



EU-PASSWORLD

Working Group on Identification, Referral, and Matching

Learning Exchange Visit, Nairobi, Kenya

Royal Tulip Hotel, Tigoni Road, off Chaka Road, Kilimani, Hurlingham

Tuesday – Thursday, March 28-30, 2023

Background

EU-PASSWORLD aims to strengthen the linkage between community sponsorship and complementary pathways as a crucial nexus both to enhance refugee integration and significantly scale the number of refugees arriving via complementary pathways. The project is implemented during 2022-24 by a consortium of 11 state, civil society and faith-based partners, and includes specific activities to expand labour and education pathways in Belgium, Ireland and Italy.

The Working Group is led by ICMC Europe and the Share Network, in collaboration with RefugePoint and Caritas Italy. While the EU-PASSWORLD project focuses on strengthening education and labour pathways, the Working Group draws on practice and approaches for identification, referral, and matching across complementary pathways. During 2022-24, the Working Group will:

- Facilitate exchange, discussion and reflection amongst key stakeholders working on identification, referral, and matching.
- Define a comparative framework in identification, referral and matching practices in the context of complementary pathways linked to sponsorship, including identifying best practices and their outcomes.
- Publish a report on identification, referral and matching best practices in complementary pathways linked to sponsorship (spring 2024).

Working Group participants are drawn from those working in the area of complementary pathways, with specific expertise in identification, referral, and matching.

Within this framework, the Working Group is hosting a learning exchange visit to Nairobi, Kenya during the three days of Tuesday-Thursday, March 28-30, 2023. The event will be hosted locally by RefugePoint and will feature in-depth exploration of pathways and programs currently being implemented in Kenya, both by RefugePoint and by other partners. It will be an opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of the many activities that collectively comprise the identification, referral, and matching of refugees for complementary pathways, including the needed subsequent steps enabling departure to the destination country.

Nairobi is an ideal location for such a learning exchange as it is a large urban hub hosting upwards of 80,000 refugees of diverse origins including from: Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, South

Sudan, Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Uganda and Sudan. There is also a robust humanitarian response community working in Nairobi, providing visitors an opportunity to meet and observe a variety of service providers. RefugePoint has a significant presence there, with a staff of approximately 50 people (comprised entirely of Kenyan nationals and refugees) serving up to 10,000 refugees per year, including referring 500 or so clients annually for resettlement and complementary pathway. This has included resettlement for more than a decade; labor mobility for the past 5 years; and, new this year, family reunification and/or sponsorship.

Objectives

- Foster a fuller understanding of identification, referral, and matching systems for complementary pathways.
- Create the opportunity for engagement with refugee candidates in various stages of different pathways, allowing for greater refugee voice, agency, and participation in program planning conversations.
- Introduce operational partners spanning the entire complementary pathways process and foster greater understanding and coordination between partners.
- Explore models and partnerships for future programming, including ideas for streamlining procedures.
- Identify recommendations for creating or scaling viable complementary pathways programs.

Report

Due to planned political demonstrations in Nairobi throughout the week, the agenda remained fluid and sessions were moved and reconfigured throughout the week to allow for optimal participation of local partners. The flow documented here reflects the final sequence of activities.

Tuesday, March 28

Introduction to the refugee context in Kenya and preliminary discussion on identification, referral and matching for complementary pathways.

Welcome and Introduction to the Refugee Situation in Kenya

In the opening session, RefugePoint gave an overview focusing on three topics: 1) the organizations self-reliance work for refugees in host countries (recognizing that its third country solutions work will be covered in greater detail throughout the week); 2) the security situation in Kenya, to help visiting guests understand the local context; and 3) prep for the morning's visits to clients.

On the first point, RefugePoint described how their local program in Nairobi program provides stabilizing services (eg, food, rent assistance, protection) to its refugee clients followed by self-reliance programs (eg, education, livelihoods) once clients are stable. They also described the global Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative and its Self-Reliance Index. Questions from the participants included: case management capacity; refugee status determination procedures; encampment policy; and more.

On security, RefugePoint highlighted the political demonstrations planned for the week, noting that the neighborhood of the conference is generally safe. Nevertheless, participants

were cautioned about avoiding opportunistic crime. Health was also covered, including combatting cholera and malaria.

Lastly, participants were prepped for visits to clients, including: Kenya's very strict data protection act; etiquette regarding photos and questions; etc.

Visits to Refugees in Communities in Nairobi

Substantive discussions began with visits to refugee communities in Nairobi. Participants were divided into six small groups, and each group was assigned one of RefugePoint's Community Navigators to lead the visits. The purpose of the visits was to give participants a broad sense of the local context in Nairobi, including the many challenges refugees face living there. The hope is such exposure provides participants with a greater understanding of both the need for third country solutions, and also the difficulties refugees face when attempting to access them.

Overview of Third Country Solutions from Kenya

UNHCR began with a demographic overview of the refugee population in Kenya, with a focus on the population trends and age, gender, and diversity statistics. This was followed by an overview of the policy environment in Kenya. We learned of the origins of the encampment policy after attacks in Kenya about a decade ago. The policy is still in force and means that any refugee wishing to reside in urban areas must get special permission and must be able to support themselves. This leads to a lot of refugees in the informal economy in Nairobi. More recently, a new refugee law in 2021 made refugee identification equal to other forms of legal identification in Kenya, to combat police and other forms of abuse and exploitation. It also created the new option for citizens of the East Africa Community to live and work in Kenya, though requires them relinquish their refugee status. We learned that Kenya is making an effort to include refugees in national systems like education. However, much of the recent progress remains mostly aspirational. In the meantime, everything is ad hoc and resource-intensive, including the need to write letters of reference for refugees to access such things as a bank account or phone line. We learned that Kenya's "Road Map for Solutions and Marshal Plan" to encourage local and durable solutions. It includes provision to encourage voluntary repatriation and local integration through the transition from camps to settlements.

A robust round of questions and answers signaled significant interest from the group in these topics. These included, among many points, a very practical exchange about how refugee status determination affects exit permits which in turn impacts eligibility for third country solutions. And also the implications on third country solutions of the new agreement between the East Africa Community.

UNHCR continued with an overview of third country solutions from Kenya, including a table highlighting statistics for departures and to what destination countries (including European countries Spain, Germany, Norway, Netherlands, and UK). IOM added additional specifics about numbers departing for complementary pathways and also alluded to programs for pathways within the region and to the Middle East. There was some discussion about refugee access to machine readable, renewable convention travel documents for access to third country solutions. UNHCR outlined the immense amount of support needed to help a

refugee navigate the complementary pathways process. They stressed the importance of active communication with refugees for the sake of managing expectations.

Again, a robust round of questions followed, including significant interest in the U.S.'s new private sponsorship program and its lessons for sponsorship generally.

Introduction to Resettlement from Kenya

HIAS began with an overview of their program in Kenya. They noted that resettlement is just a part of their programming, alongside legal protection, child protection, a safe house, and more. On resettlement, they explained that they mostly identify their cases through referrals from external partners. They highlighted their new program, the Equitable Resettlement Access Consortium. It is a program within the United States Refugee Admission Program, to grow NGO resettlement referrals to the United States. They will identify potential new NGO resettlement partners and provide capacity building to help them refer refugees to the U.S.

Many questions focused on anti-fraud procedures, including, best practices like, for example, case verification with UNHCR.

Refugee Consortium of Kenya continued by describing their legal and protection programs throughout Kenya, including child protection and sexual and gender-based violence programming. They also do skills building and advise refugees on work and business permits. They host legal clinics that they can use to do legal assessments for resettlement needs. They described many of their policies related to "client management", including their anti-fraud policy.

Questions focused on challenges associated with assisting LGBTIQ+ refugees to access resettlement. It was also noted that resettlement currently takes about 5 years, on average. The conversation concluded with a discussion about the importance of clear communication and managing expectations in the resettlement process.

Wednesday, March 29

Focus group discussion with refugees in pathways; specific sessions on labor and education pathways, including with local partners; tour of RefugePoint programs.

Focus Group Discussion with Refugees

RefugePoint and WUSC facilitated a conversation with refugees in education and labor mobility pathways. We heard from individuals from Rwanda (2), South Sudan, Somalia, and Sudan. They had been in Kenya for well over a decade, on average.

The emphasized for us, among other topics: 1) the delay in getting refugee status in Kenya, and the challenges it causes; 2) the difficulty accessing education in Kenya, making it hard to become qualified for international education opportunities and jobs abroad; 3) how challenging it is to get jobs in Kenya without identification, a bank account, etc.; 4) the challenges associated with accessing third country solutions without proper documentation; 5) the need for better communication with and between stakeholders in the process, such as employers/universities and embassies; 6) the benefits of support networks in the destination country; 7) the burden of debt in the immigration process.

When asked what they would like for us to know and do to improve the program, they stressed how disheartening it is that the process takes so long and how frustrating it is to be asked to for input in these discussions and then see no changes.

They all underscored the hopelessness of being unable to pursue jobs and dreams and, conversely, the feeling of fulfillment when able to do so.

Questions were asked about the importance of family unity and reunification in the immigration and then integration process.

Refugee Labor Mobility, from East Africa and to Europe

RefugePoint began with an overview of its program in Kenya, to Canada's Economic Mobility Pathways Project. They stressed that the process is long and cumbersome, with many stages of casework. They described the eligibility criteria for the program, including: refugee status, relevant professional education, at least one year of work experience, language testing, and various financial requirements. "Key learnings" were listed, including both challenges and opportunities. Noted challenges were: the need for partners to create a "conveyor belt" like system to support refugees through the process; lack of access to language testing; and the financial burden on refugees. Opportunities included the idea of in-country training programs to meet labor needs in destination countries. Specific learning related to refugee-centeredness was offered, many of which focused on learning on from resettlement experience (eg, the need for settlement support for refugees in labor mobility).

IRC described how they are new to the space of labor mobility programming and how it has been a challenging transition from their resettlement experience, which intuitively is similar but which in practice is not so simple. They will begin with programming from western Tanzania to Canada, in partnership with Talent Beyond Boundaries. They stressed the importance of "indexing on parity" and the many challenges associated with it. They also described a forthcoming labor mobility program to the United States, noting that while labor mobility to Canada is making use of true economic pathways, the new program to the U.S. will instead use the resettlement pipeline of cases to link cases with sponsors, including for employment and education. It will also be a program focused on referrals from East Africa.

TBB continued a 5-part presentation, starting with an overview of TBB. It was founded by people without a humanitarian background but with instead a unique focus on labor mobility. They cited several principles: additionality; employer-led; power and autonomy to candidates; equitable access; and beneficiaries pay. TBB's work is centered on the talent catalogue, which currently has over 60,000 registered refugees. Second, they use what already exists to facilitate refugee support. Based on principle of equal access, their programs are open to multiple categories of potential beneficiaries, including recently a person displaced by climate change. It's also critical to consider flexibility on documentation. Third, on program updates, it was noted that the UK is by far their biggest program, made up primarily of healthcare. Hundreds have already arrived in the UK (and 65 more in one place in May!), with dozens of employers, including repeat-employers. The visa is a temporary skilled work visa that allows permanent residence after 5 years. Processing time is just 5 days. They summarized program updates in other European countries as well, including Ireland, Belgium, Portugal, and Italy. A way to ensure additionality is to use skills-pathways

not humanitarian ones for all of these pathways. Fourth, on challenges, we heard that all programs to Europe are temporary, requiring much information to candidates to ensure access to eventual permanent status. We learned that managing all the stakeholders are “like herding cats”. Economic downturns and political shifts have tremendous impact on programming, requiring pivoting the narrative rational around labor mobility. Lastly, intra-European migration has been a benefit, as well as the low costs, and the interest of DG Home. A final benefit now is the growing number of alumni to inform the program.

Panagiotis Gfokas, a member of the European Economic and Social Committee, explained how the EU needs migrants if for no other reason than to sustain Europe’s social security system. However, EU policy has not yet embraced this reality. Indeed, there is no agreement to adopt a common EU asylum and immigration policy, and currently individual states decide the type of entry visas they wish to allow and make their own decisions about refugee status. Most are reluctant to host large numbers of refugees.

Gfokas added that in his estimation there are three key elements for better integration: language, working skills, and family support. Complementary pathways linked to sponsorship can optimize all three of these.

Tour of RefugePoint’s Urban Refugee Protection Program

Participants visited RefugePoint’s office, where they were given an overview of all activities to foster self-reliance in Nairobi and to identify and refer refugees for third country solutions. Notably, the participants met:

- The community outreach team, dedicated to connecting the refugee community with resources to address their needs. They conduct participatory assessments to identify needs and develop strategies to address them. In addition, within the team, community navigators provide real-time information: they act as link in providing medication, interpretation and translation of documents, spreading messages and general information, and referring refugees to service providers.
- The health care team, which provides with health care services including medication and maternal care, at the Office as well as “in loco” through free medical community outreach, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The healthcare team also finances refugees to enroll in the national health care system.
- The mental health & counselling team, which provides confidential support to individuals and groups in need of trauma-informed care.
- The livelihoods team, which implements a range of activities, including training, developing business plans, and making grants when necessary to help a client start a new business. This is often in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, especially in relation to the identification of opportunities, the analysis of the market environment, and connection with Kenyan entrepreneurs.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation team, which presented the tools developed to assess activities and related outcomes quantitatively and qualitatively every 3-6 months.

Education Pathways from the Region and to Europe

WUSC opened the session with a summary of their Student Refugee Program, a program linking students in East Africa to scholarships and resettlement to Canada. They noted that in addition to other factors, the fact that Kenya’s refugee population includes both

anglophone and francophone means there are many individuals qualified for immigration to Canada. The program has a unique funding model supported by students in the university partners. WUSC's main roles include the selection of students and the facilitation of the immigration process. Eligibility requirements include refugee status, age and residency requirements, education and language requirements, and more. A challenge is the highly competitive process, with over 1,000 applications for about 50 scholarships.

DAAD is an organization of for academic exchange, with a network of university members, and with an annual budget of 700 million euros. There are 150,000 scholarship holders in the program per year, and their Nairobi office is one of 70 worldwide. They have long experience working with refugees, including, very successfully and recently, a large program for Syrian refugees, and even more recently a program for students from the Ukraine. Their Leadership for Africa program offers scholarship for studies in Germany. They have 50 scholarships for Africa, including 30 for East Africa, with particular countries rotating annually. They are able to bring their families, including children, with them, and are supported to do so. Refugees and host nationals are both eligible to apply. After graduation, path to residency is available, if they find a job. The first cohort, in 2021, included 510 applications, 109 of which were refugees. Challenges include outreach in refugee camps, lack of gender parity, and disparities in qualifications between Germany and other countries, leading to admitting students who may not be ready. In addition, their In-Country/In-Region program allows refugees to study closer to home. Both programs include transparent application processes, and require much outreach and training to ensure that applicants are able to properly and fully complete their application.

During a final presentation, we learned about Open Society University Network and the Global Task Force on Education Pathways. OSUN was founded two years ago by George Soros in Davos, Switzerland. Among their mission, is "expanding access to education at a time of growing inequity". Some of the work they do is related to complementary pathways, some beyond it. Some individuals are displaced but do not seek refugee status, going instead directly to some other status and access to education. They emphasize bachelor's degrees, as well as certificate programs, all with an eye towards livelihoods outcomes. They currently have 300 students in Kenya's camps, in a program to help them access universities in their network in countries with favorable policy regimes. The program provides much preparatory support to help candidates develop skills and competitive applications for scholarships. On the Global Task Force for Education, OSUN acts as co-chair, along with WUSC. Among other activities, they coordinate the global Community of Practice, a much larger group of organizations interested in supporting education pathways.

Thursday, March 30

Conversations with local partners; forward-looking discussion about recommendations and lessons learned.

Final Presentations on Resettlement, Labor Mobility, Education

RefugePoint began with an overview of its resettlement program, emphasizing the linkage between the resettlement program and the urban protection program that participants visited the day before. They emphasized that the backlog for refugee status determination means that many people in need of resettlement don't have access to it for years. Their selection criteria for resettlement are based largely on UNHCR's, though not exclusively.

Many examples were given for different categories of resettlement. They left us with “food for thought”, asking what is the future of growing resettlement too alongside complementary pathways?

L'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie described France's new university corridor program, acknowledging that it was in many ways inspired by Italy's program. The program is a partnership with UNHCR to develop refugee access to higher education. It is a multistakeholder project, bringing together government, intergovernmental organizations, civil sector, private sector, universities, and more. As with the German program, students received a tuition waive plus a living allowance and transportation subsidies from countries of asylum. It is a purely masters-level program, so in addition to usual basic eligibility criteria, students must already have a bachelor's degree. Last year, they had thousands of applications for 20 grants.

It was also noted that WUSC, which presented on its education program earlier in the week, also works on a similar program to use Canada's private sponsorship program to link refugees to jobs, a program like labor mobility.

Discussion on Labor Mobility and Education Pathways

The session was framed as an opportunity to begin to gather our thoughts and learning from the week and surface ideas for additional discussion. We began with a look back at the objectives for this week's gathering:

- Foster a fuller understanding of identification, referral, and matching systems for complementary pathways.
- Create the opportunity for engagement with refugee candidates in various stages of different pathways, allowing for greater refugee voice, agency, and participation in program planning conversations.
- Introduce operational partners spanning the entire complementary pathways process and foster greater understanding and coordination between partners.
- Explore models and partnerships for future programming, including ideas for streamlining procedures.
- Identify recommendations for creating or scaling viable complementary pathways programs.

Then, we continued to have breakout discussions, with the following prompt questions:"

1. How do we develop identification and referral models that respond to programme eligibility criteria and take account of available pathways?
2. How do we identify and refer refugees for labor mobility / higher education, including:
 - a. What tools should we develop/strengthen to make processes more resource/time efficient to meet demand of employers/universities?
 - b. What type of partnerships should be strengthened in countries of asylum and in destination countries, including roles and responsibilities and who does what?
 - c. What cost-sharing arrangements (who pays what?) would best guarantee sustainability/scalability?
3. How do we ensure meaningful refugee participation in programme design and monitoring, evaluation and via what mechanisms?

Lessons Learned on Identification & Referral for Complementary Pathways

We began with a verbal reporting to the larger group from our smaller group conversations in the morning. The following “wow moments” were identified:

1. How do we develop identification and referral models that respond to programme eligibility criteria and take account of available pathways?
 - The importance of organizations in the field linking refugees to the appropriate pathways and opportunities.
 - Database tools are helpful, for example Kobo, the Talent Catalogue, and common application systems, as in Italy’s University Corridors.
 - Similarly, a “portal” or chatbot could be developed to help refugees assess their particular circumstances to figure out what would be the most viable pathway.
2. How do we identify and refer refugees for labor mobility / higher education, including:
 1. What tools should we develop/strengthen to make processes more resource/time efficient to meet demand of employers/universities?
 - It is important to figure out the degree of support needed to help usher refugees from one end of a pipeline to the other, and equally important to figure out who is best-placed to provide that support.
 - Identifying most viable sectors and universities for is important for any scale.
 2. What type of partnerships should be strengthened in countries of asylum and in destination countries, including roles and responsibilities and who does what?
 - RLOs are important partners, in particular for helping refugees to navigate pathways.
 - It would be good to support embassies with dedicated staffing secondments to support processing, or at least to ask states to name a focal point at each embassy to monitor legal pathways for refugees. Another version may be to appoint a focal point in the destination country government office.
 3. What cost-sharing arrangements (who pays what?) would best guarantee sustainability/scalability?
 - A key question is the degree to which refugees should be a part of any cost-sharing, for example through loans?
3. How do we ensure meaningful refugee participation in programme design and monitoring, evaluation and via what mechanisms?
 - Ideas were split into two categories, one on programme design and one on monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Closing

In a brief closing, co-hosts ICMC, Caritas Italiana, and RefugePoint reminded everyone that the gathering in Nairobi was but one part of a much larger workplan spanning two years, all aiming to build complementary pathways to Europe, linked to community sponsorship. To this end, this report and key takeaways from the event in Nairobi will feed into subsequent working group meetings, and the larger EU-PASSWORLD project.