

Side Event Concept Note for the Eleventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11) "Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063" 9-11 April 2025, Kampala

Title: Driving Job Creation and Economic Growth Through Evidence-Based Private Sector Solutions in Refugee-Hosting Areas

Co-hosted by the Government of Uganda and UNHCR

Context and Rationale

Africa hosts over 45 million forcibly displaced people, representing a significant yet largely untapped economic force. This side event explores how inclusive refugee policies and harmonized socio-economic data are catalyzing private sector engagement in refugee-hosting areas, transforming traditional humanitarian approaches into opportunities for sustainable economic growth across the continent, thereby advancing both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and leaving no one behind.

Evidence from several countries demonstrates how this transformation contributes to multiple SDGs, particularly SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 17 on partnerships. In Kenya's Turkana County, for example, refugee presence has driven a 3.4% increase in overall employment and a 6% boost in per capita income for host communities.¹ A recent study in Ethiopia demonstrates that annual assistance needs per refugee falls from US \$210 to an estimated US \$78 per year if the country adopts a "full inclusion" scenario. Refugee communities bring diverse skills, entrepreneurial spirit, and unique market insights, often developing innovative solutions that transform hosting areas into vibrant economic hubs, ensuring that no one is left behind in Africa's pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This evidence demonstrates how full refugee inclusion delivers tangible socioeconomic benefits, strengthening the case for policy reform to remove barriers to greater socioeconomic inclusion of forcibly displaced populations. Legal frameworks and supportive policies are fundamental in creating an enabling environment for refugees' access to work, freedom of movement and rights to residence and establishment in countries of asylum and beyond.

¹ See "Yes" in My Backyard? The Economics of Refugees and Their Social Dynamics in Kakuma, Kenya" (2016). Sanghi, Apurva; Onder, Harun; Vemuru, Varalakshmi. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/308011482417763778/pdf/111303-WP-Kakuma-Report-Yes-in-my-backyard-December-2016-PUBLIC.pdf>. See also https://www.jointdatacenter.org/literature_review/do-refugee-camps-help-or-hurt-hosts-the-case-of-kakuma-kenya-2/; <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/982811613626800238/pdf/Understanding-the-Socioeconomic-Conditions-of-Refugees-in-Kenya-Volume-A-Kalobeyei-Settlement-Results-from-the-2018-Kalobeyei-Socioeconomic-Survey.pdf>.

As African countries advance their Global Refugee Forum (GRF) commitments, this event presents a timely opportunity to assess progress on the Multi-Stakeholder Pledges on Economic Inclusion, which have garnered support from a large number of African governments including Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Building on the momentum from the first-ever frontier markets discussion at the AfDB-led African Investment Forum, which took place in Morocco in December 2024, this event will explore the critical roles of governments, development actors, and private sector partners in enabling this transformation and accelerating progress toward the SDGs *Alignment with ARFSD-11 Theme and SDGs*.

This event directly addresses the forum's theme by presenting concrete evidence of how private sector solutions drive job creation and economic growth in refugee-hosting areas. It specifically contributes to:

- SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Evidence from successful private sector investments
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Women's economic empowerment through market access
- SDG 17 (Partnerships): Innovative public-private collaboration models

Format and Structure (90 minutes) – Hybrid format

Opening Remarks (15 minutes):

- Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda (TBC following the approval of the application)
- High-Level UNHCR Representative TBC

Panel Discussion (45 minutes): **Driving Job Creation and Economic Growth Through Evidence-Based Private Sector Solutions in Refugee-Hosting Areas of Africa**

Moderator: UNHCR Representative/Uganda

Suggested panelists TBC (confirmation after 21st / after the approval form the National Organizing Committee):

1. Representative from the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement
2. AfDB Representative
3. IFC Representative
4. Representative from Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU)
5. Successful Refugee Entrepreneur from Uganda
6. Representative from Department of Refugees (DoR), Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda

Q/A session (30 Minutes): Open Discussion

Expected Outcomes

- Contribute evidence-based solutions from refugee-hosting areas to the Forum's outcome documents on driving job creation and economic growth, with particular focus on women's economic empowerment and private sector engagement.
- Provide concrete policy recommendations and best practices to inform the Forum's summary proceedings on advancing sustainable and inclusive development through market-based approaches.
- Present replicable models of successful partnerships between governments, development actors, and private sector to strengthen the Forum's guidance on implementing SDGs 5, 8, and 17

Application / Facilitation Requirements/ needed for the application/ submission:

- Room for 50 to 100,
- Room Requirements: Projector, Sound System, Interpreters (to be organized by UNHCR) , Extra services (wifi/internet connectivity)
- Choose not to merge with other events, although this may reduce our chances of side event
- Details of costs (Costs to be Shared – Confirmation after the approval of the organizing committee)
- Requested date 10th April