

Developing Sustainable Livelihoods for Refugees and Migrants

Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Conference: FISDMUN II

Co-Chair: TBD

Co-Chair: TBD

Committee Overview

The [United Nations Economic and Social Council](#) is one of the United Nations' committees, responsible for promoting international economic and social cooperation and development. ECOSOC plays a key role in addressing global challenges related to poverty, inequality, sustainable development, and socio-economic disparities, including the long-term impacts of forced displacement.

This committee will focus on developing sustainable livelihood systems for refugees and migrants in protracted displacement settings, with an emphasis on labor market integration, resource constraints, and host community stability. Delegates will explore strategies that move beyond short-term humanitarian aid toward long-term economic inclusion and resilience.

Introduction

Forced displacement has increasingly shifted from a short-term humanitarian issue to a global challenge, with many refugees and migrants remaining displaced for years or even decades. As a result, reliance on emergency aid alone is insufficient, and there is a growing need to transition toward sustainable development approaches.

ECOSOC and its partners, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, emphasize that durable solutions must include access to stable employment, education, economic, and healthcare systems. However, refugees often face structural barriers like legal restrictions, limited job opportunities, and resource constraints in host countries.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated international action that balances the needs of displaced populations with the economic and social stability of host communities.

Topic Background

Developing sustainable livelihood systems for refugees and migrants involves addressing interconnected economic, legal, and social challenges:

- **Displacement and Economic Dependency:** Many refugees remain in displacement for extended periods, limiting their ability to achieve economic independence. Without access to stable livelihoods, displaced populations often depend on humanitarian assistance, placing long-term strain on resources (ECOSOC, *Joint Meeting of ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission*).
- **Barriers to Labor Market Integration:** Refugees frequently face restrictions on employment, a lack of credential recognition, and limited access to formal labor markets. Even when

employment is available, it is often unstable or informal, preventing long-term economic security (Kreisberg and Gleeson; UNHCR, *Resettlement*).

- **Resource Constraints in Host Countries:** Host countries face significant challenges in supporting large refugee populations. These include pressure on infrastructure, labor markets, and public services, which can create tensions between displaced populations and host communities (Dhanapala; United States Mission to the United Nations).
- **Beyond Initial Resettlement:** Research highlights that focusing solely on initial job placement is not enough. Long-term success requires career development and access to education to ensure sustainable economic integration (Kreisberg and Gleeson).

Past UN and International Actions

The United Nations Economic and Social Council and its partners have undertaken several initiatives to address refugee livelihoods:

- **ECOSOC 2025 Meeting on Relief to Development Transition:** Emphasized the need to shift from short-term aid to sustainable economic development strategies (ECOSOC, *2025 Meeting*).
- **UNHCR Resettlement Programs:** Aim to provide refugees with long-term solutions, including access to employment and social services (UNHCR, *Resettlement*).

Despite these efforts, gaps remain in implementation and funding between humanitarian and development actors.

Case Studies

1. **Transition from Relief to Global Development:** ECOSOC discussions have emphasized the need to move from emergency humanitarian assistance to long-term development strategies. Countries that integrate refugees into local economies have shown more sustainable outcomes compared to those relying solely on aid (ECOSOC, *2025 Meeting*).
2. **Private Sector Employment Initiatives:** Companies and international partnerships have created programs to connect refugees with job opportunities, demonstrating how economic inclusion can benefit both refugees and host economies (World Economic Forum).

Policy Recommendations

Delegates should consider the following strategies and others when drafting resolutions:

1. **Promoting Labor Market Access:** Encourage policies that allow refugees to work legally and access formal employment.
2. **Supporting Host Communities:** Provide financial and infrastructure support to reduce economic strain and prevent social tensions.
3. **Bridging Humanitarian and Development Efforts:** Align short-term aid with long-term economic strategies.

Questions to Consider

- How can countries transition from humanitarian aid to sustainable livelihood systems for refugees?
- What policies are most effective in integrating refugees into formal labor markets?
- How can host countries balance economic stability with the needs of displaced populations?
- What role should the private sector play in refugee employment?
- How can international organizations improve coordination between humanitarian and development efforts?

Works Cited

- Dhanapala, Sivanka. *United Nations Economic and Social Council: Management Segment Meeting Presided by H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal and Vice-President of ECOSOC Item 20(E), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Oral Report on the Coordination Aspects of the Work of the Office of UNHCR Delivered*. 10 June 2025, pp. 1–3,
ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/21.unhcr-10june-director.pdf.
- ECOSOC. “2025 ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development - Economic and Social Council, 25th Plenary Meeting.” *UN Web TV*, 27 June 2025,
webtv.un.org/en/asset/k19/k19xal2s5e.
- . *JOINT MEETING of the ECONOMIC and SOCIAL COUNCIL and the PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION the Development and Peace Dimensions of Forced Displacement: Countries’ Best Practices in Creating Durable Solutions*. 1 July 2024,
ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/CN%20Joint%20PBC%20Meeting%2014%20June%202024.pdf.
- International Rescue Committee . “How Have the Trump Administration’s Policies Impacted Refugees? | the IRC.” *How Have the Trump Administration’s Policies Impacted Refugees?*, 2022, www.rescue.org/article/how-have-trump-policies-impacted-refugees.
- Kreisberg, Anna Nicole, and Els de Graauw Shannon Gleeson. “Refugee Resettlement Should Look beyond First Job Placements.” *Scholars Strategy Network*, 16 Mar. 2022,
scholars.org/contribution/refugee-resettlement-should-look-beyond-first.

Noor, Zarin, and Jordane P. Tofighi. "Refugee Resettlement: Challenges and Opportunities."

Academic Pediatrics, vol. 24, no. 5, Elsevier BV, July 2024, pp. 61–62,

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2023.12.002>.

States, United. "U.S. Statement on the Special Meeting of ECOSOC on Forced Displacement

and Refugee Protection - United States Mission to the United Nations." *United States*

Mission to the United Nations, 24 Apr. 2025,

usun.usmission.gov/u-s-statement-on-the-special-meeting-of-ecosoc-on-forced-displacement-and-refugee-protection/.

UN. "UN / FORCED DISPLACEMENT REFUGEE PROTECTION." *UNifeed*, 24 Apr. 2025,

media.un.org/unifeed/en/asset/d336/d3363859.

UNHCR. "Key Challenges of Refugee Resettlement." *UNHCR*, 2007, pp. 14–16,

www.unhcr.org/us/sites/en-us/files/legacy-pdf/4565a6bb2.pdf.

---. "Resettlement | UNHCR US." *UNHCR US*, 2019,

www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/build-better-futures/solutions/resettlement.

World Economic Forum. "Finding Work after Fleeing War: Companies Help Refugees Find

Jobs." *World Economic Forum*, 11 Dec. 2023,

www.weforum.org/impact/finding-work-after-fleeing-war-companies-aim-to-help-refugees-find-jobs/.