in Turkey with her sister but without the right to work or access to health care, which led her to venture to Brazil. She stayed at a local mosque during her first four months in Brazil. Dana began to take Portuguese classes and after six months became conversational in the language. During that time she moved about five times and was forced to change jobs accordingly. She continued to study Portuguese and submitted the required paperwork to have her degree in English Literature recognized but has not yet been able to. She currently works at a local Islamic organisation as an administrative assistant.

Mabiala Nkongo was persecuted in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Everyone in his family went their separate ways. He first fled to Angola and lived with a family there for three years. His sister left for Brazil so he decided to do the same. He was underage when he arrived. His studies were not recognized by the universities or by any employers. The same occurred with the provisional documentation he received upon arrival. Eventually he started working at a fast food chain and opened a bank account. He has since received his digital work permit (*carteira digital*) and is now continuing his studies.

Adama Konate was told he would have to wait about one year to receive his visa to study in the United States. In the meantime, war broke out in his native Mali. He applied for a visa to travel to Brazil, registered upon arrival and started studying accounting and working as a translator for Caritas and the Federal Police.

Dana, Mabiala and Adama were very grateful to have been recognized as refugees in Brazil and despite the hardships they endured to get there and upon arrival, they were very happy to be safe and be able to continue with their lives. When asked what assistance was the most important for them upon arrival, all three responded that the help to obtain the necessary documentation and, overall, the orientation that they received from various local organisations such as Caritas in São Paulo.

The one thing that all three refugees agreed was the most helpful assistance they received was the initial orientation from organisations like Caritas and the help to obtain the necessary documentation to look for employment, secure a lease on an apartment, etc.

In sum, these three testimonies pay tribute to the hardships that refugees face before and even after arriving in their host country, as they search for security and protection. Yet, they also exemplify the resilience they have and their will to contribute to their host countries. They do not want to be supported by the government or live off of their subsidies, what they value most is the help they receive upon arrival so that they can get back on their feet and be independent.

SUPPORTING REFUGEE ORGANISATIONS **– Taking the middle man out and strengthening refugees' capacities**

1. *Providing initial support to help refugees organisations get organized and stay organized is critical.*
2. *When working in organized groups, refugees can successfully advocate for themselves.*
3. *Using alternative conflict resolution techniques can be more effective than resorting to legal measures in legal disputes.*

Two participants from Colombia and the Dominican Republic delivered examples that showcased how UNHCR and its partners can support refugee organisations so that they can be sustained agents of change.

Refugees and asylum-seekers in the Dominican Republic found it important to form an advocacy coalition given that documentation, employment, housing and access to education and health services remain serious issues, especially for the most vulnerable such as the elderly. UNHCR Dominican Republic guided the refugee association Bonds of Dignity (*Lazos de Dignidad*) from its inception, and provide the backing it needed to assist members of its community. Support in the initial stages was crucial to the association's success and longevity since the refugee community in the Dominican Republic was very fragmented. UNHCR emphasized the potential of acting as a unified force instead of trying to solve issues on an individual basis and promoted the creation of a managing board for the association. Although Haitians make up 80 per cent of the association, the managing board is comprised of one Haitian, one Colombian, one Syrian, one Cuban, one Ukrainian, and one Iraqi, among others. UNHCR Dominican Republic also ensured that the association was registered as a NGO before the Dominican authorities. After this initial consolidation of the group, UNHCR participated in the association's meetings to ensure that it maintained its focus and to build its capacity by helping to create a strategy and assist in the writing of proposals.

The association is now fully autonomous, with a strong leader who also headed a social movement in her native Colombia, and can cite various accomplishments, such as establishing agreements with U.S. high schools who send volunteers to build or renovate the homes of the most vulnerable refugees. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*) has invited the association to participate in the consultations that will form the basis for the Government's 2015-2020 Human Rights Plan.

In the border regions between Ecuador and Colombia, as well as in Panama and Colombia, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Colombia works with single mothers, Afro-Colombian women, low income families, complex legal cases and associations of refugees with a focus on women, to ensure that refugees have legal access to dignified, stable housing and a path towards home ownership.

In the 9 de Octubre neighbourhood in Lago Agrio (Sucumbios province), Colombian refugee families relied on NRC Colombia's support to negotiate with the Ecuadorian host community to allow for the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda*) to register the land and properties of various families as "joint family assets". This made it possible for refugee women who have unrecognized relationships with Ecuadorian men and their children to also obtain land deeds and have rights in the case of separation or divorce. In addition, in the Nueva Esperanza neighborhood in the city of Ibarra (Imbabura province), NRC Colombia assisted an association led by a refugee woman and comprised of 98 families (60 per cent of whom were Persons of Concern) in obtaining a 70,000USD subsidy from the Ministry to buy land, pay architects, and gain approval from municipality members to build new homes for the refugees by mediating through alternative conflict resolutions techniques. The association already had a savings of 8,000USD (accumulated by saving 5USD a month per family). This feat alone challenged the pervasive stereotype that refugees cannot organise amongst themselves.

Many refugee women have Ecuadorian partners but are not in legally recognized relationships and in case of separation or divorce, the women would not be protected. NRC Colombia has worked with the male partners to recognize both their relationships with the refugee women and their children. At the same time, discrimination is the greatest problem refugees face in Ecuador and, the fact that foreigners are not allowed to buy land within 20 kilometers of the border shared with Colombia. Initially, there was a lot of reticence from the host communities who did not want refugees to reside among them, mainly due to negative stereotypes against Colombians, and resistance from the Ministry because of a general lack of knowledge. Nonetheless, the Government of Ecuador has approved social programmes allowing for land to be given to groups or families that do not have any or have very little, focusing on women heads of household.[11] These legislative instruments are at the core of NRC Colombia's legal aid work in Ecuador.

However, alternative conflict resolution techniques have proven more useful in many cases for improving relations between the foreign and host communities and are preferred to taking legal action, except when taken to guarantee due rights. Similarly, when access to banking is limited or non-existent, using non-traditional means of securing credit, through cooperatives and associations has made it possible for refugee women to augment their financial capacity so that they can access housing.

Dana, Adama and Mabiala – the three refugees who shared their stories in the previous panel – gave their reactions to the two good practices shared by UNHCR Dominican Republic and NRC Colombia. They emphasized their

[11] The 2009 Plan to Foment Access to Land and Territories (*Plan de Fomento de Acceso a Tierras y Territorios*), which allows land to be given to groups or families that don't have land or too little, with women, farmers and ethnic groups as a priority. The 2010 Organization Act on the Food Sovereignty Regime (*Ley Orgánica del Régimen de la Soberanía Alimentaria*) offers special considerations for women head of households.

desire to contribute to their host country, Brazil, but reminded us of the importance of obtaining the legal documentation they need (e.g. work permits, recognition of their studies). They also agreed that refugees should be portrayed in a better light to the general public and the public should also be better informed about why they would leave their countries and come to Brazil to solicit asylum.

The two examples presented illustrate how UNHCR and partners need to work with refugees and not for refugees. They need to offer refugee organisations support where they need it and then step away to let them take control. NRC Colombia did just this, by advocating for the refugee families in Ecuador, Panama and Colombia and offering legal and mediation support only where necessary. UNHCR Dominican Republic supported the creation of an autonomous, empowered refugee advocacy association.

CROSS-CULTURAL PROGRAMMING **– Building bridges between the refugees and their host communities**

1. *Including children refugees in arts programmes can promote their sense of belonging, and that of their parents, in the host community.*
2. *Building familiarity with the host city is critical in helping refugees gain the confidence to navigate otherwise new and unfamiliar places.*
3. *Learning the local language is key to promoting local integration.*
4. *Providing communal meeting spaces for the host community and refugees can improve relations between the two groups.*

The Cross-Cultural Programming Panel benefited from examples of activities implemented in Venezuela, Panama, Brazil and Mexico. All four instances provide a unique perspective on how cross-cultural sensibilities can be integrated into urban programmes.

The Government of Venezuela established the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela in 1975 (commonly referred to as *El Sistema*, or The System) with the aim of promoting social inclusion, personal growth and ingenuity for children and youth, without distinction of nationality or social origin. Recognising the affinity in these values, UNHCR Venezuela established an agreement with the governing body of the Simón Bolívar Music Foundation (FundaMusical), and began supporting the enrolment of refugee children into these local music schools in order to promote their social inclusion and participation. As part of its efforts, UNHCR has also trained school teachers and parents in the communities where they reside about refugee issues to raise awareness. Especially vulnerable children are provided with counseling as well. Although the FundaMusical schools are free of charge and can be self-sustainable through the government-led programme, UNHCR Venezuela sponsors children whose families cannot pay for the uniforms and instruments required, and also helps with transportation and incidental costs. UNHCR has contributed funds to schools attended by many refugee children to enhance the FundaMusical activities and improve the facilities. After enrolling in the programme, the children and their families reportedly felt an increased sense of belonging in their communities and self-confidence to continue pursuing a formal education. UNHCR also actively supports the establishment of bi-national FundaMusical schools and programmes along Venezuela's rural borders where the integration of refugee children is precarious.

The "Know Your City" Initiative is a local integration strategy promoted by HIAS Panama in Panama City. Every two months, a team of HIAS psychologists leads a group of refugees and asylum-seekers, of mixed age and gender, on organized excursions to key sites and monuments in the city. The refugees and asylum-seekers decide on what places to visit, articulating why they think the visit would generate a positive experience, and they plan the logistical aspects of each excursion. The idea is to create reference points for refugees and asylum-seekers and engender a sense of familiarity with their new host city. Undertaking the excursions builds a collective experience of discovery, which in turn builds a deeper sense of belonging amongst the

members of the group. By knowing the history, symbols and key places in the city, refugees and asylum-seekers feel that they have increased access and a right to these spaces; the excursions introduce them to new ways of navigating the city and invite them to partake in the Panamanian experience. HIAS Panama has engaged more than 50 asylum-seekers and refugees in the "Know Your City" programme since its inception.

Caritas Rio de Janeiro (RJ) understands how important learning the local language is for integration in Brazil. Thus, the organization offers Portuguese language courses free of charge to refugees and asylum-seekers who wish to improve their proficiency in the language. There are four courses: two for native French speakers (due to the high demand), one for native Spanish speakers and another course taught to those who have other mother tongues but also speak or understand English. At any time, each course is taught by two volunteer professors from the local Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ, *Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*);[12] this dual teaching strategy ensures continuity in the event that one of the professors can no longer teach the course. Three refugees also volunteer as assistant teachers to offer extra support during the courses, and specialised attention is given to refugees and asylum-seekers with learning disabilities or special needs, e.g. those who are illiterate or dyslexic, others who only speak a particular dialect and the elderly. Caritas RJ serves 202 students of more than 20 nationalities. The content of the language courses was designed using an innovative pedagogic approach that allows for anyone to join the course at any time. In addition, the courses are structured around themes that are relevant and necessary for integration and they learn Portuguese through relevant themes such as work and employment, Brazilian laws, mobility, transport, health, food, gender, and diversity. The language courses are partly financed by UNHCR and by the Ministry of Justice (*Ministério da Justiça*) and the Public Ministry of Employment (MPT, *Ministério Público do Trabalho*).

In Mexico, UNHCR has been working closely with civil society organization Casa Refugiados to bring the local community and refugees and asylum-seekers closer together. Casa Refugiados provides temporary shelter for refugees and asylum-seekers – for up to three to four months – and within these spaces also promotes educational and cultural activities. As part of its training and capacity building, Casa Refugiados engages other key actors to develop solidarity networks that can then develop into opportunities for housing, access to health services and education, as well as employment and self-employment. This network of civil society actors promotes the sensitisation and mobilisation of other parts of the community, primarily in educational and religious spaces, and cultural exchanges through festive meeting spaces that are at once collaborative and inclusive. These activities

[12] Through the teaching, research and extension scheme (*ensino, pesquisa and extensão*) in Brazil, university professors, apart from their duties as teachers and researchers, are also obliged to spend a certain amount of hours engaging in a project in partnership with the local community free of charge. The professors that work with Caritas in Rio de Janeiro approach the organisation hoping to fulfill this service requirement through their support of the organisation's language programmes.

are particularly welcome by a host community whose social fabric has long been worn away by violence.

The exchanges between the host community and refugees are integral to building integration potential. In Venezuela, this was achived by including refugee children in a programme otherwise reserved only for Venezuelan children; in Panama, HIAS created a greater sense of belonging by enabling refugees to their host city as Panamanians do; Caritas RJ worked to make it possible for refugees to communicate effectively with Brazilian nationals through their language courses. And lastly, the organization Casa Refugiados created common, festive spaces for refugees and the host community to celebrate what unites them and not what would otherwise entrench divisions in the community. Promoting these encounters is also about promoting acculturation and refugees taking the culture of the host community and melding it with their own.

THE "GRADUATION MODEL" **– Scaled, targeted interventions for livelihoods show promise**

1. *Public and private partnerships are essential to the success of a Graduation Model programme.*
2. *Allowing host governments to incorporate the Graduation Model into their own country plans is a great way to promote the programme's sustainability.*
3. *With the proper support and capacity-building, refugees can take themselves out of situations of poverty.*

The Graduation Model Panel focused on the experiences with the pilot programmess in Costa Rica and Ecuador, with a special presentation by a regional livelihoods expert from UNHCR Ecuador.

The regional livelihoods expert launched the panel discussion with an overview of UNHCR's *Operational Guidelines on the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming*, [13] as the criteria will be mandatory and a prerequisite for all livelihoods programmes starting in January 2016.

The Graduation Model is an approach involving a series of scaled interventions targeting the ultra-poor; the aim is to enable them to come out of or "graduate" from poverty. The approach was developed by the Bangaldeshi organisation BRAC. Both BRAC and the NGO TrickleUp worked with UNHCR recently to adapt the model for use in refugee settings.

In Ecuador, UNHCR is targeting 200 families (739 individuals) in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas (henceforth simply Santo Domingo), hoping to enable this population to find employment and self-employment opportunities. The intervention began with a socio-economic study of the region and a market assessment. Although the Ministry of Labour (*Minsiterio del Trabajo*) in Ecuador had conducted market assessments previously, the results analysed the national market and did not focus specifically on Santo Domingo. To carry out a local assessment specific to Santo Domingo, UNHCR began by consulting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Ecuador and then worked with Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) to carry out a profiling assessment of the population, as it is very dispersed. UNHCR Ecuador then partnered with a private enterprise to conduct the market assessment.

HIAS Ecuador was a key partner all throughout, lobbying on behalf of refugees to local businesses. The participating families were briefed on their rights and responsibilities and have been monitored and assessed based on various "graduation criteria", e.g. food security, income streams, savings account, and community life and networks. One of the keys to the success of the programme thus far has been the inclusion of governmental and private entities for training and to promote refugees' inclusion in public services.

[13] Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/54fd6cbe9.pdf

Between January and May 2015, 20 per cent of the 200 participating families had savings accounts in comparison to 10 per cent at the beginning of the programme. In addition, three per cent have already increased their income per capita to the Ecuadorian minimum wage and 18 per cent have increased their daily per capita caloric consumption. Special attention has been placed on the elderly and other vulnerable populations. UNHCR Ecuador expects that 35 families will have graduated out of extreme poverty by December 2015.

Sustainability is often a concern when implementing a programme as resource-intensive as the Graduation Model. In Costa Rica, however, the Government has decided to include the Graduation Model in its National Plan for Development 2015-2018 (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2015-2018*), ensuring its sustainability for years to come. This initiative came after various advocacy efforts, in which UNHCR reminded parties about the General Law on Migration from 2010 (*Ley general de migración*), and emphasized the importance of integrating refugees.

To pilot the programme, UNHCR Costa Rica is collaborating with the Department of Integration and Human Development (*Dirección de Integración y Desarrollo Humano*). UNHCR Costa Rica only chose persons who can legally remain in the country to participate in the pilot. A Graduation Model committee has been established and includes eight public institutions. The Government of Costa Rica is committed to providing the money necessary for the programme subsidies. Moreover, Costa Rican women are also included in the scheme. The initial market study was carried out in partnership with the ILO, allowing the organization to identify the current employment niches in the market, while the National University of Costa Rica carried out the baseline survey. The first assessment of the programme's achievements will take place nine months into the project's implementation.

As UNHCR Ecuador and UNHCR Costa Rica have shown, the Graduation Model can be effective but its implementation must be based on sound assessment and monitoring and needs to call on the expertise – public and private – in the country where it is being implemented, as its implementation is context-specific. Moreover, in situations where the government takes the Graduation Model and integrates it into its own development programmes, we can expect a more sustainable intervention.

LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMING **– Livelihoods programming can take on many forms in different contexts**

1. *Livelihoods support needs to be targeted and built upon a strong market assessment.*
2. *Social obstacles, e.g. discrimination, must also be addressed through livelihoods programming. Likewise, cultural barriers should be explained and worked through.*
3. *Collective enterprises, at least for refugee youth, can be successful in building confidence and sustainable livelihoods.*
4. *Corporate social responsibility platforms are useful.*
5. *Refugees are capable of saving when adequate support is provided.*
6. *Livelihoods interventions coupled with education and training initiatives can increase refugees' employability.*

During the two livelihoods panels, six initiatives describing how UNHCR and partners can forge partnerships with the public and private sector and build refugee capacity to promote self-sufficiency were presented by participants from Argentina, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Brazil and Ecuador.

In Buenos Aires, the Argentinian Catholic Foundation Commission of Migration (FCCAM, *Fundación Comisión Católica Argentina de Migraciones*) has brought together public and private actors to promote refugees' social integration through various educational and employment interventions. In the initial stages, UNHCR and the Government of Argentina provided basic humanitarian assistance. In addition, FCCAM has forged partnerships with the University of Buenos Aires and the Tzedaká Foundation who offer their support in the form of food assistance, shelter, health services, orientation and Spanish language classes. Once these basic needs have been met, the focus shifts to labour and educational integration. FCCAM works with Manpower Group and Iceberg Cultural Intelligence, two employment consulting and recruitment agencies, to offer cultural workshops on job searching in Argentina to refugees and asylum-seekers; the workshops are also a platform for educating businesses affiliated with the two agencies on refugee issues.

With FCCAM, New York University (NYU) reviews CVs and works with each refugee and asylum seeker to explore a "Plan B", identifying other interests or competencies that may enhance their employability in another sector should they be unable to secure employment in their sector of choice. To promote educational integration, FCCAM has a team of tutors that offer support to those who want to take examinations to have their professional qualifications recognized in Argentina, or those who want to continue onto tertiary education or employment. Various civil society organisations and Argentinian ministries are involved in this capacity. In 2012, at the start of the programme, 15 individuals benefited from this programme; in 2014, almost 40 have been served through the programme.

UNHCR Venezuela has been implementing an innovative strategy combining private sector fundraising with refugee awareness initiatives since 2003, by

appealing to private sector organisations through their corporate social responsibility platforms. Colombian refugees face a lot of prejudice and social exclusion, limiting their prospects for local integration despite being considerably integrated in the economic sense. UNHCR's aim was to educate Venezuelan society about refugee issues and to promote a culture of tolerance and peace in the country. With the help of various private sponsors, UNHCR was able to organize musical concerts in Maracaibo and Caracas, conduct a customer donation programme in a retail store chain in the state of Zulia (EPA) and launch promotional campaigns through social media and public relation events, all to highlight the positive aspects of having refugees join the community.

UNHCR Costa Rica also saw corporate social responsibility as a path to fostering the socio-economic integration of refugees residing in the country, particularly in regard to promoting refugees' ability to secure employment. UNHCR, the Immigration Office and partner agency ACAI signed a MoU with the Business Association for Development (AED, *Asociación Empresarial para el Desarrollo*). By providing technical support, sharing good practices and establishing other social responsibility programmes and policies amongst its 120 affiliated companies, AED has become a key player in the effort to increase refugees' access to employment. "*Vivir la integración*" (Living Integration) is the resulting scheme of this collaboration and has led to the establishment of an affirmative action mechanism for placement of refugees in the workforce as part of a broader corporate social responsibility platform. Private companies can join the platform by providing job opportunities to refugees, purchasing the goods they produce, contracting their services, conducting awareness campaigns or backing the livelihoods training of refugees. Between 2013 and 2014 approximately 240 refugees and asylum-seekers were employed; another 600 were trained by partner companies. Fifty-one of the 600 trainees found jobs within the first quarter of this year. The network has greatly increased since the Chamber of Commerce joined in 2013, bringing along over 800 allied companies. Last year UNHCR gave awards to 36 companies and three public institutions on World Refugee Day for their alliance.

UNHCR BO Brazil accepted a group of Sri Lankan refugees for resettlement in Porto Alegre (Rio Grande do Sul State) in 2012. To address the cultural and linguistic barriers and ensure that all members were on a path to becoming locally integrated, UNHCR – with the support of its partner ASAV – contracted a Tamil-speaking consultant who could communicate with the refugees directly and who understood their cultural needs. This person provided assistance as the resettled Sri Lankans navigated life in Brazil, helping the children enrol in local day care centres and schools, assisting the elderly to link up with local groups of elders, and accompanying them to places of worship where they could build a more sustainable social community as well as providing assistance during language courses. The intercultural exchange that took place between the Sri Lankans and the hosting Brazilians was also very important. The most impressive feature of this resettlement programme was the fact that the Sri Lankans' professional capabilities were matched with the demands of the market in Porto Alegre;

they were also open to learning new trades to identify new job opportunities. At the end of the one-year support programme, all of the resettled Sri Lankans were employed and self-sufficient. Many were able to have their professional credentials recognized nationally while others decided to become self-employed.

For six years, RET Latin America (formerly known as the Foundation for the Refugee Education Trust) has been working closely with refugee youth in Quito, Ecuador, providing them with the support they need to launch entrepreneurial cooperatives. The focus of these interventions is to construct livelihoods through psychosocial support, rebuilding confidence, expanding upon technical competencies, and capitalizing on the social dimension of the programme. The greatest challenge is the effect that mobility sometimes has on continuity and group cohesion. RET also works closely with the refugee youth's families and communities. They start out by building groups through small projects that involve their community and showcase how they are able to contribute and be positive agents of change, always through a participatory process. RET constantly monitors and supports, offering technical advice for the youth to put together their life plan. The initiative has both a therapeutic aspect, brought about through the psychosocial support and group dynamic, as well as a livelihoods aspect, in which they launch a venture, watch it grow and become actively involved in its growth and success. The refugee youth who participate in this initiative become confident leaders and can be better prepared to ensure sustainable livelihoods throughout their lives.

Catholic Refugee Services (CRS) and the Scalabrinian Mission (MSC) partnered up to build refugees' own capacities and provide technical assistance to promote their economic and social integration in Ecuador. Following the initial stage when humanitarian assistance is provided, CRS/MSC works together with refugees to establish a savings account and design a business plan (based on their capacities and potential), and participate in vocational and technical training where necessary. After meeting the expectations set through a savings scheme, the refugee family receives equipment or credit to kick-start their productive enterprise. CRS/MSC offer support for up to one year and throughout this time also act as the link between the refugee families and various local and national service providers to ensure their access to credit facilities, taxpayer registration, municipal permits and any other necessary documentation to guarantee the enterprise's sustainability. CRS/MSC found that despite refugees' limitations in generating income, they are able to save even a few cents daily which allowed them to follow through with the savings scheme.

CRS/MSC's methodology involves a series of scaled interventions and close monitoring, not unlike those that are employed in the Graduation Model, involving self-saving, grants, credit, capacity building and organisation. Amongst its accomplishments, CRS/MSC has helped establish 50 savings groups, comprised of a total of 600 persons; 1,200 persons have received grants, amounting to 400,000USD; 900 loans have been disbursed, 98 per cent of which have been recovered; and has called meetings with national authorities to promote the inclusion of refugees through their regularisation.

UNHCR's Regional Livelihoods Expert, based in Ecuador, took a moment at the end of the panel discussion to alert the participants of an existing database of good practices in livelihoods that can be found online on the UNHCR website.[14]

The FCCAM/Argentina and the RET/Ecuador livelihoods interventions presented, made it clear that such interventions need to be multi-dimensional. They were not focused solely on ensuring that refugees were employed but that they understood the local work culture and norms. The interventions took into account that the participants were on a path to further studies, which would help increase their earning potential. The interventions were equally concerned with the psychosocial aspects of spearheading a project and becoming productive members of society. In Costa Rica and Venezuela, UNHCR used corporate social responsibility platforms to engage the private sector and promote refugee employment and integration into their communities. UNHCR BO Brazil and CRS/MSC in Ecuador also reminded us of the close monitoring that is required and of how useful it can be to offer specialized support and scaled interventions, not unlike the Graduation Model.

[14] Available at (in English and Spanish): http://livelihoods.acnur.org/en/home/

ACCESS TO CAPITAL **– Partnerships with the government and banks can help refugees establish themselves financially**

1. *Coordination with banks is integral to their extension of financial services to refugees.*
2. *Microfinance institutions can be an important entry point and can help refugees establish their credit history.*
3. *When refugees contribute the funds for communal banking schemes, their sense of ownership and responsibility to follow through with loan payments is increased tremendously.*
4. *Continual sensitisation to build the understanding of public servants is also a critical part of any initiative to increase access to service, including financial services.*
5. *Traineeships and internship programmes can help refugees enter a local job market.*

Three examples from Ecuador, Panama and Bolivia illustrate the importance of having access to capital when building sustainable livelihoods.

HIAS Ecuador has found an innovative way to increase refugees' access to financial services. Their efforts began with a series of workshops for business owners and other private sector leaders, carried out with the Partner Employment Network (*Red Socio Empleo*), the Ministry of Labour and UNHCR. These sensitisation sessions gave way to a partnership with the largest private bank in Ecuador, the Bank of Pichincha. HIAS worked hard to build its relationship and trust with the Bank. In turn, this led to the establishment of a community credit scheme in which the refugee community members guarantee the loans. The community bank group selected a president and a regulator. For the credit scheme, the interest rate was set at six per cent. HIAS also held financial training workshops on sound indebtedness for refugees and selected those with a stable economic activity and needed more capital to boost their businesses.

Generating the necessary trust to launch such an initiative was a challenge but through coordination meetings, HIAS and the Bank of Pichincha established a format which guarantees the gradual growth that the person will have through his livelihood. Here is how it works: after the loan agreement is signed and the necessary documents are submitted for credit verification and verified, the loan is disbursed. Three documents are needed to apply for a loan: a reference document that guarantees the monitoring and livelihood assistance that the person is receiving, documentation of refugee status (including provisional documents) and a valid ID or passport. The community bank group is comprised of individuals living in the cities of Esmeraldas, Lago Agrio, Ibarra and Santo Domingo. On average, the 21 ventures that have been funded received loans of 600 to 800USD and paid 173USD a month per thousand loaned. 17,000USD has been loaned thus far. The initiative has allowed the participating refugees to have more visibility within the financial system in Ecuador. It also increased their independence, sense of responsibility, self-sufficiency and level of empowerment.

In Panama, ONPAR, with UNHCR's support, established an agreement with the Superintendence of Banks. They now accept the refugee ID card issued by the National Service of Migration (*Servicio Nacional de Migración*), allowing refugees to open bank accounts at any bank. Importantly, this initiative made it possible for persons without a valid passport to access the banking system.

In addition, the Office established an agreement with the microfinance institution Microserfin, of the BBVA banking group, to make it possible for refuges to access anywhere between 600 and 3,000USD in loans. The capital used for the loans comes from a revolving fund contributed by UNHCR through the Panamanian Red Cross (PRC) in 2007. ONPAR appealed to Microserfin through its Corporate Social Responsibility platform, emphasizing how helping refugees take on productive work projects would support their platform. Capturing the interest of the Superintendence of Banks was more challenging but was made possible after some sensitisation sessions. The partnership with Microserfin worked when establishing an identification and referral system because of the close collaboration between the Microserfin, PRC and UNHCR. The monitoring of the borrowers and the technical training offered to them was also essential. ONPAR, PRC and UNHCR hope to sign a MoU with Microserfin soon, to institutionalize the partnership and guarantee access to microfinance services for more refugees in the future. Microserfin allowed for refugees to build their credit history, which in turn made it easier for them to open a bank account.

In Bolivia, the Government, with the support of UNHCR's Regional Representation for Southern Latin America and its Bolivian partner Pastoral de Movilidad Humana (PMH), developed a series of interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods for refugees in the country. Public programmes are available to help refugees integrate into the labour market. The Bolivian Ministry of Labour certifies trades or professionals through examinations or certifications. "My First Job" is another programme that refugees can access and involves three months of state subsidies to participate in training and an internship with a company, where the Government pays part of the salary, and in the last month the refugees are officially hired. Eighty-five per cent of the programme participants are still employed after 7 months. These are the options available for those with a worker profile.

For the more entrepreneurial refugees, UNHCR partnered with the microcredit institution Foncresol to provide them with seed capital. A key to this programme's success has been the complementarity of the microcredit and seed capital programmes to the public programmes, including through the capacity building and monitoring that took place. Because of the refugees' diverse profiles, it is important to evaluate and carry out a sound assessment to identify actions in the short, medium and long term and, most importantly, the refugee himself has to agree to the life plan that is developed.

A significant amount of information surfaced during this panel. HIAS Ecuador and ONPAR in Panama illustrated how it is possible to engage with banks and make financial services available to refugees. All throughout any

consultation process, sensitisation becomes a powerful tool for negotiation. The same can be said about microfinance institutions, which can be a starting point to financial inclusion by helping refugees establish their credit history. In Bolivia, we saw how, apart from job placement and traineeships, refugees with more entrepreneurial qualities can greatly benefit from seed capital to kick start their enterprises.

MIGRATION AND REFUGEES IN BRAZIL **– Brazilian institutions have good intentions toward refugees and migrants**

1. *For physical and cultural reasons, refugee women have special needs.*
2. *Documentation and sensitisation are key to refugees' effective integration into Brazil's labour market.*

Two key figures from Brazilian civil society and government were invited to speak on refugee and immigration issues in Brazil, offering their perspectives on what UNHCR and its partners can do to promote refugees' integration and well-being in Brazil.

Sister Rosita Milesi, Director of the Brazilian Institute of Migration and Human Rights (IMDH, *Instituto de Migrações e Direitos Humanos*), focused on an important topic that is often lost in discussions about urban refugees: the experiences of refugee women in Brazil. Sister Rosita is also a member of a broader network of Scalabrinian missions in Brazil of more than 50 institutions that have been working in the country for over a decade. Sister Rosita pointed out that of the 1,112 new asylum-seekers, the Scalabrinian Sisters only assisted 77 women. Because refugee women constitute the minority, their needs are often forgotten. Sister Rosita emphasized the importance of maintaining some form of specific interventions in three realms that she saw as key to women's well-being: 1) the reproductive space; 2) the productive space, whereby refugee women often reinvent themselves, having to work for the first time in their lives and becoming the breadwinners in the family; and 3) the public space. In the public space, refugee women need to interact with other women to find strength in their community.

Sister Rosita was able to share important lessons learned from her years of serving refugees. She considered family reunification to be extremely important, along with having welcome and reception centres. Sister Rosita emphasized that women are not vulnerable but do live in vulnerable situations. Sister Rosita echoed the importance of cross-cultural programming to facilitate all refugees' capacity to integrate locally and interfaith initiatives, as the religious and spiritual dimension is important. Sister Rosita ended her presentation with a call to regularize the stateless, to offer more alternatives for regularizing those who want to immigrate to Brazil and to provide economic support the newly arrived for a reasonable period of time.

Paulo Sérgio de Almeida, of the National Immigration Council (CNIg, *Conselho Nacional de Imigração*) and long-standing member of CONARE, focused his remarks on the changing landscape of immigration in Brazil and the developments he hoped will take place in the years to come. CNIg works together with CONARE, and are actively involved in the drafting of laws and new migratory initiatives. The fact that refugees are now given long-term residency is a product of CNIg's advocacy and input. Under Brazil's refuge law, from the moment that an individual solicits asylum, he can access employment and work legally even before CONARE comes to a decision about his case. To promote their effective integration, Paulo Sérgio acknowledged that the Ministry of Labour needs to work more closely with the

federal government but focus its efforts on state and municipal governments, since most refugees reside in urban areas. While immigrants and refugees alike have access to the workplace, their opportunities are often limited by the time it takes to acquire the right documentation and the language barrier.

The day that Paulo Sérgio delivered his point of view on the immigration situation, the issuance of documents for immigrants and refugees was finally decentralized. This meant that instead of being only able to retrieve their work permits from the Ministry of Labour's offices, refugees can now obtain their documents from any partner ministry, institution, municipality, etc. To improve the quality of the services that refugees and immigrants receive, CNIg and UNHCR Brazil have led a series of workshops to reach municipal authorities and sensitize them on the integration of refugees, with emphasis on hiring interpreters and refugees, so that the quality of the services is improved and those who come see that Brazil is prepare to receive them. Lastly, Paulo Sérgio touched upon the importance of qualifications and the ability to have diplomas and studies recognized in Brazil. Pronatec, the National Programme on Access to Technical Studies and Employement (*Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e Emprego*), offers many courses including Portuguese language instruction. Enrolling in this course then allows them to enroll in other Pronatec courses and receive the certifications they need to find better employment. Workplace inspections are also something that he supports, as immigrant workers can be more vulnerable to exploitation. Finally, Paulo Sérgio mentioned CNIg's partnership with the University of Brasilia's Observatory of International Migration (*Observatório* das *Migrações Internacionais no Brasil*). CNIg and the Observatory are partnering to conduct a study on the increase of immigrant workers in Brazil. From 2011-2013, there was an increase of 50 per cent in the number of foreign workers in the formal sector. This information, coupled with Brazil's economic boom, may point to the positive effect that this influx had on Brazil's growing economy.

Sister Rosita and Paulo Sérgio emphasized respectively the need for the needs of women to be considered when providing assistance to refugees and the importance of documentation and sensitisation for labour market access. Both are working in their respective realms to bring these matters to the fore.

ANNEX 1

The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil Agenda

	Wednesday 27 May
9:00-9:10	**Agenda & Practical Info** *Co-Facilitators*
9:10-9:25	**Welcome** Andres Ramirez, UNHCR Representative for Brazil
9:25-9:45	**Participant Introductions**
9:45-10:15	**Introductory Remarks** Renata Dubini, Director of the Bureau for the Americas
10:15-10:35	*COFFEE BREAK*
10:35-11:20	**Brazil Government Coordination** 1. Juliana Armede (State Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights) - Coordination for Results in State of São Paulo 2. Guilherme Otero (São Paulo City Office for Human Rights) - Coordination and Reception in the City of São Paulo 3. Gabriel Godoy (UNHCR BO BRAZIL) - COMIGRAR Initiative
11:20-12:20	**Working With Local Governments** 1. Magda Medina (UNHCR CHILE) - Coordination in Quilicura for Integration 2. Karin Wapechowski (ASAV BRAZIL) - City-Level Coordination in Rio Grande do Sul for Resettlement 3. Mauricio Fallas (UNHCR VENEZUELA) - Collaboration with the Government in Zulia State
12:20-13:20	*LUNCH*
13:20-13:40	**Legislative Good Practices for Urban Refugees** Juan Carlos Murillo, Head of the Regional Legal Unit
13:40-14:40	**RSD** 1. Crismar Alvarez (ONPAR PANAMA), Kylie Alcoba (UNHCR PANAMA) and Clara Gamiz (NRC PANAMA) - Quality Assurance Initiative 2. Kathya Rodriguez (GOVERNMENT OF COSTA RICA) and Marcela Rodriguez-Farrelly (UNHCR COSTA RICA) - Quality Assurance Initiative 3. Marina Almeida (CONARE BRAZIL) - Quality Assurance Initiative

14:40-15:25	**<u>Documentation</u>** 1. Crismar Alvarez (ONPAR PANAMA), Kylie Alcoba (UNHCR PANAMA) and Clara Gamiz (NRC PANAMA) - Documentation for Access to Education 2. Cinthia Perez (COMAR MEXICO) - Recognition of Academic Diplomas
15:25-15:55	*COFFEE BREAK*
15:55-17:00	**<u>Residence and Naturalisation</u>** 1. Crismar Alvarez (ONPAR PANAMA), Kylie Alcoba (UNHCR PANAMA) and Clara Gamiz (NRC PANAMA) - Law 74 for Permanent Residence 2. Magda Medina (UNHCR CHILE) - Naturalisation of Palestinian Refugees 3. Marcela Rodriguez-Farrelly (UNHCR COSTA RICA) - MoU for Naturalisation of Refugees
17:00-17:30	**Learning Summaries by Facilitators**

	Thursday 28 May
9:00-9:15	**Day 2 Network Exercise & Day 1 Highlights**
9:15-10:00	**Mapping** 1. Maybritt Rasmussen (UNHCR ECUADOR) - Local Integration Index 2. Aline Thuller (CARITAS RIO DE JANEIRO) - Service Mapping and Sensitisation
10:00-11:20	**Information Campaigns** 1. Karina Sarmiento (AALA ECUADOR) - Door-to-Door and Outreach 2. Elisa Carlaccini (UNHCR COSTA RICA) - Door-to-Door Outreach and Information Campaign 3. Karina Sarmiento (AALA ECUADOR) - Mobile Clinics for RSD 4. Aline Thuller (CARITAS RIO DE JANEIRO) - Monthly Refugee Rights Debrief 5. Larissa Leite and Adelaide Lemos (CARITAS SÃO PAULO) - Youth Initiative
11:20-11:35	*COFFEE BREAK*
11:35-13:05	**Social Protection** 1. Elisa Carlaccini (UNHCR COSTA RICA) - MoU for Access to Secondary, Tertiary and Vocational Education 2. Albert Vañó Sanchis (UNHCR ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA) - Low Interest Loans for Housing 3. Marcela Vega (GOVERNMENT OF CHILE) - Cooperation for Social Protection 4. Mauricio Fallas (UNHCR VENEZUELA) - Cooperation with Government for Various Aims 5. Claire Baptiste (LWC TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO) - Access to Psychosocial Support for Children 6. Albert Vañó Sanchis (UNHCR ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA) - Access to Health Care in Bolivia
13:05-14:05	*LUNCH*
14:05-14:45	**Refugee Voices** 1. Adama Konate (MALI) 2. Mabiala Nkongo (DRC) 3. Dana Albakhi (SYRIA)
14:45-15:30	**Supporting Refugee Organisations** 1. Mario Echeverria (UNHCR DOMINICAN REPUBLIC) - Lazos de Dignidad 2. Karine Ruel (NRC COLOMBIA) - Housing, Land and Property for Refugees
15:30-16:00	*COFFEE BREAK*

16:00-17:15	**<u>Cross-Cultural Programming</u>** 1. Mauricio Fallas (UNHCR VENEZUELA) - Fundamusical Programme for Integration 2. Cristina Carvajal (HIAS ECUADOR, PANAMA) - "Know Your City" Initiative 3. Aline Thuller (CARITAS RIO DE JANEIRO) - Portuguese for Integration 4. Jose Luis Loera (CASA REFUGIADOS MEXICO) and Susana Lozano (UNHCR MEXICO) - Cultural Engagement for Sensitisation and Integration
17:15-17:45	**Learning Summaries by Facilitators**

	Friday 29 May
9:00-9:15	**Day 3 Network Exercise & Day 2 Highlights**
9:15-10:10	**Graduation Model** 1. Besem Obenson (UNHCR ECUADOR) - Introduction to Graduation Model & Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods 2. Besem Obenson (UNHCR ECUADOR) - Experiences with the Graduation Model in Ecuador 3. Elisa Carlaccini (UNHCR COSTA RICA) - Experiences with the Graduation Model in Costa Rica
10:10-11:15	**Livelihoods Programming #1** 1. Jorge Fernandez (FCCAM ARGENTINA) - University and Private Sector Partnerships for Education and Employment 2. Elisa Carlaccini (UNHCR COSTA RICA) - Vivir la Integración through CSR 3. Mauricio Fallas (UNHCR VENEZUELA) - CSR for Fundraising and Awareness Raising 4. Carolina Smid (UNHCR BO BRAZIL) - Integration of Tamil Refugees through Language and Employment
11:15-11:30	*COFFEE BREAK*
11:30-12:25	**Livelihoods Programming #2** 1. Remi Mannaert (RET LATIN AMERICA, ECUADOR) - Youth Empowerment: A Holistic Approach to Livelihoods 2. Janete Ferreira (SCALABRINIAN MISSION) - Scaled Livelihoods Interventions 3. Besem Obenson (UNHCR ECUADOR) - Database of Good Practices in Livelihoods
12:25-13:30	*LUNCH*
13:30-14:30	**Access to Capital** 1. Crismar Alvarez (ONPAR PANAMA), Kylie Alcoba (UNHCR PANAMA) and Clara Gamiz (NRC PANAMA) - Collaboration with MICROSERFIN and the Superintendence of Banks 2. Cristina Carvajal (HIAS ECUADOR) - Community Banking through Bank of Pichincha 3. Albert Vañó Sanchis (UNHCR ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA) - Seed Capital and Direct Employment for Refugees
14:30-15:30	**Migration and Refugees in Brazil** Fernando Bissacot (UNHCR BO BRAZIL) - *Refugees in Brazil (Refugiados no Brasil): Video Introduction* 1. Sister Rosita Milesi, Director of the Instituto de Migrações e Direitos Humanos (IMDH) 2. Paulo Sergio de Almeida, President of the National Immigration Council (CNIg)

15:30-16:00	*COFFEE BREAK*
16:00-17:00	**<u>Closing Remarks & Discussion</u>** *Conclusions & Action Points* Renata Dubini, Director of the Bureau for the Americas
17:00-17:30	**Facilitator's Farewell**

ANNEX 2

The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil Participant List

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ANNEX 3

Proposed Follow-Up Actions (2015-2016) from The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil

In line with the objectives of the workshop, the following actions are recommended with the aim of contributing to the execution of the **Brazil Plan of Action**, in particular the "Local Integration" Programme for refugees:

At the regional level

1. Develop specific guides and basic indicators to determine "Cities of Solidarity" in Latin America and the Caribbean (Follow-Up: UNHCR, Instituto de Políticas Públicas en Derechos Humanos (IPPDH), Cities of Solidarity Champions, universities in solidarity).

2. Build communities of practice to exchange programmatic solutions – particularly for critical issues like outreach, access to housing and livelihoods – as well as to promote advocacy coalitions (Follow-Up: workshop participants, coordinated by Asylum Access).

3. Foment a regional / sub-regional space for reflection for civil society organisations in order to define a support and follow-up strategy for the Brazil Plan of Action and in particular the "Local Integration" Programme (Follow-Up: Organisations SC involved in the process at the sub-regional level, NRC).

4. Facilitate exchanges between "Cities of Solidarity" that are effectively developing policies and response programmes for refugees and asylum-seekers (Follow-Up: UNHCR, Cities of Solidarity Champions).

5. Promote a reflection group within academia (universities / institutes in solidarity) to contribute themes for research and to the development of innovative solutions (Follow-Up: The Federal University of ABC (UFABC), Instituto Migrações e Direitos Humanos (IMDH), Instituto de Políticas Públicas en Derechos Humanos (IPPDH), Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población (IDESPO) tbc, and others).

6. Share the measurement methodology of the Local Integration Index, produced by UNHCR Ecuador, with a view to evaluate the possibility of adjusting the Index and applying it in other operations in the region (Follow-Up: UNHCR, National Commissions for Refugees (CONAREs), partners, universities in solidarity, RET, Caritas São Paolo).

At the national level (Follow-Up: all of the members of the Coalition)

7. Update / develop an assessment and mapping of refugees and asylum-seekers in order to identify their levels of integration.

8. Update / develop an inventory of services, programmes and existing subsidies that benefit or that could incorporate refugees and asylum-seekers.

9. Promote the adoption of livelihood strategies articulated by Governments, together with various actors and the Cities of Solidarity, that benefit large groups of refugees and migrants.

10. Promote the establishment of “Cities of Solidarities” and the creation of coordination and monitoring mechanisms (Inter-institutional coordination committees) to discuss attention to migrants and/or refugees at the municipal level, in accordance with national contexts.

11. Assure the effective participation of refugee populations and their organisations in the Regional Coalition of Good Practices, national / municipal strategies for local integration and in dialogues and discussions.

12. Develop specific strategies with the private sector and academia to promote “Corporate Social Responsibility” initiatives among others, with the participation of the State and the active participation of refugees, partners and UNHCR.

ANNEX 4

The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil Action Plans

Summary

In an effort to promote participant engagement after the *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop for the Americas region that took place in São Paulo, Brazil from 27 to 29 May 2015, participants were asked to develop an "Action Plan" stating at least one specific activity they plan to implement to improve urban protection and programming in their duty stations.

The following pages list the Action Plans received from the participants, organized by country and organization, based on an Action Plan template provided (see below).

Urban Programming Action Plan

Participant Name:

Organization Name:

City:

What are you planning to do?	
How are you planning to do it?	
Who are you going to do it in partnership with?	
How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?	

Action Plans

Argentina

UNHCR RO Argentina (including UNHCR Chile)

1. What are you planning to do?

Host a workshop about local integration in urban settings at the municipal level in Chile involving local institutions, partners and refugees with the aim of opening a space for reflection about local integration from a local perspective and exchange ideas and good practices about the joint work being done to assist refugees. At the same time, the objective will be to promote the National Network of Cities of Solidarity. The municipality where the workshop will take place will be determined at a later date.

2. How are you planning to do it?

i. Identify the needed budget to carry out the activity.
ii. Coordinate the activity with key actors in refugee matters.
iii. Replicate the event carried out in São Paulo and exchange experiences with UNHCR Brazil.
iv. Analyse the results obtained with Cities of Solidarity signatories in the Mexico Plan of Action.
v. Evaluate other potential cities to include as Cities of Solidarity.
vi. Carry out the workshop with the interested cities.
vii. Establish a concrete work plan with these cities and sign new Cities of Solidarity agreements.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

- Municipalities with Cities of Solidarity agreements signed or potential cities that could come to sign the accord.
- Partner NGOs and other key institutions for the integration of persons of concern.
- Refugee organizations.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

Update the indicators to measure the impact of Cities of Solidarities in line with the criteria established within the framework of the Mexico Plan of Action and establish a concrete work plan with the cities interested in participating.

Fundación Comisión Católica Argentina de Migraciones (FCCAM)

1. What are you planning to do?

Put emphasis on obtaining durable solutions that contribute to local integration, by means of supporting the search for employment and the

establishment of organizational networks that make it possible to assist the refugee population.

2. How are you planning to do it?

- Get in contact with different civil society organizations and other public entities to link the activities of the 2015 project with the programmes and offerings of these other institutions (public and private).
- Agree on a work schedule and a methodology with each institution.
- Promote the Cities of Solidarity agreement in Buenos Aires.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

- Caritas Argentina
- Israeli Mutual Association Argentina (AMIA)
- Islamic Center of the Republic of Argentina (CIRA)
- National Ministry of Employment
- National Ministry of Social Development
- Argentinian Microcredit Network (RADIM)
- Ministry of Work of the City of Buenos Aires
- Ministry of Social Development of the City of Buenos Aires
- Ministry of Culture of the City of Buenos Aires
- Ashoka

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

The impact will be measured by the involvement of persons of concern in the different activities and the results that they achieve regarding processes of local integration.

Brazil

UNHCR BO Brazil and FU São Paulo

1. What are you planning to do?

Increase the exchange of ideas based on good practices at the regional level and implement a new activity to strengthen the protection of children and a strategy for youth, including unaccompanied and separated minors.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Strengthening the protection of children and youth in Brazil will be carried out through three pillars: (i) improvement of the quality of the RSD procedure in Brazil related to childhood; (ii) inter-institutional advocacy to sensitize the general population and promote the capacity of key actors; and (iii) incrementally increase mechanisms of protection for unaccompanied and separated minors, including the mapping of concrete cases.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

The National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), all of the implementing partners, Federal Police, judges for infants and youth, public shelters specialized in children and youth, the Office of the People's Defender as well as the children themselves and their families.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

UNHCR Brazil will evaluate and strengthen the protection of children and youth through capacitation initiatives and sensitization campaigns within the framework of the QAI. It is necessary to monitor the inclusion of international and regional norms and good practices for the protection of refugee children in the municipal and state strategic plans, using the direct opinions of the children through participatory assessments. In addition, we will evaluate the increase in collaborations with local organizations that work with children. This will serve as the basis for prioritizing programmatic components of protection and for evaluating gaps in legal and administrative frameworks, as well as the procedural or practical obstacles that could result in a revision of the plan.

*Secretary of Justice and of the Defense of Citizenship of the State of São Paulo (*Secretaria da Justiça e da Defensa da Cidadania do Estado de São Paulo*), Government of Brazil*

1. What are you planning to do?

I plan to better understand the practical examples that were shared by the other countries so that we can see if would be useful given the local reality in the State of São Paulo.

2. How are you planning to do it?

I plan to implement the activity in collaboration with the State Committee for Refugees, thinking about the creation of a São Paulo State Plan for Refugees.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

Secretaries of the State, Public Defenders of the Union and civil society representatives.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

By means of support and carrying out the activity.

*Municipal Secretary of Human Rights and Citizenship of City of São Paulo (*Secretaria Municipal de Direitos Humanos e Cidadania da Prefeitura de São Paulo*), Government of Brazil*

1. What are you planning to do?

Better establish our actions with entities whose work is related to immigration or refuge in Brazil (Ministry of Justice, CONARE, UNHCR) as well as to support their actions.

2. How are you planning to do it?

We will look to build a Federal Pact, which will be part of a new National Immigration Law, and which will establish the responsibilities and actions of the government entities involved in migratory concerns in Brazil.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

Ministry of Justice, CONARE, UNHCR, CRAI.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

Observe the development of that Law, following it to see if it is approved.

Caritas Rio de Janeiro

1. What are you planning to do?

Invest in cultural and recreational activities that involve the local community more, as a way to facilitate interaction and coexistence in various spaces between refugees and Brazilians.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Instead of creating specific spaces for refugees, we understand the importance of “inserting” refugees in spaces and resources that already exist and of incentivizing the creation of others, as a way to divulge information about refugees, broaden the protection network and increase the possibilities refugees integrating in Brazil.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

Public and private institutions that act in this area of interest.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

Caritas Rio de Janeiro’s engagement in this realm will promote not only surveying and referral but also the joint building of activities and events together with the accompaniment and support of our team in the realization of various activities. Through permanent accompaniment, we will be able to better evaluate the level of involvement of both refugees and Brazilians and whether or not these activities lead to positive results in the local integration of refugees, either directly (through labour integration or in network services) or indirectly (in the dissemination of information).

Colombia

NRC Colombia

1. What are you planning to do?

Improve coordination of the housing, land and property activities with UNHCR and other actors to, for example, integrate impact measurement or local integration programming and use the Graduation Model for VTP.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Raise awareness about UNHCR's guidelines and coordinate meetings with the UNHCR offices in the different countries where we implement these programmes. Integrate the measurement in our own monitoring and evaluation and share the results with the UNHCR offices.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

UNHCR Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama and other countries if applicable as well as with other relevant civil society actors.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

By way of monthly, trimester and annual evaluations we have integrated a monitoring and evaluation matrix. Also, through the indicator for working more closely with UNHCR on VTP initiatives (through proposals or approved grants, for example).

Ecuador

UNHCR Ecuador and HIAS Ecuador

1. What are you planning to do?

- Better targeting of interventions based on income groups
- Better community outreach because we know that the most vulnerable don't come to our offices.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Using a combination of software, capacity building of teams and a good monitoring process.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

HIAS
UNHCR
State institutions
Other NGOs
Private entities (banks, companies)

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

- Longitudinal impact evaluation
- Use of indicators on FOCUS and Proxy

Catholic Refugee Services (CRS) Ecuador

1. What are you planning to do?

We have an interest in consolidating our coordination mechanisms with other humanitarian assistance entities in Ecuador, and particularly with the World Food Programme. We are interested in setting up a reference system that allows for us to optimize our resources in the assistance of refugees.

2. How are you planning to do it?

In collaboration with WFP Panama and the local teams that provide humanitarian assistance to the population. We propose establishing a permanent dialogue between these local teams and evaluate the process of coordination.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

The World Food Programme, partners that deliver food assistance, and the Scalabrinian Mission in Ecuador.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

We will carry out local meetings every trimester and start up a reference system utilizing the databases of PMA and the CRS-Scalabrinian Mission to share basic information of the beneficiaries among the associated entities.

Mexico

UNHCR Mexico

1. What are you planning to do?

I plan on having improved coordination with the different actors so that our actions are directed in accordance with the needs of persons of concern, our mandates and the reach of each institution. My idea is to design a strategy so that refugees can have access to and be able to open bank accounts.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Identify the achievements and advances that there are in terms of legal integration (for example, the right to health, school, employment, documentation) and the gaps for efficient access to services/Rights and their cause (for example, the prohibition of opening bank accounts).

Avoid duplicating efforts by carrying out a mapping of stakeholders that clearly identifies what each institution does and their potential contribution to the strategy.

Include new actors that are interested in organizing workshops where we can bring to the fore who a refugee is and his/her rights and obligations in Mexico.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

Internally: with the Protection team and the field offices.

Outside the organization: with the partners that implement projects, with the governmental counterpart, other agencies of the UN system and other entities in the private sector (for example, banks).

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

The strategy will identify the causes that impede access to bank accounts and the actions that should be taken to achieve access. Perhaps in this first moment the actions will be advocacy/lobbying activities with migration, banks, etc. The impact will be measured in the flexibility achieved with banks so that refugees are able to open bank accounts.

Casa Refugiados

1. What are you planning to do?

Develop, strengthen and manage a network of allied persons, groups and institutions that will allow for a greater impact for persons of concern in terms of livelihoods (temporary shelter, housing, health services, education, employment opportunities or income-generating activities, as well as social

interaction) through effective monitoring and support (outreach) to persons of concern and actors involved in actions in solidarity and in favour of persons of concern.

2. How are you planning to do it?

- Revision and promotion of an institutional route to attention, 'protocols', focused on an integrated service for access to the RSD procedure, reception, assistance, training, promotion of livelihoods, and integration.
- Develop institutional coordination mechanisms for volunteers, social services and professional practices.
- Detect, map and train persons, groups and institutions that could become involved in the 'network of solidarity' to benefit persons of concern.
- Push for socio-cultural activities to promote collaborative networks between persons of concern and the host community.
- Establish conventions and collaborative mechanisms, coordination with mobilized actors and other involved institutions with the aim of operationalizing the resources and opportunities generated for the benefit of persons of concern (access to services and livelihood opportunities).

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

- UNHCR
- Mexican Commission for Help to Refugees (COMAR)
- Involved civil society organizations
- Persons of concern (newly arrived and more protracted cases)
- Universities and educational centres
- Churches
- Volunteer management organizations
- Other local authorities involved
- Corporations, businesses and cooperatives
- Foreigner community organizations
- Mass media

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

- Establishment of integration indicators and others with the help of academia.
- Tracking, visits, interviews, questionnaires and surveys for persons of concern and actors working in solidarity to determine access to services and livelihood opportunities.
- Meetings with other institutions involved.
- Participatory assessment.

Panama

National Office for the Attention of Refugees (ONPAR, Oficina Nacional para la Atención de los Refugiados*) Panama*

1. What are you planning to do?

After having participated in this workshop in São Paulo, where good practices were shared by other countries in the region, we are committed to strengthening and improving our existing programmes for refugees and asylum seekers in order to ensure quality refugee status determination procedures as well as to guarantee and promote access to rights of this population. This will be carried out in partnership with UNHCR and civil society representatives.

We as the State are obliged to guarantee and promote access to rights for refugees and asylum seekers, and in this sense the Government of Panama would like to establish a public-private alliance to promote the job placement of refugees in the labour market with the aim of allowing them to integrate into Panamanian society.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Carrying out sensitization campaigns throughout the country, so that companies learn what a refugee is and in this way promote their job placement in an equitable manner and with conditions that are on par with others so that they can fully integrate into society and are able to have an income, help their nuclear families and contribute to the country.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

Private companies, UNHCR and representatives from civil society.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

Implement controls and evaluations of this project in order to verify that the objectives of the private-public alliance are met. They will be carried out monthly and annually on the part of the government, in conjunction with UNHCR and representatives from civil society.

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Panama

1. What are you planning to do?

At NRC we welcome persons that have recently arrived to the country and we offer them legal orientation and assistance for RSD so that they can obtain refugee status. In a sporadic manner, we have information sessions that are very informative, workshops of sorts. After attending the workshop in São Paulo I thought it would be best to replicate the good practice presented by

Caritas Rio de Janeiro, where they have periodic information sessions, once a month, in which they involve those who already have refugee status and the sessions focus more on providing orientation than teaching or being formative.

2. How are you planning to do it?

Along with the legal assistance team we decided to establish a set day in the month, the first Tuesdays of every month, in which we will host these formative sessions. The sessions will target all asylum seekers that have passed through NRC's offices the previous month. We will touch on the following themes:

What is the RSD process? What are the right and duties during the determination process and after? What are the challenges and difficulties that await them? What are the next steps? What organizations can they go to?

The session will be led by a lawyer, with the participation of a psychologist from HIAS, one of NRC's partner organizations. In each session we will invite a refugee (already recognized as such) to share his experiences with the recently arrived asylum seekers.

Information about sessions will be disseminated by giving information about the sessions along with an appointment to those that arrive looking for orientation or legal representation.

3. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

Our main partner will be HIAS, with whom we will jointly carry out the activity, although we will also inform other institutions of the sessions, so that they can send us their users (SJR, CRP, RET, Pastoral). We will also coordinate with ONPAR (National Office for the Attention of Refugees in Panama) so that they can disseminate the information for the convocation, so that more people can come.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

At the end of each session, we will pass around a brief questionnaire to the participants to find out if they felt it was useful or interesting and if we met their expectations. We will analyse the questionnaires and try to revise and improve the activity based on suggestions and complaints. We will also evaluate internally how to best run the activity, extracting lessons learned.

Trinidad and Tobago

Living Water Community (LWC)

1. What are you planning to do?

Coordinate and implement a mentorship programme for the refugees families that LWC serves. Refugees are in need of a network of families in Trinidad and Tobago because in most cases their families stayed in their country of origin. Therefore, this programme will allow children as well as adults to get the support they need in Trinidad and Tobago, their country of asylum. In addition, they will be able to develop their linguistic competencies and their capacity to adapt to life in Trinidad and Tobago, which is a key factor in their ability to manage stress and frustration. At the moment, the linguistic barrier impedes the development of the majority of Refugee families. This opportunity to interact with Trinidanian families also presents an opportunity to become self-sufficient. The mentoring families can help to find jobs, donate household appliances and furniture. There would also be an cross-cultural exchange; refugees would be more exposed to Trinidanian culture thanks to their interaction with the families and vice versa, with the aim of facilitating their local integration.

2. Who are you going to do it in partnership with?

LWC will choose the mentoring families that can participate in the programme. We have already begun meeting with the refugee community on a quarterly basis and so we can utilize this forum to coordinate the initiative. We could explain the benefits of the programme, both for the mentoring families and refugees.

3. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

A network of mentoring families and sponsors.

4. How will you monitor the activity and know if it had an impact?

We will have discussions in the quarterly reunions to obtain the opinions and suggestions of the parents and children. The case managers will also conduct home visits to monitor the living conditions and well-being of each family. Each family will receive 2 visits from one of the case managers.

ANNEX 5

The *Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees* Workshop in São Paulo, Brazil Participant Feedback Summary

In an effort to learn from this experience and improve on the subsequent regional workshops, participants from the Americas regional workshop were asked to evaluate their experience and give feedback on the workshop by answering the following two questions:

1. What do you think worked well?
2. What do you think could be improved?

Overall, the feedback from the Americas regional workshop was overwhelmingly positive.

The participants cited the following elements as those which made for a successful workshop:

- The enriched exchange facilitated through the discussion and questions and answers sessions.
- The coordination and organisation of the workshop and prior preparation.
- The diversity of presentations delivered by a variety of actors, specifically the variety of themes discussed.
- The format of the workshop and the hotel accommodation and meals provided.

Yet, the participants felt that the workshop could have also benefited from:

- Having fewer presentations and being more selective.
- Making more space for discussion and having more time for questions.
- Organising practical work or thematic tables through breakout sessions.
- Providing a handout with a summary of the good practices before the workshop, for more focused discussions, and/or after the workshop.