

# Let Them Work

*Improving Refugees and Forced Migrants' Socio-Economic Wellbeing*

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Many of the world's 40 million refugees and asylum seekers lack the ability to freely work, move, and thrive. The Let Them Work initiative, a partnership between the Center for Global Development and Refugees International, works to understand these barriers and overcome them.

The three-year long initiative, funded by the IKEA Foundation and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, has four thematic pillars: financing, location, climate, and social cohesion. Under these pillars, we conduct research, outreach, and policy engagement. For each pillar, we have started with a literature review to identify important questions and opportunities. Moving forward, we will highlight countries where exciting new policies or initiatives are or could be implemented.

## Financing

International aid actors are increasingly seeking more transparency and accountability in financing refugee situations, as well as durable solutions to long-term displacement. Financing institutions and development actors are taking on more direct roles in working with refugees. We want to explore the best way to support refugee crises in the long-term.

To date, we have worked closely with the World Bank as it launches its World Development Report on "Migrants, Refugees, and Societies," develops its "Evolution Roadmap," and welcomes a new president.

*Going forward, we plan to:*

1. Support the World Bank to operationalize the World Development Report and expand their Refugee Policy Review Framework

2. Encourage coordination between the multilateral development banks, including engaging with the Working Group on Economic Migration and Forced Displacement
3. Explore whether innovative financing mechanisms, such as social impact bonds, could be applied to the displacement context

## Location

Humanitarians are experimenting with different approaches to assist refugees with finding a place to live. For instance, voluntary relocation programs are facilitating moves to areas with more economic growth, and hybrid settlements provide additional housing and allow freedom of movement. We want to explore these models and their potential for impact.

To date, we have started analyzing data on multiple locations and engaged closely with UNHCR on voluntary relocation.

*Going forward, we plan to:*

1. Build a new dataset on refugees' locations within countries to document the differences with hosts and facilitate additional research
2. Measure the impact of voluntary relocation schemes
3. Explore alternative, cost effective, policies to reduce impacts on housing markets

**For more on the Let Them Work initiative, visit**

<https://www.cgdev.org/project/expanding-labor-market-access-refugees-and-forced-migrants>

## Climate

Refugees and displaced people often work in economic sectors that are highly sensitive to climate change. Despite this, climate change is rarely factored into refugee and displaced peoples' job prospects. Similarly, refugees are rarely included in national adaptation plans and climate adaptation financing. We want to explore these connections.

To date, we have analyzed how refugees are integrated within National Adaptation Plans and work focused on Rwanda, while also engaging with key actors such as the International Organization for Migration and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

*Going forward, we plan to:*

1. Explore strategies to reduce refugee exposure to highly climate-vulnerable areas, including by incentivizing hosting countries to explore less-exposed locations in advance
2. Increase awareness of refugee livelihoods' exposure to climate change
3. Push countries to incorporate refugees in National Adaptation Plans, and help to crowd in climate finance

## Social Cohesion

Host community attitudes can affect refugee outcomes through daily economic and social interactions and the politics and policies enacted by host governments. However, we have little data about public attitudes within most refugee-hosting countries, and little understanding of "what works" to promote social cohesion between refugees and hosts. We want to explore both of these issues.

To date, we have completed a randomized controlled trial in Kampala, Uganda showing the significant effect that a simple message (attached to aid to host communities) can have, while also engaging with key actors such as the World Bank and AfroBarometer.

*Going forward, we plan to:*

1. Ensure the sector focuses on a theory of change, asking whether stand-alone social cohesion interventions are the best use of money to promote refugee well-being.
2. Collaborate with others to expand the amount of data collected on public attitudes in low- and middle-income countries
3. Design new experiments to change messaging around existing host community programming, and to provide information to politicians about public attitudes

*We want to collaborate with others in these spaces and are always interested in hearing about interesting policy moves, initiatives, and data. Please get in touch!*

## Contact

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