

# Impact

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## After the Crisis

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# After the Crisis

## How refugees are gaining economic self-sufficiency & hope

by Ziad Ayoubi & Janet Heisey

**The current global population of displaced persons tops 65 million, a level not seen since World War II.**

In 2015, 24 people on average were displaced from their homes every minute of every day. Displaced people face economic hardship, the risk of exploitation, and the denial of fundamental human rights while global aid agencies and host countries must cope with strained resources.

With the average duration of protracted refugee situations currently at 26 years, refugees often remain displaced long after the immediate conflict or disaster that caused them to leave their homes. Without assistance, they may face sustained discrimination and marginalization. Refugees are at risk

of violence, chronic hunger, and other challenges facing people living in extreme poverty.

Despite these many challenges, recent studies have shown that refugees can be productive contributors to the economy of host countries. To help refugees become economically active in their host countries, Trickle Up and the Livelihoods Unit at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been piloting the Graduation Approach to build sustainable livelihoods for refugees and other displaced populations.

### **Trickle Up & refugees**

Trickle Up uses the Graduation Approach to meet the needs of people living in extreme poverty around the world. Graduation projects typically feature cash stipends to support refugees at the

start of the project, regular coaching and mentoring, access to savings, training, and either seed capital to launch small businesses or links to employment opportunities. UNHCR recognized that the model held potential for refugees living in poverty, and in 2013, Trickle Up and UNHCR began working together to design Graduation projects adapted to the refugee context. Trickle Up utilized its experience implementing Graduation in India, the Americas, and West Africa. UNHCR brought its global mandate and expertise helping refugees, and its knowledge of the local context and resources. Together we support economically vulnerable refugees.

Through our partnership, we are implementing Graduation pilots in Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, and Zambia. Each country has a different context, with refugees living in rural, urban, and camp settings.

Some situations are emergencies while others are protracted. Each program must account for the specific vulnerabilities of the refugee population and the political, social, economic, and legal environment in which it is implemented.

Often many of Graduation's core components already exist in a typical UNHCR operation, but they are rarely combined for maximum effect. Trickle Up's approach to Graduation provides a deliberate sequencing of Graduation

communities, engage in livelihood activities, and access other services. However, refugees in urban and peri-urban settings may try to keep a low profile because of harsh sentiments against them. They may also be vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, arrest or detention, and competition with local workers.

One of the exciting innovations of the Trickle Up-UNHCR partnership is that it is among the first to test Graduation in urban settings. With urban projects

Graduation program components more challenging to organize and sustain. Careful program design is required to overcome these challenges and to take advantage of the unique opportunities, which will be documented in an upcoming Urban Graduation Manual.

### Reaching more refugees

Over the next three years, Trickle Up and UNHCR will expand Graduation's reach in UNHCR operations to up to 17 new countries, supporting 37,000

## Impact Data

97%

of refugees participating in the self-employment track in Alexandria, Egypt report having started a business.

81%

of participant families in Ecuador report eating two to three meals a day, as compared to 17% at the beginning of the project, just eight months prior.

87%

of participants in Alexandria, Egypt, feel qualified to run their business and 76% report that training provided them with the necessary skills to excel in their work.

components to achieve the greatest impact within a specific period of time. Services supporting the specific needs of refugees have been added, including legal assistance, psychosocial counseling, and opportunities to integrate into local communities.

Graduation also involves individual coaching, so staff at UNHCR and partners can monitor household progress, provide encouragement, and troubleshoot issues, allowing for quick adaptability as a household's circumstances evolve. All households will continue to receive UNHCR protection, but Graduation will help refugee families establish sustainable livelihoods and no longer require ongoing economic assistance.

### An urban challenge

Over 60 percent of the world's refugees live in urban environments. Unlike camps, cities allow refugees to more easily integrate into local

in Egypt, Costa Rica, and Ecuador, the Graduation Approach faces both advantages and disadvantages. Urban environments enable access to wage labor opportunities and formal financial services, but the dispersed location of refugees in cities makes weekly home visits by coaches challenging. Many urban refugees lack the community that is often formed in rural and camp settings, making engagement in

refugees worldwide. By incorporating the Graduation Approach into the UNHCR Livelihoods Unit's arsenal of livelihoods interventions, we will provide sustainable economic empowerment to more of the poorest refugees than ever before.

To learn more about our work with refugees visit [trickleup.org/refugees](https://trickleup.org/refugees).

## Funding Newsflash

# \$500,000 grant to expand Trickle Up-UNHCR partnership

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) has awarded Trickle Up nearly \$500,000 in support of our Graduation and Refugees Initiative to provide technical assistance to UNHCR. The new partnership with PRM will help us to deliver high-

quality, transformational livelihood support to thousands of refugees. This three-year initiative will allow Trickle Up, UNHCR, and other NGO or government actors to support 37,000 refugees worldwide to improve their livelihoods.

# The case of Costa Rica

by Helen Greene & Tyler McClelland  
Trickle Up

Costa Rica is a country more often associated with majestic vistas than as a host for refugees, but the last few years have seen several waves of arrivals.

Unlike in many countries, refugees and asylum seekers in Costa Rica have the right to work, start their own businesses, open bank accounts, and access public services such as health care and education. Despite these rights, many refugees still face barriers to integration, including discrimination, xenophobia, and a lack of information.

In Costa Rica, UNHCR addresses the immediate needs of people living in vulnerable conditions through legal support, cash-based assistance, and access to basic health and education services. With support from Trickle Up, UNHCR Costa Rica is using the Graduation Approach to further empower households to engage in sustainable livelihoods, increase their resilience to shocks, and better integrate into their host communities.

Through the program, refugees are matched with case workers who make regular home visits to provide coaching and support. Participants receive training on accessing legal services, managing

income and savings, and self- or wage-employment. Approximately 85% of participants enter the self-employment track, often selling food or clothing. The other 15% enter the wage-employment track, where they are linked to job opportunities in the food and beverage, commerce, and tourism sectors.

As they become financially secure, participants become eligible to apply for a business loan through a partnership with a local microfinance institution. From 2014-2016, Trickle Up and UNHCR reached 450 participants in Costa Rica. 70% of the project's participants were women. To encourage integration into local communities and address the extreme poverty faced by Costa Rican households, 100 women from local communities were included in the project. Most are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, single mothers in highly vulnerable conditions, or HIV positive. This provides vulnerable women from Costa Rica

with a pathway out of poverty and enhances the self-reliance and community integration of refugee women and children by connecting them to a similarly vulnerable local community of women.

Over the coming year, UNHCR looks forward to expanding its program to at least another 100 persons of concern and local Costa Rican women. In order to ensure the sustainability of the program, UNHCR is working closely with 15 public and private entities to promote the institutionalization of the project. Recently, the project was incorporated into Costa Rica's 2015-2018 National Development Plan, which has helped to increase support from government officials and national institutions.

To learn more about our projects visit [trickleup.org](http://trickleup.org)



## Meet Marcela

# Overcoming adversity with a smile

by Carolina Loza  
UNHCR Ecuador

Marcela has a constant, contagious smile. Her smile lights up her kitchen and automatically draws smiles from everyone around.

It is 1 PM and she does not stop frying green plantains. A young boy she's hired quietly packs the snack bags of plantains so he can sell them later on the streets of Ibarra, a city in northern Ecuador.

Marcela has lived in Ecuador since early 2016 when she fled violence in Cauca Department, located in the southwestern part of Colombia. As she settled in Ibarra (120 kilometers from Quito, the capital) with her family and the little belongings she was able to carry, UNHCR and its partner organization HIAS noticed the potential Marcela and her family had to be part of the Graduation project, an innovative approach that aims to support refugees in search of dignified livelihoods.

When Marcela's family started in April, her daughter remembered that Marcela was great at making plantain chips and identifying good locations to sell the chips. With the technical guidance they received from their mentor, they were able to



**Marcela\***  
Ecuador, South America

scout out suitable locations, as well as determine the price in order to turn a profit. With the first conditional cash transfer they received, the family

**“We are happy here and calm; we can leave our ingredients outside of the house and nothing will happen. We are safe.”**

purchased start-up equipment to process plantains.

Marcela and her family of four make an estimated \$10-15 USD a day and have a savings jar for the extra income they generate on a daily basis. Based on demand, the family hires a Colombian in his late teens to sell the plantain chips on buses and at traffic lights in the afternoons. Marcela

plans to open up a savings account soon and continues to work with her mentors to further strengthen the business.

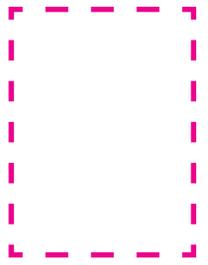
Marcela and her family take part in the business together with joy: “We are planning on expanding the kitchen and going to the doctor with the next cash transfer. We’ve gotten some school supplies for my granddaughter. We are happy here and calm. We can leave our ingredients outside of the house and nothing will happen. We are safe.”

[Read more stories like Marcela's at \[trickleup.org/stories\]\(https://trickleup.org/stories\).](https://trickleup.org/stories)

\* participant name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

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**Impact**

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“Today, they are refugees. Tomorrow, they can be students and professors, scientists and researchers, workers and caregivers.”

**Ban Ki Moon**  
Secretary-General  
United Nations

