



Final Report:

Urban Refugee Incubation Programme (URIP) Supporting Refugee – Led Organisations

October 2017

With the support of individual donors as well as the US State Department, Populations, Refugees and Migration bureau.





URBAN REFUGEES

12 rue Saulnier

75009 Paris, France

contact@urban-refugees.org

+336 99 46 42 82

www.urban-refugees.org

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Printed in France

Registration number: W783004065

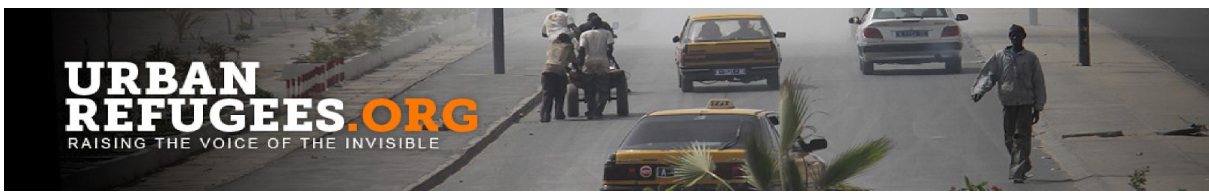
MISSION STATEMENT

URBAN REFUGEES is a non profit working to improve the lives of urban refugees and internally displaced people in countries of first asylum. We believe that solutions to the global refugee crisis exist and that they take roots in refugee communities. We partner with refugees and IDPs to ensure that their voices are heard and that they have a place at the table. We provide technical and financial support to their community organizations and advocate for their recognition as key stakeholders in responses.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

URBAN REFUGEES would like to thank the Bureau of Populations, Refugees and Migration of the US State Department (BPRM) as well as all the donors from our first crowdfunding campaign, without whose support this report would not be possible. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to our Boards of Directors, who provided valuable support and insight throughout the implementation of this program, as well as all our volunteers and staff members for their commitment to making this program a success. Many thanks also go to the experts in the NGO community in Kuala Lumpur, UNHCR Malaysia and the local authorities who met with us and provided expert input. Most of all, thanks to the leaders and volunteers of the Afghan Community Center, the Somali Refugee Committee and the Rohingya Society of Malaysia for their participation in this pilot program.

Cover photo: ©Kenny Low



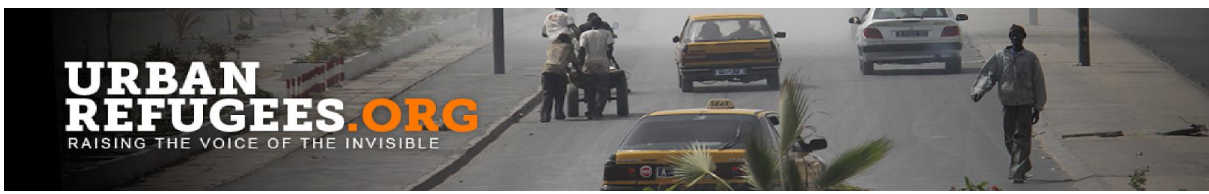
Executive Summary

URBAN REFUGEES (www.urban-refugees.org) is a non profit established in November 2012 with the mission of drastically improving the lives of those displaced in urban settings by strengthening the capacities of refugee-led organizations (RLOs), disseminating best practices and advocating at the policy level.

It was created based on the observation that the refugee landscape has changed dramatically over the past decade. Today, over 60% of all refugees live in urban areas and the numbers of those forcibly displaced continues to grow - currently 65.3 million inclusive of 21 million refugees. What hasn't changed is the fact that the vast majority, over 80% of refugees, continue to reside in less developed countries - countries that struggle to care for their own citizens and which face pressures of internal conflict and instability. Urban refugees often fall between the gaps of humanitarian and conflict-related stabilisation funds. URBAN REFUGEES (UR) seeks to intervene to bridge this gap by assisting this often unseen population. The scale and scope of the crises requires new modalities of working to increase both program effectiveness and cost efficiencies. Engaging and supporting RLOs is one way to do both that can transcend borders.

Refugees bring a wealth of skills and experience with them when they flee to new countries and communities. These skills need to be identified and tapped to better engage refugees in their own solutions. Refugee communities, for example, often set up their own self-help groups in their countries of asylum. These groups know their communities best and are often those who respond first to their communities' needs and priorities. These RLOs, however, are seldom part of the formal humanitarian response and are almost never capacitated, engaged and financially supported for what they do or what they could do, with many deeming the investment too great for expedient needs and the political risk too high to empower the displaced .

Through an RLO incubation program (the Urban Refugees Incubation Program, hereinafter URIP) piloted from July 2016 to July 2017 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a country that has not signed the 1951 Convention, UR has learned that building the capacity of refugee-led organizations have immediate near-term and longer-term benefits for refugee communities. The URIP provided training and mentorship to RLO leaders, staff and volunteers in several key areas that match their most pressing organisational and community needs. By doing so, the programme enabled the development of self-sustained RLOs that 1) actively support their communities by improving service delivery and advocacy and 2) facilitate the work of humanitarian actors in non-camp settings. This is all the more important given that the humanitarian community currently struggles to shift approaches from camps to urban settings. This is true not only in protracted refugee situations but also in emergency contexts - as shown by the Syrian crisis.



Using this mentorship model and on the basis of a thorough evaluation, URBAN REFUGEES has demonstrated that RLOs are not only willing but also capable of working on their organizational shortcomings when appropriate support is provided to them. The result was an increase in the quantity and quality of services provided to affected populations, better coordination with local partners which facilitated the delivery of aid, and an increased number of community members benefiting from programs, particularly the most vulnerable ones. This pilot also clarified the key role RLOs play in urban humanitarian response, notably that:

- **They are uniquely placed to support their communities:** being managed by refugees themselves and located in neighborhoods where the majority of a given community lives, RLOs are uniquely placed to provide support. This is particularly valuable in contexts where refugees are at risk of arrest and detention when moving around the city.
- **They play a key role in protection,** particularly in case of emergencies, security threats or in moments when refugees are most vulnerable to various risks (for example upon arrival).
- **They facilitate the delivery of services and humanitarian aid** by helping NGOs identify needs and particular target groups.
- **They enhance local integration of refugee communities** by providing services such as language classes or cultural orientation but also by approaching and creating linkages with local authorities, businesses and individuals.
- **They play a peacemakers/peacebuilders role** in fragile environments

This evaluation report outlines the main findings of this pilot program and draws some recommendations for future programming in urban settings.



Table of Contents

Acknowledgment 2

Executive Summary 3

Table of Contents 5

Abbreviations 7

1. Introduction 8

 1.1. Background 8

 1.2. Program description 9

 1.3. Evaluation method 9

2. Project Context 10

 2.1. Country context 10

 2.2. Beneficiary profile 11

 The Rohingya Society Malaysia 11

 The Afghan Community Centre 12

 The Somali Refugee Committee 12

3. URIP Methodology 12

 3.1. Five-phase approach 12

 3.2. Detailed phases 13

4. Evidence from the URIP 15

 4.1. Outputs 15

 4.2. Outcomes 19

 4.2.1. Increase in service and program offering 19

 4.2.2. Increase in number of beneficiaries 21

5. General Findings 22

 5.1. On the needs of RLOs 22

 Organisational Capacity Building 22

 Access to Seed Funding 22

 5.2. On the role of RLOs 22

 5.3. About the relationship between RLOs and partners (NGOs, UN agencies, donors) 24

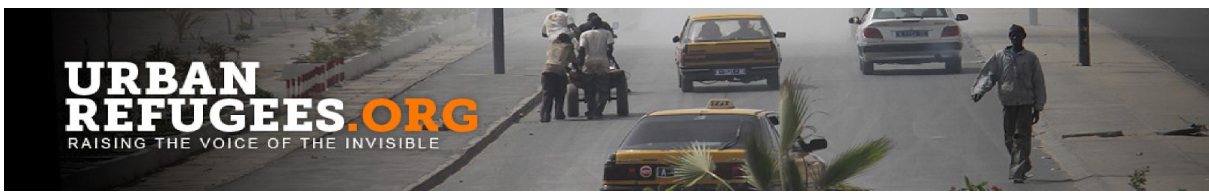


6. Recommendations	24
6.1. General recommendations	24
6.2. Operational recommendations	25
7. Conclusions	26



Abbreviations

ACC	Afghan Community Centre
CoP	Community of Practice
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
NGO	Non – Governmental Organisation
RLO	Refugee – Led Organisation
RSM	Rohingya Society of Malaysia
SBGV	Sexually Based Gender Violence
SRC	Somali Refugee Community
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UR	URBAN REFUGEES (NGO)
URIP	Urban Refugees Incubation Programme



1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Humanitarian organisations are confronted with important challenges supporting refugees in urban and non-camp settings. There are multiple problems identifying and assisting refugees outside of camps as they are scattered across wide areas and often tend to keep a low profile for fear of arrest or detention. In such a context, disseminating accurate information within the refugee community, providing services and involving beneficiaries in the design of programs constitute especially difficult tasks.

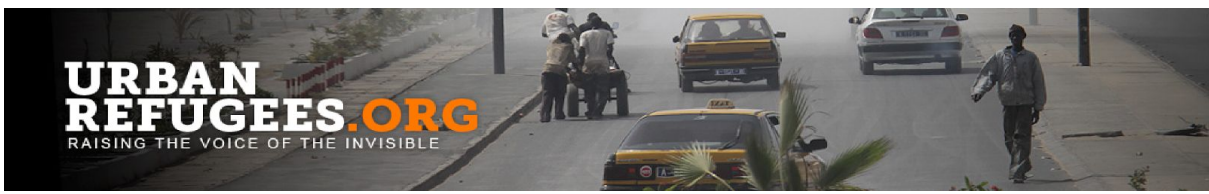
Confronted by limited support, asylum seekers and refugees have adapted to meet the needs of their own communities by creating community-based organizations. Studies have shown that such organisations – refer hereinafter as refugee-led organisations (RLOs) – deliver essential support to their community¹ and act as key representatives and interlocutors with the wider humanitarian and host communities. RLOs facilitate the work of humanitarian organisations by, for example, disseminating accurate information, referring cases or representing their community when NGOs seek beneficiary inputs.

Yet many RLOs face organisational challenges that impair their ability to deliver services and advocate effectively for their communities, and to engage meaningfully and collaboratively with the international community. These challenges include nascent management systems, lack of resources and limited access to digital tools. Humanitarian actors may find it hard to engage with RLOs when they are informal and poorly structured. However, by leaving them with no or limited support, an opportunity is missed to greatly facilitate the provision of aid in cities and to involve those that are often the first responders to their communities' needs.

Key international voices highlight the need to strengthen the capacities, support, and prioritize RLOs in urban refugee programming². Doing so provides a number of benefits: 1) facilitating access to services and enhancing protection for urban refugee communities, 2) fostering self-reliance and local integration, and 3) acting as a bridge to the work of the humanitarian and development community in cities.

¹ D. Buscher, *New Approaches to Urban Refugee Livelihoods*, *Refuge, Canada's Journal on Refugees*, vol 28 n 2, 2011. Available at <http://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/36473/33161> and IRC, *In search of Survival and Sanctuary in the city: Refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*, Dec. 2012. Available at <http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/In%20Search%20of%20Survival%20and%20Sanctuary%20in%20the%20City.pdf>

² J. Cosgrave, N. Crawford and I. Mosel, *10 things to know about refugees and displacement*, Briefing papers, Overseas Development Institute, September 2015. Available at <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9850.pdf>. D. Buscher, *New Approaches to Urban Refugee Livelihoods*, *Refuge, Canada's Journal on Refugees*, vol 28 n 2, 2011. Available at <http://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/36473/33161>. IRC, *In search of Survival and Sanctuary in the city: Refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*, dec. 2012. Available at <http://www.rescue.org>; IRC and WRC, *Urban Refugee Research and Social Capital, A Roundtable Report and Literature Review, A Product of the IRC's and WRC's Urban Refugee Roundtable*, February 19, 2013.



1.2. Program description

The Urban Refugees Incubation Program (URIP) aims to strengthen and reinforce the capacities of RLOs, filling a major gap in the current refugee support system in cities of the Global South.

The URIP provides training and mentorship over 6 months to RLO leadership, staff and volunteers in a number of key areas that match their most pressing organisational and community needs. The URIP aims to be both replicable to any RLO and flexible to target the specific needs of each organisation. It was built around 5 key assumptions:

- Supporting the development of organisations trusted by refugee communities increases the likelihood that “hidden” refugees and the most vulnerable will seek services and support.
- Supporting service delivery at the most local level by grassroots, self-help groups, improves cost-effectiveness, community empowerment and protection.
- Building strategic planning and program development capacity help reduce duplication or the creation of parallel services and promote the strengthening of and access to existing services.
- Applying a participatory and empowerment-based model supports local ownership and leadership of initiatives, which is generally more sustainable in the long-term;
- Focusing on partnerships and networks of action enhance the international community’s ability to work more effectively in urban settings.

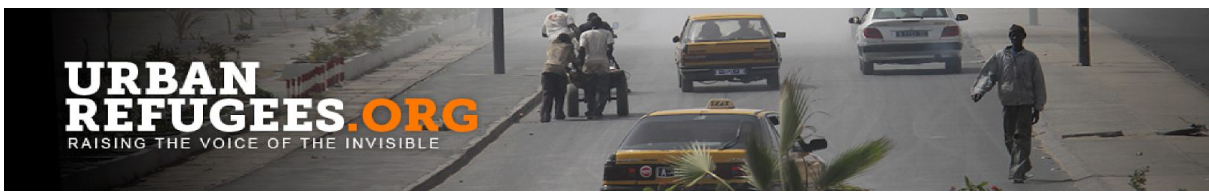
The URIP is aligned with and complements the global strategy of UNHCR to increase community-based protection, which is an essential component of the 2014 “*Alternative to Camps*” policy. It is also in coherence with the “*localization of aid*” agenda mainstreamed since the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) and in adherence with The US Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migrations (BPRM) [Principles for Refugee Protection in Urban Areas](#), especially the principle that “*interventions should promote self-reliance*” and the call for humanitarian actors to establish new partnerships, “*including with refugee-led groups*”³. Finally, this approach is in line with commitments governments have made to improve the comprehensive refugee response as part of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in particular by strengthening the capacity of refugees to engage in the response and collaborate with national and international actors.

The URIP pilot was conducted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, across 3 RLOs from July 2016 to July 2017.

1.3. Evaluation method

The URIP is a dynamic iterative program structured around strategic learning. The above mentioned assumptions were tested using a monitoring and evaluation plan (hereinafter

³ See the 9 Principles here: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organisation/187237.pdf>



M&E plan) structured to measure progressive change over a longer more realistic time frame, while demonstrating ongoing strategic learning and responsiveness.

Consistent with the iterative nature of the program, the M&E framework for the URIP is centered on a developmental evaluation approach, specifically structured to foster rapid real time program feedback using a process that includes: 1) conducting an audit based on a “capability matrix” to thoroughly assess the unique capacity needs of each CBO across a diverse array of areas using multiple data collection methods, which creates a rich baseline context for designing program interventions and measuring change; 2) continuous monitoring of the program effectiveness and emergent outcomes; 3) as outcomes emerge and evolve, developing new indicators and mechanisms for tracking them; and 4) capturing learning and responding with revised/customized program interventions.

The URIP M&E framework is structured around measuring outcomes for three core strategies that the program pursues to build RLO capacity and improve the lives of urban refugees. The strategies, which are also considered program objectives, include:

Objective 1: To improve the program delivery and impact of incubated RLOs

Objective 2: To increase organizational and financial sustainability of incubated RLOs

Objective 3: To strengthen strategic relationships and coordination with key stakeholders of incubated RLOs

During this pilot an additional key objective was to ensure replicability of URIP by creating a dynamic program model and strategy based in an extensive toolkit that allows adaptability to any CBO context. In locations beyond Kuala Lumpur, replicability will continue to be an important aspect to be measured.

2. Project Context

2.1. Country context

Kuala Lumpur is the national capital of Malaysia as well as its largest city. As of 2016 it is estimated to have a population of 1.76 million people in an area of just 94 square kilometres, and so the city has a very high population density. The main ethnic groups in the city consist of Malay/Bumiputra (45.9%), Chinese (43.2%) and Indian (10.3%), the remaining 1.6% making up a mixture of ethnicities. The city is also host to several religions: Islam accounts for 46.4% of the population, followed by Buddhism (35.7%), Hinduism (8.5%), Christianity (5.8%), Daoism (1.1%) and other religions (2%)⁴.

⁴ World Population Review, 2017, available at <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/kuala-lumpur-population/>



Figure 1. Map of Malaysia. Source: Reliefweb, 2017

According to the latest UNHCR statistics, as of end June 2017, there were some 149,200 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia. 132,500 are from Myanmar, comprising some 59,100 Rohingyas, 38,200 Chins, 9,900 Myanmar Muslims, 4,200 Rakhines and Arakanese, and other ethnicities from Myanmar. There are approximately 16,700 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries, including some 3,800 Pakistanis, 2,200 Sri Lankans, 2,100 Yemenis, 2,100 Somalis, 1,900 Syrians, 1,400 Iraqis, 1,100 Afghans, 700 Palestinians, and others from other countries⁵.

67% of refugees and asylum-seekers are men, while 33% are women. There are 37,000 children below the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017). Malaysia has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor the 1967 Protocol. Refugees are thus considered ‘illegal migrants’: they have no access to the education or the health system and do not have the right to work.

2.2. Beneficiary profile

Because of this large urban refugee population but also the quality of the applications received from RLOs in Kuala Lumpur⁶, the historical links UR had in Malaysia with local NGOs as well as the attention put by the UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur on RLOs, UR decided to choose 3 RLOs based in Kuala Lumpur to run the first URIP that are introduced next.

The Rohingya Society Malaysia

The Rohingya Society in Malaysia (RSM) was formed in February 2010 in Penang to advocate the needs of Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia. Rohingya are Myanmar’s Muslim minority living in Arakan state (also known as Rakhine state). They have been deprived all basic human rights such citizenship right, voting rights, restriction on marriage

⁵ UNHCR 2017, Figures at a Glance Malaysia, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/my/About_Us-@-Figures_At_A_Glance.aspx

⁶ A call for applications was launched in January 2017. In total, 34 RLOs from different countries applied to benefit from the program and 3 were selected for the first pilot.



and freedom of movement and have been driven from their homes by force since 1970. RSM partners with the National Government, UNHCR and other local and International NGOs. RSM works on eradicating illiteracy, increasing the number of women in employment, providing health care support, and assisting youths to achieve higher education and gain professional skills through basic training programs.

The Afghan Community Centre

The Afghan Community Centre (ACC) was created to support Afghan refugees in Kuala Lumpur, especially with finding housing, jobs, sharing opportunities but also with arrest and detention cases. The organisation represents 900 refugees, and ACC tries to improve Afghan refugees' daily lives by protecting and advocating on behalf of the community, particularly at the UNHCR Kuala Lumpur level. The centre offers a range of classes to Afghan adults and children including sport, English and art courses as well as livelihoods activities such as sewing, in addition to providing a place for people to gather for social or cultural events.

The Somali Refugee Committee

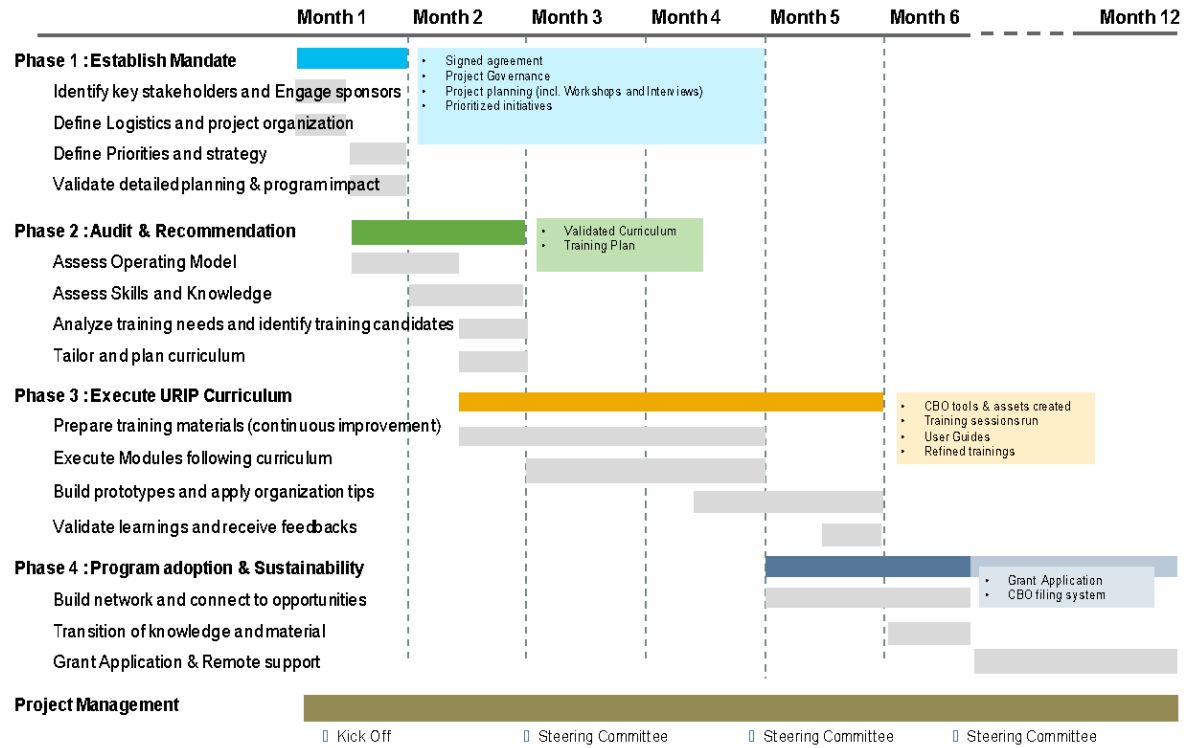
The Somali Refugee Committee (SRC) was created in 2008 by a group of Somali refugees living in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in order to address the pressing needs of their communities. The SRC aims to provide support to all Somali refugees, with a focus on single mothers and children. The bulk of the services target this particular group, but support is also provided to all categories in the population. SRC delivers classes to refugee children, sewing machines and classes for women, distributes food to vulnerable families, register community members and advocates in cases of detention and helps community members access health services, among others. There are currently 1000 Somali refugees supported by SRC.

3. URIP Methodology

3.1. Five-phase approach

The URIP is founded on an approach that has been developed within the context of a global community of practice⁷ (CoP), and encompasses best practices and lessons learned from years of experience in diverse urban refugee settings. The URIP consists of a 5-phased replicable approach (see below graph) that reflects change management theories.

⁷ See our repository of urban Good Practices developed in partnership with UNHCR: <http://www.urban-refugees.org/we-connect>



3.2. Detailed phases

Phase 1 / Month 1 - Establish Mandate: This stage sets the program direction and agenda, allows for the proper mobilisation of key stakeholders and enables participatory planning. It enables UR to identify the RLO internal power dynamics, objectives, risks and potential resistance as well as to confirm the overall feasibility of the change.

Phase 2/ Month 1 – Month 2: Audit and recommendations: The audit stage aims to understand the training needs, identify key individuals who will receive trainings and tailor the approach by conducting RLO capability assessment (whereby leaders assess the level of maturity of their own organisation), gathering insights from NGO partners as well as RLO











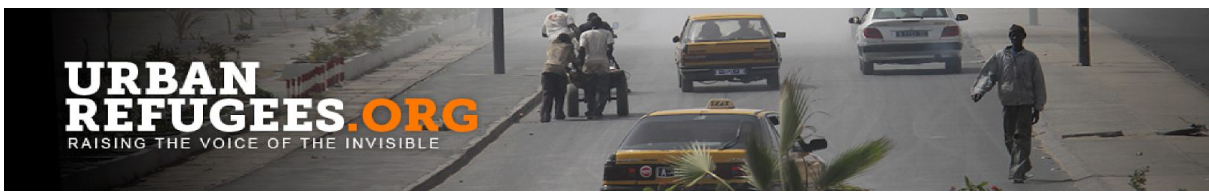
beneficiaries and conducting an individual training needs analysis for each leader. UR then shares conclusions and recommendations with the RLO leaders at the end of the audit with a full audit report that enables leaders to get a clear idea of their main areas of improvement. Based on these findings and in close collaboration with RLO leaders, UR and the RLO jointly refine priorities and tailor the URIP curriculum.

Phase 3 /– Month 5: URIP Curriculum: During this stage, trainings are delivered to equip the leaders with the capabilities defined during the audit stage. UR follows a 7-step process to equip the RLO with new skills, knowledge, behaviours and ways of working:



As UR focuses on bridging the gap between current vs. desired competencies, UR ensures that trainings are personalized to each RLO need (Step 1). Each training is built around “hands-on” practice (Step 5) to apply the new tools or new ways of working in their daily work. To ensure continuous improvement, UR provides opportunities for feedback by participants at the end of each training delivered (Step 7). The UR training curriculum contains 28 training modules covering 8 main capabilities and including multiple disciplines / dimensions; e.g. technical (excel, collaborative tools etc.), professional (project management, finance etc.), interpersonal (working in teams, communications etc.), leadership (strategic planning, governance etc.). UR trainings with RLOs aim to reinforce existing capabilities, building upon strengths and assets of each RLO, and build new capacities where necessary.

 Project Management	<table border="1"> <tr><td><i>Planning a project</i></td><td><i>Measure impact & gather feedbacks</i></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Track Progress and Reporting</i></td><td><i>Budgeting</i></td></tr> </table>	<i>Planning a project</i>	<i>Measure impact & gather feedbacks</i>	<i>Track Progress and Reporting</i>	<i>Budgeting</i>
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Phase 4/ – Month 6: Program adoption:

To integrate and ensure sustainability of new skills and capacities, UR allows sufficient time for program adoption. During the initial adoption of the change, UR focuses on:

- Ensuring RLO teams adopt the change and have started using new ways of working by completing a post incubation review.
- Reinforcing the key messages through various channels and repeated communications.
- Ensuring transition of knowledge and materials to RLO teams.
- Conveying the success stories and best practices, identifying how the new approaches, behaviours, and attitudes have helped improve performance.
- Empowering role models among the leaders to embody the change

Phase 5 / Month 7 – 12: Sustainability:

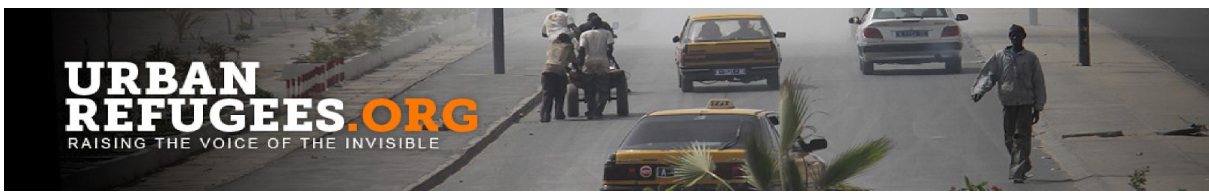
- **Tollgates:** these are formal meetings at month 9 and 12 during which the RLO demonstrates the on-going use of tools, assets and learning created during the incubation. Tollgates are used to: ensure that the change has been embedded, is stable and is owned by the RLO so that the incubation programme can stop providing external support, based on pre-agreed criteria; and to assess readiness for the release of the sustainability grant;
- **Grant:** a \$10,000 grant is allocated for each incubated RLO. The grant is subject to an application process at month 6 and is disbursed after the completion of the two tollgates at month 12. It is designed to cover core costs of RLOs in order to maintain sustainability and reward organisational change adoption.
- **Mentoring:** from month 7 to 12, UR assesses the extent to which the incubated RLO is able to keep growing in autonomy. Based on the findings, UR determines the level of mentoring needed: Level 1, most intensive: mentoring from local volunteers, other well-structured local RLOs or NGOs; Level 2, medium intensity: international mentoring done remotely by volunteers, and Level 3, low intensity: support provided by well structured RLOs in other countries.

4. Evidence from the URIP

Upon conclusion of the programme, the following progresses towards the 3 strategic objectives were made by the incubated RLOs. Note that these are a sample of the main areas of progress as of 30.09.2017, per RLO.

4.1. Outputs

Objective 1: To increase organizational and financial sustainability of incubated RLOs



Governance and leadership representation:

Evaluation question: To which extent were the governance structure of incubated RLOs strengthened? To which extent is the RLO increasingly representative of its population?

Three indicators were used to answer this question: by the end of the program does the incubated RLO: 1) has defined roles and responsibilities for leaders; 2) has transparent leadership transition rules; and 4) increased its gender and community representation. Only 1 RLO out of 3 already had a strong governance system in place at the beginning of the program. By the end of the program, all RLOs met these 3 indicators:

- The ACC and SRC drafted a constitution shared publicly at their office space and included processes for elections and replacement of leaders. This led to a significant decrease in community complaints – proven, for example, by the number of positive messages about the ACC on the community Viber group post incubation.
- The ACC conducted an election following the new governance rules post incubation which led to 2 new leaders being appointed and trained by previous leaders.
- The 3 incubated RLOs increased the gender representation within their organizations, the ACC and RSM creating a women’s committee with female leaders in charge of women’s affairs and the SRC electing a woman as the Chair.

Financial management:

Evaluation question: to which extent did the incubated RLOs enhanced their financial management?

3 RLOs out of 3 did not have a proper financial management system in place at the beginning of the incubation program. As part of the training, 100% of incubated RLOs created a bookkeeping and a cash management process as well as a simple accounting database on excel which was still in use as of 30.09.2017. In particular:

- The ACC keeps using the database and tracks every single transaction as of 30.09.2017.
- The RSM also created a procurement and reimbursement processes and appointed a treasurer as well as a finance reviewer.

Fundraising:

Evaluation question: to which extent were the fundraising capacity and income generating methods of the incubated RLOs enhanced?

One of the main challenges incubated RLOs were facing in their development was fundraising. The URIP provided tailored training to enhance the ability of leaders to, among others, write effective proposals, identify potential donors and pitch projects, raise donations from the most well-off within the community or develop income generating activities for the organization.



2 RLOs out of 3 were able to increase their annual budget by at least 25% in the 3 to 6 months post incubation:

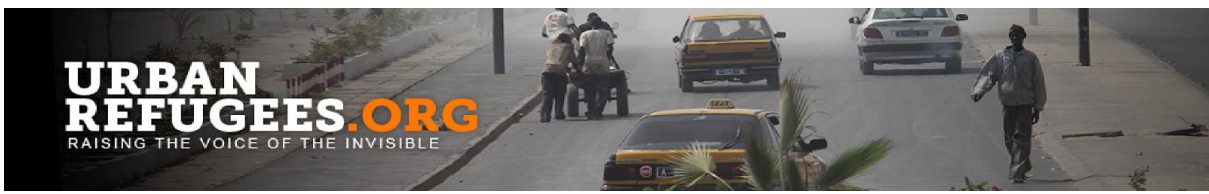
- The ACC doubled its annual budget in 6 months (from 10 000 to 26 000 RM, approx. USD 6100) and diversified its funding sources thanks to:
 - A grant proposal to UNHCR for livelihoods activities which was successful (one for sewing classes for women and one for a cooking class) for a total budget of 11 600 RM
 - A crowdfunding campaign in 2017 through which the ACC successfully raised 1450 USD on the platform Start Some Good. In addition, it was approached by two businesses based in Malaysia which resulted in the donation of 10 computers to the centre and 1000 RM (USD 230)
 - The organisation of a fundraising concert (entirely funded by a partner organisation) which raised 300 RM from partners
 - The sewing machines are rented 10 RM / hour by community members to use them and the money generated helps covering the cost of the rent
 - Donations from the community thanks to the creation of a donation box at the center
 - Additionally, the ACC leaders drafted and sent 5 new funding proposals in the 6 months following the incubation, including 3 to business partners, compared to 1 in a year prior to the program
- RSM also increased its fundraising capability:
 - One proposal was successful in 2017 for an SGBV project initiated by an NGO
 - The leaders reached out to new potential funders including embassies and private companies

Community trust and mobilization:

Evaluation question: to which extent did the incubated RLO increased community trust and mobilization?

At the beginning of the program, 100% of the incubated RLOs were facing rumors within the community and had difficulties recruiting volunteers for activities. Post incubation, they all had make significant improvements in this area. This was verified through the number of volunteers and members involved with RLOs as well as the creation of volunteers engagement processes:

- The ACC successfully:
 - Created a working culture and a number of volunteers have been emerging spontaneously from the community. As an example a woman created a class for adults on how to best handle parenting issues and another proposed to be a caseworker.
 - Shares information with the community which decreased rumors and complaints
- The RSM increased its ability to recruit volunteers within the community:
 - 3 female volunteers were recruited in 3 months in 2017 following the incubation (one as a computer class teacher, one as an SGBV counsellor and one as a community health worker).



- When RSM advertised a teacher volunteer position in 2017, 6 applications for the position were received which was unusual
- The SRC more effectively informs the community about activities and opportunities; a whatsapp group was created to share information with community members

Objective 2: To improve the program delivery and impact of incubated RLOs

Needs assessment:

Evaluation question: to which extent are RLO services better aligned with community needs?

2 RLOs out of 3 had never conducted a needs assessment at the beginning of the program. By the end of the incubation, 100% of incubated RLOs had created and conducted a community needs assessment which was used to design and implement a particular programme (see below section for all new programs created).

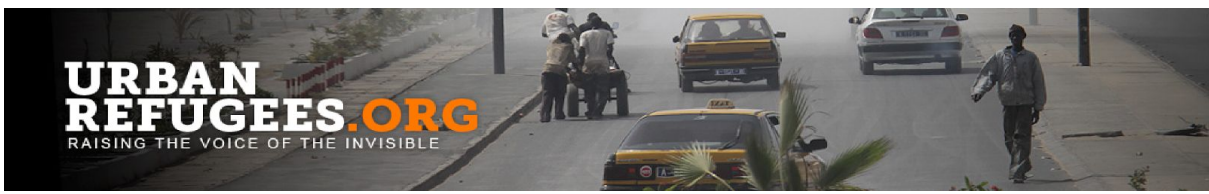
Monitoring and Evaluation:

Evaluation question: to which extent did RLOs create or improve their monitoring and evaluation of their programs and services?

Across the 3 RLOs, a lack of interest for M&E activities was clear during the program. Interestingly, when RLOs increased their programmatic and financial stability, leaders tended to be interested in monitoring their impact. All incubated RLOs now conduct M&E activities:

- The RSM created two types of questionnaires to evaluate the benefits of new programs launched as well as a database to track the participation level for all services. As a result, the RSM realized that 350 families on average were supported each month (instead of 50 as leaders originally thought).
- The SRC created a database to track the number of service beneficiaries by age and vulnerability to inform its programming.
- The ACC developed an ongoing evaluation of programs. As an example, a female English teacher was resettled and replaced by a male teacher in early 2017. The women attending the class indicated in the evaluation form they would prefer a female teacher and the ACC leaders thus identified a new teacher suiting their request in less than a month. They also track participation for some of their activities.

Objective 3: To strengthen strategic relationships and coordination with key stakeholders of incubated RLOs



Partnerships:

Evaluation question: to which extent did RLOs create new partnerships with NGOs and other local stakeholders?

At the beginning of the program, all RLOs incubated had relationships with NGO partners and UNHCR, to various degrees. However, partners reported a lack of capacity from RLOs which was detrimental to their partnerships with them. 3 RLOs out of 3 increased their engagement with partners post incubation:

- Partners reported an increase in their understanding and engagement with incubated RLOs by 1 to 2 points on average on a range from 1 to 5 between the beginning of the incubation and 6 to 12 months post program
- The SRC initiated 7 new partnerships including 4 related to food distribution, the RSM created 4 and at the ACC, a mindset change was observed in the way partnerships are handled by leaders (from a reactive to a proactive approach, initiating relationships with partners and following up on existing ones). As a result, 3 new strategic partnerships were created with a business, a local NGO, and a church.

Improved coordination with stakeholder

Evaluation question: to which extent did RLOs improved their coordination with key stakeholders at the local level?

Key stakeholders include local and international NGOs, faith-based groups, UN agencies, local authorities and civil society. 2 RLOs out of 3 had serious difficulties coordinating with partners at the beginning of the program. As of 30/09/2017:

- ACC increased its coordination with partners, answering emails in a timely fashion and organizing joint activities for community members
- Local partners interviewed reported that SRC increasingly responds to requests, helping them coordinate their venue and identify beneficiaries in particular. Based on leaders' reporting and photos, more than 20 partners' events were organized in coordination with SRC since May 2017.

4.2. Outcomes

4.2.1. Increase in service and program offering

The above mentioned organizational achievements led to an increase of service offering and protection for urban refugees: The ACC tripled its program offerings to community members in the 6 months following the incubation program, the SRC created more than 10 new services in 8 months and RSM increased its service offerings mainly for women.



The evidence was gathered through interviews with leaders, on site observations as well as discussions with RLOs' beneficiaries and partners:

- o Educational and recreational activities:
 - ACC:
 - 3 new classes were created for adults and children (kick-boxing, guitar and religious awareness)
 - A monthly activity was developed in partnership with a local NGO enabling 100 kids to have access to a recreational activity
 - A theater class was created for 26 children in partnership with an NGO
 - SRC:
 - 4 classes: English and Arabic language (4 times a week, 10 participants on average) and math and science for children, (4 times a week, 10 children participating on average)
 - Sport activities (5 football teams of 10 to 15 people including 2 children's teams)
 - 1 theater program for youth (12 trainees)
 - RSM:
 - An English class managed by 3 teachers recruited within the community
 - A literacy class for women
- o Livelihoods:
 - ACC:
 - 3 livelihoods opportunities emerged (classes in cooking, bag making, and sewing for women to acquire skills so they can generate income). Note that the classes were given by refugees from the community who have the skillset in these areas
 - A job matching service was created which was already enabled 12 refugees to find a job
 - A food distribution service was put in place for vulnerable households
 - SRC:
 - A job facilitation service (8 persons found a job since March 2017)
 - 1 sewing classes (10 women being trained to become sewing teachers, 4 times a week)
 - 1 urban gardening project in partnership with a local NGO
 - Food distribution (850 families benefiting since the beginning of the program in March 2017)
 - A training on business creation in partnership with an international NGO
- o Mental and physical health:
 - ACC:
 - is increasingly becoming a community hub, playing an important emotional support role for refugees.

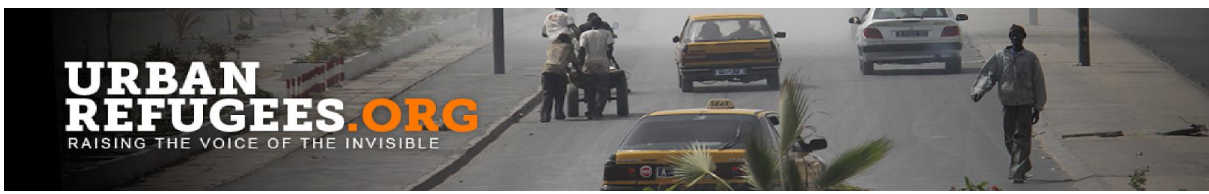


- A psychologist from a local NGO is now coming at the ACC office every week and consults adults patients
- SRC:
 - 1 serie of workshops on reproductive health for 30 women in partnership with the UNHCR Health Unit
 - 1 serie of workshops on SGBV in partnership with a local NGO benefiting 40 women
- o Protection and Security:
 - ACC:
 - Information sessions are conducted about UNHCR processes with community members on a monthly basis
 - An emergency housing service for families and individuals in need was put in place
 - SRC:
 - Workshops on UNHCR registration process in partnership with a local refugee rights NGOs
 - RSM:
 - Established a community case management service in partnership with a local NGO providing the necessary training
 - Active sharing of information about UNHCR registration processes through Facebook and at the office

4.2.2. Increase in number of beneficiaries

The increase in program offering, the better outreach and information sharing with beneficiaries and the increase in the number of volunteers led to an increase in the number of urban refugees accessing services across the 3 RLOs:

- The SRC currently supports an estimated 1050 families at the time of this writing which is 2 times higher than before the incubation. However, it is important to note that the baseline used for this estimate was based on the previous SRC leaders' estimates which may be faulty.
- The ACC now:
 - supports on average 115 people per week through various services compared to 55 at the beginning of the incubation
 - offers community events to 100 to 150 people every month compared to 50 to 100 people at the beginning of the incubation
 - is visited at the office by 20 to 50 community members weekly compared to 5 to 15 on average at the beginning of the incubation. Those figures have been determined based on onsite observations cross-checked with leaders' reporting.
- RSM increased its outreach to women through the activities and programs newly created.



5. General Findings

5.1. On the needs of RLOs

This pilot confirmed the existence of the following needs which tended to be the similar, albeit to various degrees, across the 3 incubated RLOs:

Organisational Capacity Building

A capability matrix was used to assess the main organizational gaps of each individual RLO. A training was considered as needed when the RLO scored 2.5 or less on a rank from 1 to 5, with 5 corresponding to a competency being fully acquired.

Trainings in the following areas were considered as needed and prioritized by the leadership of at least 2 RLOs out of the 3 incubated:

- **Leadership and other soft skills** which included teamwork and conflict resolution as well as time and team management
- **Governance** which included definitions of roles and responsibilities as well as the creation of shared governance rules
- **Financial management** which included bookkeeping and accounting as well as financial transparency
- **Partnerships** which included service provider identification, case management and referrals well as creation of partnerships
- **Fundraising** which included proposal writing, donors identification and outreach, income generation as well as crowdfunding
- **Communications** which included creating a website and writing effective emails
- **Project management** which included planning and executing a project, budgeting as well as monitoring and evaluation
- **Community mobilization:** which included internal communications, sharing the right information, handling rumors and complaints and needs assessment

Access to Seed Funding

Out of the 3 RLOs incubated, 2 faced a dramatic lack of funding, impairing them from growing further and delivering more assistance to their communities. None had ever run a crowdfunding campaign online considering the legal barriers imposed by crowdfunding platforms (certificate of registration, bank account). Leaders mentioned the difficulties of writing proposals in English instead of their native language, the impossibility to open a bank account for their organization as well as their limited network as the main challenges they face in fundraising.

5.2. On the role of RLOs

The piloting of this one year program across 3 RLOs confirmed that RLOs:



- **Are uniquely placed to support their communities:** being managed by refugees themselves and located in neighborhoods where the bulk of a given community lives, RLOs are uniquely placed to provide support:
 - The services they provide tend to respond to the direct needs of the community and are provided in refugees' native language.
 - RLO also provide a sense of belonging to community members which is unique.
 - Being located in the areas where refugees live makes it easier for people to access their services. This is important in contexts where transportation is expensive and refugees risk being arrested.
 - The more mature they become, the more RLOs tend to become information hubs for their community.
- **Play a key role in protection, particularly:**
 - In case of emergency: As an example, during the course of the incubation program, 2 RLOs used the office space as a safe shelter for women victims of SGBV and at-risk of being further persecuted by their aggressor, for families living in areas where an increase in police checks and crackdowns on houses was reported and for sick persons with no access to appropriate medical services.
 - For newly arrived refugees: providing them with key information as well as support to find housing and jobs. In urban cities and towns new arrivals can struggle to find their way and RLOs provide a welcoming interface to newly arrived refugees/asylum seekers who may not be able to reach international organisations due to concerns over safety and security or access challenges.
 - To avoid security threats:
 - By sharing information (on platforms like Whatsapp or Viber) about roadblocks or police checks in certain locations, enabling community members to avoid arrest and detention
 - By advocating directly with the local police for the release of those who have been arrested thanks to links established prior (see below)
- **Facilitate the delivery of services and humanitarian aid to refugees in urban settings:**
 - By providing an office space located within the community to NGOs willing to provide activities and services to refugees, which decreases the security risks (arrest, detention) for beneficiaries who do not have to travel to access services while reducing the traveling costs.
 - By helping NGOs identify needs and particular target groups (single mothers, unaccompanied minors), and providing referrals as needed. In particular, RLOs can provide outreach to the most vulnerable through deep knowledge of the particular cases of households.
- **Enhance local integration of refugee communities by, for example:**
 - Providing services such as language classes or cultural orientation to increase the ability of refugees to engage with locals, as the ACC and SRC do
 - Approaching and building up links with:
 - local authorities to enhance the protection space for refugees in the neighborhood, as ACC, SRC and RSM do with the local police.



- local business owners to not only get their financial support but also to ensure the organization and the community as a whole are “protected” by powerful local individuals.
- **Play a peacemakers/peacebuilders role** in fragile environments despite vulnerability: based on discussions with leaders and beneficiaries, it appeared that RLOs do play a peace building role in neighborhoods where they operate. As an example, the ACC and RSM leaders often mediate conflicts within the community but also between community members and locals.

5.3. About the relationship between RLOs and partners (NGOs, UN agencies, donors)

There are dozens of NGOs in Malaysia supporting refugees, and many engage with RLOs as part of their work. UNHCR Kuala Lumpur is also particularly engaged in community work: among others, meetings are organized regularly with RLO leaders and an innovative small grant program (the Social Protection Fund to support the refugee communities’ own solutions) was developed, allowing RLOs to apply for funding for their community projects. This can be seen as a “good practice” which would deserve to be expanded to other contexts.

Throughout the course of this pilot, local partners were engaged at different stage of the program. Among the main findings, it appeared that:

- Partners tend to have high expectations and unrealistic goals towards RLOs, with often low level of support in exchange. RLOs are, for example, expected to deliver outputs which are beyond their capacities without proper training or support.
- RLOs have turnover in leadership which generates an instability in engagement from partners who may stop support when new leadership is appointed. Such changes have a destabilizing effect on RLOs which may be fatal in some cases.
- Poor reputation of RLOs (lack of legitimacy and corruption among others) is often based on rumours and can be solved by trainings or providing tools to help redress problems when they exist. For example, when financial mismanagement did occur, or there was a risk of mismanagement, RLOs requested support on how to address concerns and the participation rate to these trainings was particularly high. It is to be noted that the accounting database is the one which is the most used and updated across the 3 RLOs post incubation.

6. Recommendations

6.1. General recommendations

The following recommendations are made to enhance the role and place of RLOs in urban settings:



1. Greater efforts must be made to recognise the important and unique role of RLOs in urban settings and to partner with them as frontline providers.

RLOs play a critical role that is often not recognised by the wider humanitarian community. All actors should recognize that refugees know best what they need, the solutions for fulfilling these needs, and are best placed to work toward those solutions. It is essential to recognize their role and involve them as key stakeholders in responses.

2. RLOs should be empowered to find solutions to urban refugee issues

As voices for refugee communities, RLOs are well placed to foster solutions to issues that affect refugees living in urban areas. They require advocacy support and a seat at the table to make their voices heard.

3. RLOs should receive greater support so they can more effectively serve their community, including beyond displacement

RLOs require consistent and ongoing funding as well as capacity building opportunities. This is a cost effective way to increase the localization of aid and to make responses more inclusive of affected populations.

4. When necessary, donors should support intermediary organizations that mentor, strengthen and build the capacity of RLOs.

There is a paucity of innovative programming for RLOs. To this end donors should consider replicating the URIP in other locations.

6.2. Operational recommendations

The following recommendations are made to partners (UN agencies, NGOs, donors) who are already (or willing to) engaging with RLOs:

- Decrease level of expectations towards RLOs, especially on the quality of M&E and deliverables
- Provide targeted and personalized training opportunities rather than general trainings on broad subjects
- Provide funding, particularly when requesting a lot of support from RLOs, so they have the means to deliver what is expected
- Expand the “Social Protection Fund” initiated by UNHCR Kuala Lumpur to other country of operation
- Allow RLO leaders to fill proposals in native language
- Provide interpreters for meetings to decrease the language barrier
- Increase trust towards leaders
- Maintain support throughout turnovers in leadership
- Systematically investigate and scrutinize rumors



7. Conclusions

This pilot program aimed to strengthen the capacities of 3 RLOs to verify 5 key assumptions:

- Supporting the development of organisations trusted by refugee communities increases the likelihood that “hidden” refugees and the most vulnerable will seek services and support. Supporting service delivery at the most local level by grassroots, self-help groups, improves cost-effectiveness, community empowerment and protection.
- Building strategic planning and program development capacity help reduce duplication or the creation of parallel services and promote the strengthening of and access to existing services.
- Applying a participatory and empowerment-based model supports local ownership and leadership of initiatives, which is generally more sustainable in the long-term;
- Focusing on partnerships and networks of action enhance the international community’s ability to work more effectively in urban settings.

The evidence gathered throughout this pilot verified these assumptions to various degrees for each RLO. Incubated RLOs have demonstrated that they can extend their reach, expand their services, increase their transparency, be the provider of first resort, and be the connective tissue that brings refugees together. Participating RLOs have added new services based on their community's' expressed needs, improved gender parity within their organizations, solidified their missions and strategic plans, and enhanced their sustainability through funded donor proposals.

These RLOs have demonstrated that they have much to offer and value to add to the humanitarian response. It is time for them to be empowered and offered a place at the table.



Let's talk more

For more information, just get in touch with our team!

contact@urban-refugees.org



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Contact:

Sonia BEN ALI

CEO and CO-Founder

sonia.benali@urban-refugees.org

Urban Refugees would like to thanks Aisling O'Loughlin for assistance with drafting the report.