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# SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT TOOLKIT

A how-to guide for opening pathways  
to decent work for refugees



INGKA GROUP  
An IKEA retailer



**When you look at a refugee,  
what do you see?**

A neighbour, a customer, a potential  
co-worker? If you don't, you could be  
missing a key to your company's success.

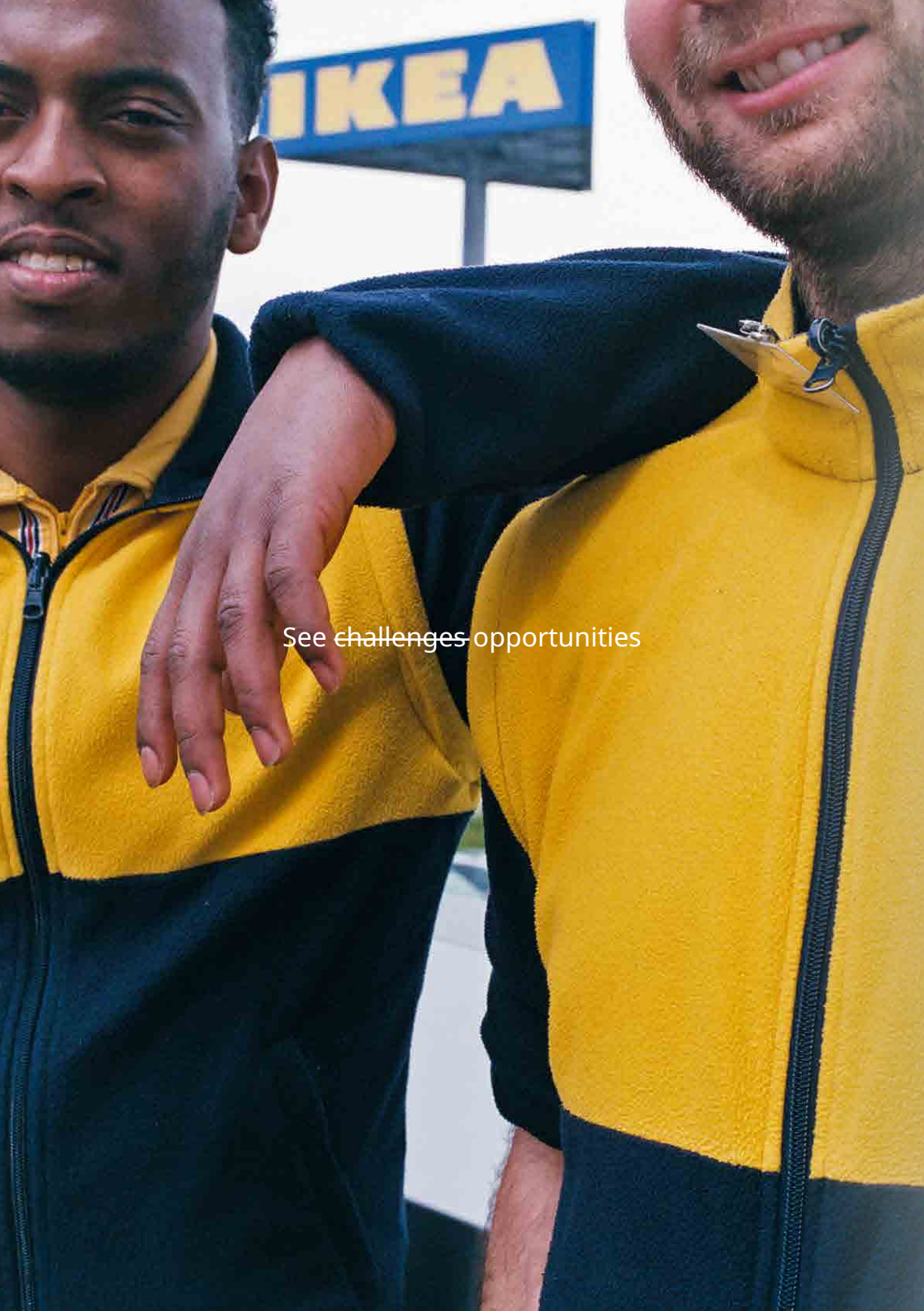


## Toolkit contents

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>WHY TAKE ACTION?</b>                    | <b>10</b> |
| <b>HOW TO CREATE A PLAN</b>                | <b>16</b> |
| Seven-step approach                        | 18        |
| 1. Understand your community               | 20        |
| 2. Evaluate internally                     | 24        |
| 3. Design initiative                       | 30        |
| 4. Roll out                                | 36        |
| 5. Follow up and measure                   | 42        |
| 6. Evaluate and improve                    | 48        |
| 7. Change the narrative<br>around refugees | 50        |
| <b>WHAT WE'VE LEARNED</b>                  | <b>52</b> |
| <b>GET INVOLVED</b>                        | <b>60</b> |

LOKALT is a collaboration with contemporary local designers from Amman, Delhi, Bangkok and IKEA in-house designer. It is a vibrant collection of handmade textiles and ceramics where local traditions meet traditional handicraft, produced by social entrepreneurs in Jordan, Thailand and India.



See challenges opportunities

## Let's stand with refugees

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### Must we act?

To date, more than 6 million people have fled Ukraine since the war began in late February. It's the worst refugee crisis in Europe since the end of WWII. And sadly, this is only one of many examples in recent years that is forcing millions of people to flee their most important place in the world, their homes, and their countries. In recent years, many countries where Ingka operates have seen the arrival of large numbers of people. They come from all over the world, from regions experiencing crises of all kinds.

Arriving with high hopes, people want to make a fresh start – to build a new life for themselves and their families. The reality they find is somewhat different and, in many countries, integration proves to be difficult. As a result, the World Economic Forum Global Risk Report 2022 finds that large scale involuntary migration is a top long-term concern for economies and societies. The message is clear: yes, we must act.

### Can we act?

Experts agree that having a job is key for successful integration. We know from experience that people are highly motivated to work and that they have skills, perspectives and experiences that can benefit societies and businesses. This is where we step in. We believe that every person has a talent to be nurtured and we value each individual because of their unique abilities and skills to be part of developing business and people, for the better.

As a values-driven company, equality and inclusion are part of our DNA. We know that a diverse workforce gives us a better understanding of our customers' needs, and by reflecting the diversity of our local communities, we can widen our customer base and tap into new markets.

### Will we act?

Wherever we are, we contribute to a thriving and inclusive community by how we run our businesses and through our local community engagement initiatives, such as transforming empty apartments and refugee centres into homes. We've also started to look at how we can expand refugee integration beyond our own operations by encouraging our business partners to act as well. Already, our Skills for Employment initiative has supported more than 1400 refugees and asylum seekers in 24 countries to improve their employability and language skills and increase their opportunities to set up a new career in a new country.

Now more than ever, it's critical that we work together across companies, society and governments to support and open doors for jobs, integrations and development of people. We need to take action now, and by working together we can have a greater impact.

**Let's take action, together.**

**Jesper Brodin**  
Chief Executive  
Officer  
Ingka Group

**Ulrika Biesert**  
Chief Human  
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## About this toolkit

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The private sector can make meaningful contributions to local neighborhoods and society at large by supporting refugee integration and opening pathways to decent work for refugees. Together, we can prove that inclusive growth and positive social impact go hand in hand.

At Ingka Group, we've committed to supporting 2,500 refugees by the end of 2023. Our goal is to improve their skills to gain employment inside or outside of our business. Through our Skills for employment initiative we provide 3-6 months of training, after that refugees and asylum seekers are invited to apply for existing vacancies.

So far, we at Ingka Group have rolled out Skills for Employment initiatives in 24 countries reaching over 1400 people. We've developed this toolkit to share our experience and lessons learned.

We hope this toolkit inspires you to act, too.



**WHY ACT?**

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## Because it's happening now

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Whether we fully understand the geopolitical reasons for refugee migration, the fact is that refugees need our help now. We welcome them and support their integration.

Refugees\* are people forced to flee their homes because of the risk of persecution or war. Most of them undertake dangerous journeys and sea crossings, risking life and limb to try and reach countries with stable economies and functioning social systems. Some get stuck along the way, and some don't survive the journey.

### High hopes meet hard realities

Understandably, the refugees who do make it have high hopes and ambitions. They want to find work to support their families and give their children an education and good prospects for the future. For those who arrive safely, the difficult journey is not over. They face frequent rejections and frightening uncertainty as to whether they can stay or will have to go back to homes that, in some cases, no longer exist. The situation becomes even more fraught with bottlenecks in processing asylum applications and provision of care and accommodation.

### Trapped in a cycle

These circumstances mean most refugees have few real prospects for the future, with little or no work or structure in their lives. Their contact with the local population is often very limited, which makes it difficult for them to learn the local language and culture. Many feel dependent and, in that situation, their self-esteem plummets.

### Work is key for integration

Experts say that employment is essential for long-term and successful integration in a host country. It needs to take place here and now, not just when conditions are ideal i.e. when refugees have learnt the local language, or when the population is united around the need for integration. In the end, it's very simple; the better the integration, the lesser the tensions in society.

Although work is key, some countries don't allow asylum seekers and refugees to work legally, and refugees often lack the necessary skills to be employed in a new country. That's where Ingka and other employers can support them.

\* The International legal definition of a refugee as per the 1951 Convention is a person who, "owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality".

## Because it's good for business and society

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Besides, helping people in need is the right thing to do.

### **Businesses have an opportunity**

Employment is essential for long-term and successful integration. We know that refugees do not want hand-outs. They want to work and contribute and build a new life for themselves and their families. Together with other stakeholders, businesses can play an important role in helping refugees build a safe life in a new home, while contributing fully to the local community and economy.

We believe that businesses also have an opportunity to help change the narrative around refugees and lead the way in demonstrating that refugee integration is both good for business and good for society.

### **Refugees help strengthen the economy**

They help fulfil labour needs and counter ageing demographic trends. Studies show that the long term economic benefit of admitting refugees outweighs the initial costs. Studies also show that soon after a spike in migration, the overall strength and sustainability of the country's economy improves — and the unemployment rates drop.

### **Refugees bring diverse perspectives and experiences**

According to the Harvard Business Review, diversity unlocks innovation and drives market growth. Studies show that diverse and inclusive cultures lend companies a competitive edge over their peers — and that diverse companies generally perform better financially.

### **Refugees bring talent and skills**

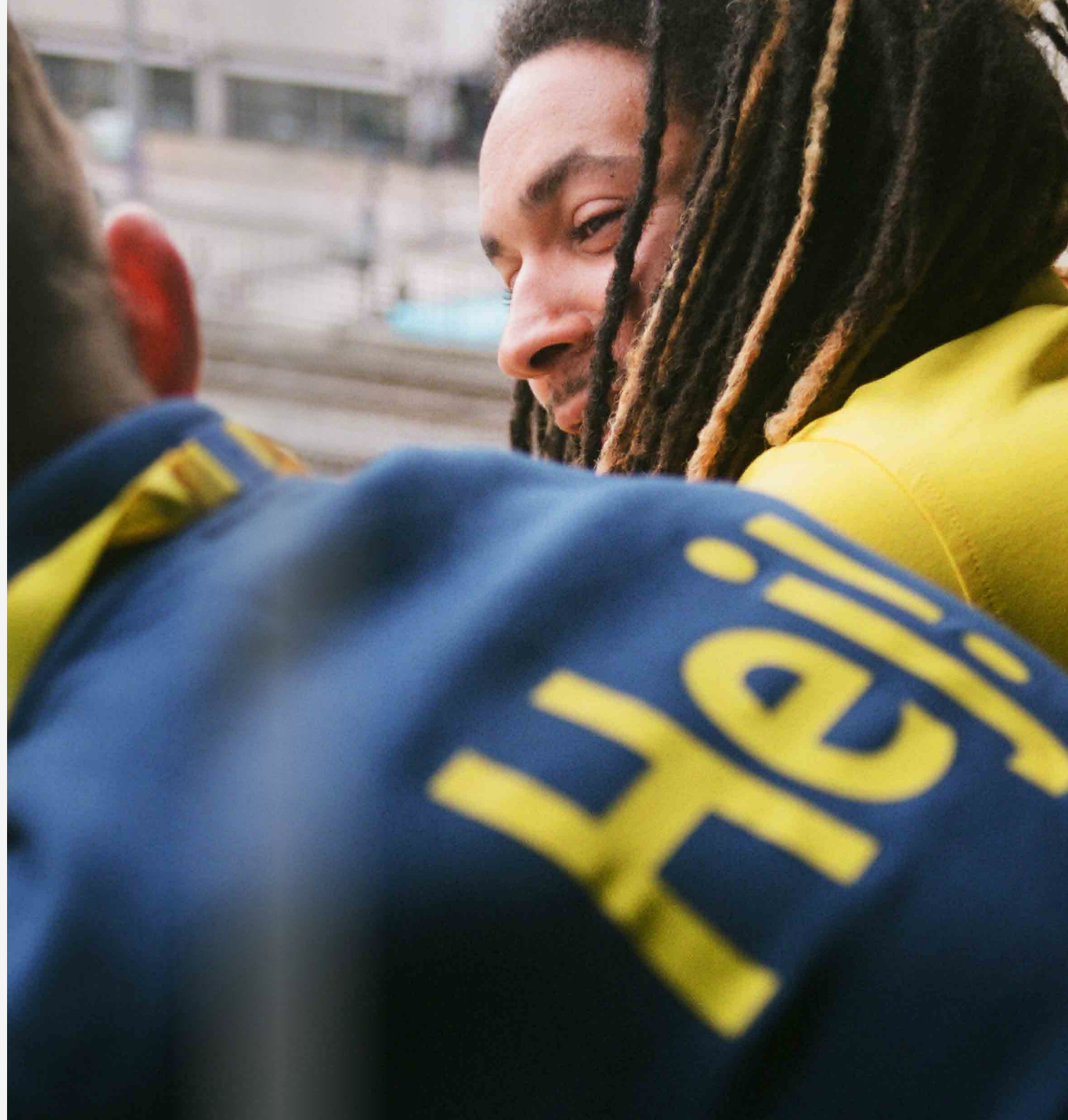
They inherently have resilience and adaptability. Refugees also tend to stay with the same employer longer — contributing positively to higher retention rates.

See your idea of me



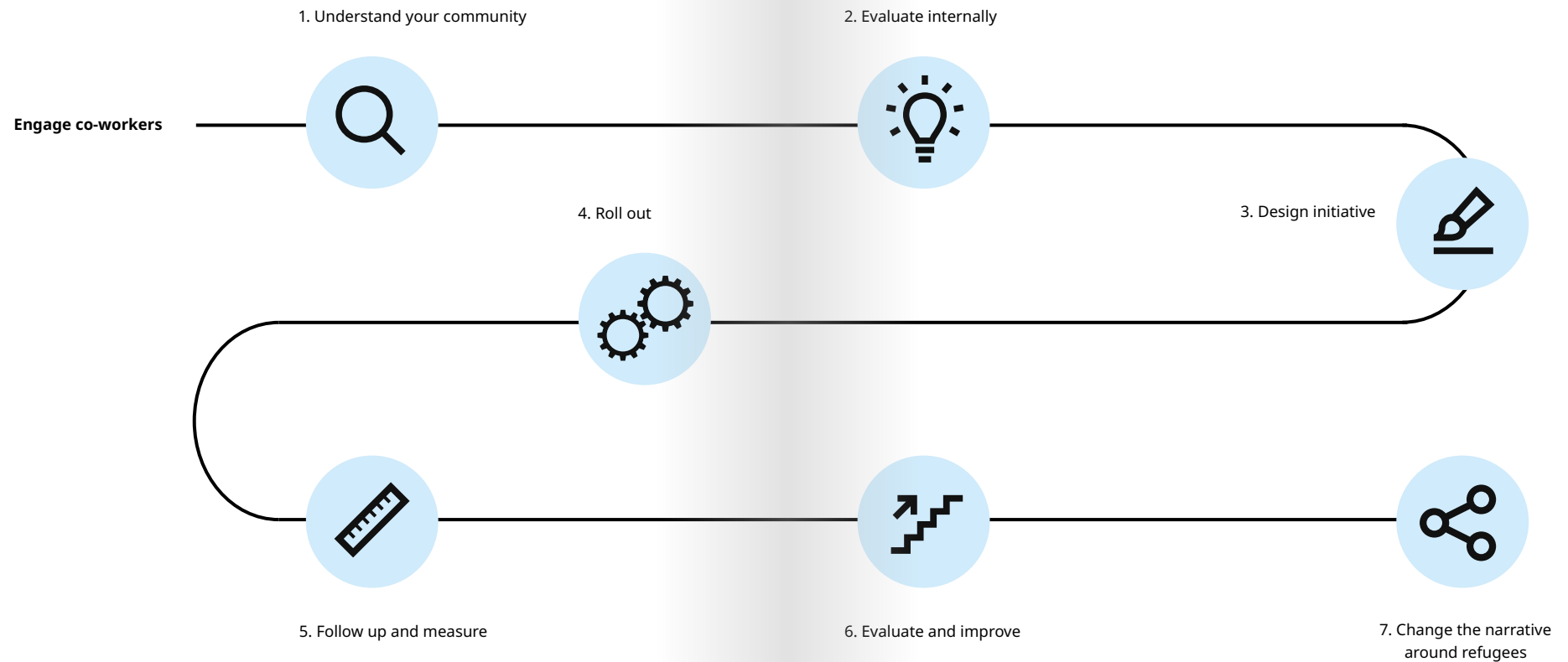
## HOW TO CREATE A PLAN

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## 7-step approach

This toolkit takes you through the 7-step process we've used at Ingka to build an initiative.





## 1. Understand your community

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First, you need to understand the local community: the refugees as newcomers, the local inhabitants, the organisations already involved and the legal matters. You need to identify local community needs and social challenges or fears as well as existing initiatives and opportunities.

### **The refugee situation**

Who are they, where do they come from, and what's their background, experience and cultural heritage? What's their employment situation? What resources are available in the country, region or city? The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has identified the following work-related challenges for refugees:

- **Language**

The biggest initial hurdle is language. Many refugees can't speak the local languages — and when language courses are offered, they generally only include the basics.

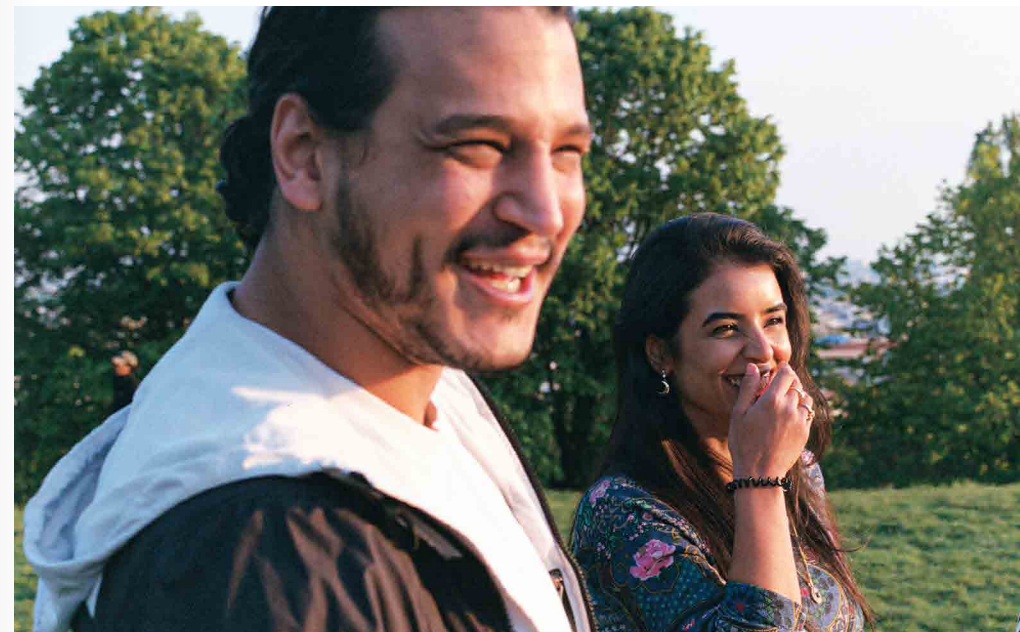
- **Diplomas, degrees and references**

Many refugees can't find work because they don't have the right certificates or documents. Special training may not be required in some

of the refugees' home countries, depending on what the job involves. There are also many refugees who are highly qualified and have completed an apprenticeship, training course or degree. However, most diplomas are not recognised in a host country and are discounted. Also, the personal belongings of many refugees were either left behind, lost or destroyed. This means in many cases the certificates and documents required for a successful job application no longer exist.

- **Time restrictions**

Refugees need to rebuild their lives in a new country. This takes time and may mean attending language classes or other courses — so many are not able to commit to full-time training or work before they fully settle in.



#### • **Fears**

Often, unconscious bias about people's personal backgrounds and individual differences plays a critical role in the way that refugees are perceived.

#### **The community situation**

What's the level of refugee integration in the community? How are refugees perceived? What are the social challenges of your local community overall? Are there other groups of people within the community experiencing poverty and inequality, unemployment or other challenges? Being fully aware of these things is very important for building a well-balanced community engagement strategy that will maximise the positive impact.

#### **The local stakeholders**

Who are the local stakeholders you can collaborate with? These may include non-governmental organisations, social businesses, local and country authorities or other businesses. Are there any local examples of refugee integration initiatives

to learn from or team up with? Contact the relevant local authorities and tell them about your plans. Often, migration offices and associated organisations responsible for integrating refugees at work show a great deal of interest. They are in favour of refugees becoming independent and are happy to provide information and support. It's important that the applicants are pre-selected by the authorities or partners. You should allow enough time to identify the relevant offices and organisations you will need to help you. Tent Partnership and UNCHR, The Refugee Agency are great partners.

#### **The legal situation**

What are the key legal considerations for hiring refugees? Are there any existing governmental initiatives supporting refugee integration?

In some countries, asylum seekers, and even recognised refugees, are not allowed to work. In such cases, our main/only action would be advocacy to change these limitations.

## IN OUR EXPERIENCE

### Be informed

"Gathering information is key. In Oslo, we found that refugees were taking part in introductory programmes run by their districts, including language classes. We also found that the majority of unemployed refugees were women, mostly for social and cultural reasons. So, we made sure the number of women participating in our programme was high. This has helped decrease the unemployment rate amongst female refugees by 30 percent within the last three years."

*Dan, IKEA Norway*

### Collaborate with partners

"In order to understand local community needs and the refugees' situation, it's essential to establish a strong collaboration with an external local partner. Ours briefed us about many aspects of the refugees' situations before we started recruiting. This helped us to ask the right questions during interviews and put answers into perspective."

*Kegula Bächli, IKEA Switzerland*

### Tackle the legal framework

"One of the main obstacles that the first stores in Germany met was a lack of understanding concerning legal and administrative frameworks. So, IKEA Germany created a guide on how to best deal with both. This allowed IKEA stores to set up initiatives more quickly and easily and was really well-received."

*Kai, IKEA Germany*



## 2. Evaluate internally

A successful initiative needs to meet certain requirements. Is there a recognised need for action and is there a willingness and enough resources to carry out the initiative?

According to UNHCR, employers have mentioned the following reasons for not hiring refugees:

- Uncertainty about the legal situation regarding refugees being able to work
- Uncertainty about their qualifications and skills
- Anxiety about possible poor performance and low productivity due to lack of local language skills
- Fear of discrimination in the workplace and uncertainty about refugees being accepted and included
- Fear of criticism from the general public for employing refugees or asylum seekers

### Is your organisation on board?

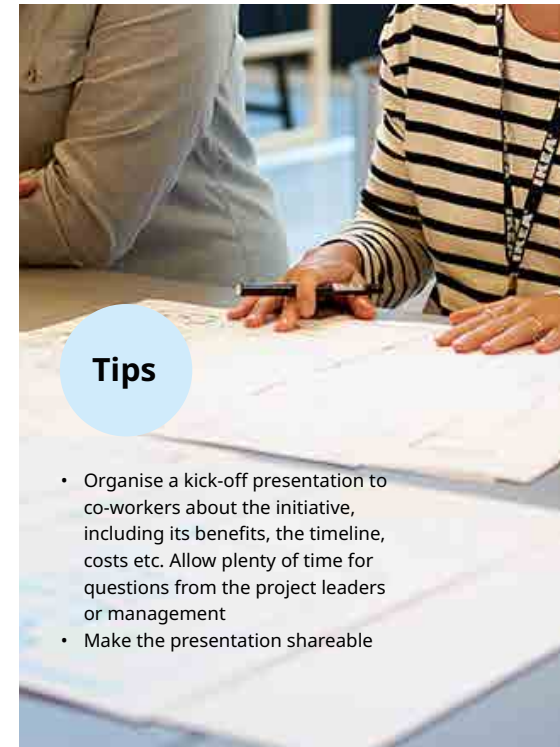
It takes people to make the initiative successful and sustainable. Map your internal stakeholders and work out who needs to be involved and at which stage. Make roles and responsibilities clear, both on country (service office) and unit level. To begin with, the country and unit management must be on board and committed. You need people in key positions in the company to support the idea, to actively promote the project and to convince those who are critical. It's vital to create awareness among all co-workers and have a communication plan. Openly explain why you want to do it, how you will do it and how this initiative works with your diversity plans and your engagement in the local community. Be transparent.

### How much do you want to invest?

Besides committed people, a successful project requires resources and time. So, you need to secure a budget for the project. The budget needed can vary depending on a number of things. In making your initial estimate, think about the following:

- Duration of the initiative (usually three to six months per year over three years)
- Number of participants per round
- Wages (how much you will pay the participants of the initiative)
- Additional training/coaching/instruction for refugees or your employees
- Additional headcount with corresponding workload, e.g. a project leader per country

There could be governmental funding schemes or subsidies to promote refugees' labour integration in the private sector. Don't forget to explore these opportunities in your market and note that funds are sometimes available through joint partnership with local stakeholders.



### Tips

- Organise a kick-off presentation to co-workers about the initiative, including its benefits, the timeline, costs etc. Allow plenty of time for questions from the project leaders or management
- Make the presentation shareable

## CHECKLIST OF REQUIREMENTS



- ☐ Is there willingness in the company to commit to supporting refugees?
- ☐ Are enough human resources available for both the design and roll-out phase?
- ☐ Does a project leader need to be appointed?
- ☐ In which part of the company is the project based?
- ☐ What business needs do you want the initiative to support?
- ☐ Have you identified and established a relationship with local stakeholders, e.g. government, UNHCR, NGOs, etc.? With whom will you be able to develop the initiative?
- ☐ Are roles and responsibilities clear?
- ☐ Have you identified how much time should be invested in the project?
- ☐ Have you defined the budget? Is it available?
- ☐ Are you willing to deal with possible negative reactions, internally and externally?
- ☐ Is there a culture of inclusion to help refugees integrate?

Photo: TILLTALANDE, a handmade collection co-created with Jordan River Foundation, made by Syrian refugee women and Jordanian artisans.

The time you need to prepare for your project will depend on the size and scale of it. Use your preparation time to investigate the following things:

- Planning and defining a budget (including potential governmental support funding)
- How many participants you will take on in each round
- Possible areas of work practice for participants
- Job specifications
- Responsibilities within the company during all phases of the initiative

### What do you want to achieve?

The main purpose of this initiative is to give refugees a chance to gain experience of the local labour market and work culture to further their employment skills. The skills and references they gain should make it easier for refugees to apply for jobs after the training, including at IKEA. Even during the initiative, participants who show enough potential can be encouraged to apply for available jobs. However, they should always follow the regular recruitment process for all IKEA employees.

Before starting the detailed planning for a project like this, you need to decide within your country/unit, what your objectives are for starting this initiative, e.g.:

- To play an active role in helping refugees to integrate
- To reflect local community demographics and customer base
- To acquire qualified co-workers
- To fill jobs that don't require specific skills

Also think about what business needs can be solved thanks to the outcome of the initiative.

Are there certain areas or times that are especially suited for a refugee initiative e.g. vacancies in specific departments or during summer vacation?

### Who do you want to focus on?

Once you know what you want to achieve, you can decide on the type of people you are hoping to appeal to with your initiative, taking into account that refugees in your community can be very diverse. We should focus this initiative on most vulnerable groups and e.g. who have not yet had a work experience in a host country or who lack a language skills.

### Are you ready for the unexpected?

As part of your preparation you should also complete a risk assessment and check how you can reduce risks. Experience so far has shown that you will also come across unexpected challenges. This is why fully committed management is important and where proactive communication with key stakeholders and co-workers pays off. So, before you begin your journey, make sure you're ready to deal with any possible challenges.

## IN OUR EXPERIENCE

### Prepare your teams

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“We knew everyone in all departments needed to be informed about the initiative, not just the departments involved. It’s important the whole team knows that the project aims to strengthen refugees’ employability skills so they can apply through the regular recruitment process – just as any other co-worker of IKEA. This eases the fear of unfair competition.”

*Regula Bächli, IKEA Switzerland*

### Stand together

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“At the Winnipeg unit we already had a refugee programme in place, but when IKEA Canada announced a Canada-wide refugee programme, the response from co-workers was even more positive. A feeling of organisational pride developed which helped the refugees become better integrated in all aspects of the job.”

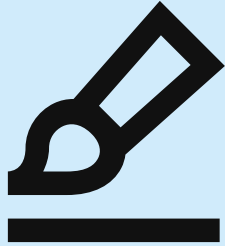
*Janice, IKEA Canada*

### Find the right people and partners

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“Our store manager is very committed to social initiatives, which was hugely important for success. We have also developed a very good relationship with the local governmental labour agency, who was our main partner – we knew we could only make it happen by working together.”

*Niloufar, IKEA Sweden*



### 3. Design initiative

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Now it's time to design the initiative. Remember, the better you prepare, the easier rolling out the project will be. And don't do it alone. Build a relationship with the external stakeholders you've identified and work with them to decide who will do what. Spend time creating awareness and understanding in your own organisation.

#### Length of the initiative

We recommend making the programme three to six months long. This is the time usually required to learn about IKEA, gain work practice and learn the local language. Planning with a three-year view is strongly recommended. Also, remember to use what you learn from each round in the next.

#### Job requirements and candidate profiles

Another important task is defining job profiles for the roles refugees will carry out in their placements. Consider the following points:

- **Language skills**

The local language skills needed very much depend on the type of work. If the applicant is going to be in contact with customers, they need good language skills. If the work doesn't involve customer contact, the standard can be lowered. Based on experience so far, the language skills of applicants can vary greatly.

- **Physical requirements**

Depending on the area of work, physical requirements may be very important. It's crucial to remember that some refugees have been physically injured by war or during their journey, and may have suffered from psychological trauma as a consequence.

- **Openness**

Openness towards the culture of the host country and the different cultures of other co-workers is required from possible candidates.

- **Teamwork**

Teamwork is not as common in some other cultures as it may be in yours. Many refugees are not familiar with working in this way and need time to get used to it.



## MORE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ✓

- ☐ How many people will participate in each round? Our recommendation is not to exceed 12 participants per unit and round, so that all participants receive enough support and attention.
- ☐ Which departments will be involved? To help the development of local language skills, it's good practice to place participants in departments that interact with customers, where possible.
- ☐ How will you recruit participants to the initiative? How will your local partners be involved?
- ☐ How will you ensure diversity, e.g. gender, age, physical and mental ability or any other aspect of a person's identity?
- ☐ Have you informed trade unions about your initiative?

### • Gender equality

It's important to put extra effort into attracting and enabling female refugees to take part in the initiative, since it's generally more difficult for women to enter the labour market. It's also worth remembering that in certain cultures it's uncommon for women to work and hold managerial positions.

### • Motivation and commitment

The local culture can be viewed as unfamiliar, strange and even incomprehensible for refugees. Many of them arrive with a high degree of motivation, but sometimes with unrealistic ideas about working life. Faced with the reality of their circumstances, refugees can lose their motivation. This is an important issue that should be discussed at the initial interview.

### • Adaptability

The work culture is different from country to country. The way employees interact with each other, work in teams, make decisions, communicate and lead others can vary greatly. Many refugees may need to adapt to a new way of doing things.

### • Mobility

Depending on when working hours start and finish, and where the applicants live, refugees might struggle to reach the workplace in time using public transport.

### • 50/50 approach

Depending on the possibilities and priorities in your community agenda, you could develop skills for employment initiative which support refugees and local people who are far away from the labour market. Beyond being a well-balanced initiative, this approach could help newcomers to meet local people and build their network, which is a key component for their social integration.

### Building in support

There are a number of practical things you can build into your programme to make sure participants have support to fully integrate. Here are some suggestions:

### • Introduction to IKEA

Customise an introduction for the participants. E-learning is not recommended due to a lack of local language skills. For example, safety training on the first day through e-learning is not useful because the participants are unlikely to understand the content.

### • Intercultural training

This is highly recommended for participants, existing co-workers, People & Culture departments, direct managers and other team members (especially mentors).

### • Language

Organise local language lessons for people who need them. Some refugees may already take part in courses through local organisations, but it might not be enough. Learning a language in a working environment has been proven to bring good results.

### • Mentors

Assign volunteering mentors or 'buddies' to each participant to explain their role, answer questions and offer support along the way.

### • Training

Remember that all co-workers should go through training about equality, diversity and inclusion.

### • Schedules

Make sure work schedules are aligned with other parts of the refugee integration initiative (e.g. language courses).

### • Support

Is there any support needed to find a day care, transport, etc?

## IN OUR EXPERIENCE

### Start with the basics

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“Going through a Skills for Employment process is a long and challenging process for a refugee. Simplifying the programme made things more successful in Canada. An initial introduction/training in the language of the refugee helped the participants to feel more comfortable. Also don't forget that refugees mostly don't own cars and depend on the availability of public transport.”

*Janice Swan, IKEA Canada*

### Create a safe space

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“We organised intercultural training for both refugees and co-workers. The refugees very much appreciated the safe space to openly ask questions about the host culture. These trainings were very well-received and afterwards we saw that the participants became more self-confident, curious and proactive.”

*Regula, IKEA Switzerland*

### Provide a different perspective

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“The Spanish economy was in a precarious situation at that time and we were confronted with the possibility of staff members questioning the investment. We decided to spread awareness and increase the understanding by inviting NGOs to speak about the difficulties that refugees face when leaving their countries. This really helped to win over our co-workers and to create a much more welcoming environment”

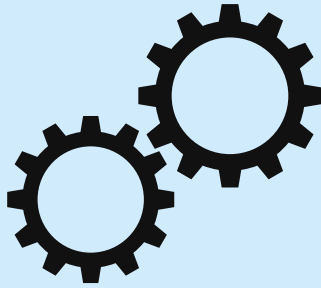
*Laura, IKEA Spain*

### Build in language learning

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“We wanted our participants to commit to learning Swedish, so they split their time between language school and training at the store. The training was held in spring and summer, and most of the participants were taken on as summer staff, leading to permanent roles.”

*Niloufar, IKEA Sweden*



## 4. Roll out

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When you've made preparations and defined job profiles, it's time to start selecting participants. This stage should be well-planned and thought-through.

### Selecting applicants

Experience has shown that the initiative works best when local partners recommend applicants. This ensures the most suitable people receive the opportunity to improve their employment skills. Plus, an ongoing partnership will make it easier for your People & Culture department to recruit candidates who are physically and mentally capable of having a regular job, which is not a given with refugees from war zones.

### Introductory interview

Many refugees aren't familiar with the unwritten rules of how to behave in interviews. They may be extremely nervous or uncertain, making it difficult for People & Culture managers to see their true potential – which can be made worse by limited language skills.

For this reason, consider arranging interpreters for certain applicants. Remember, some standard interview questions will not be appropriate, such as "Why do you want to work for our company in particular?" because the applicants are simply looking for work to support themselves and improve their skills. This shouldn't be seen as a negative. It's best to avoid questions about personal experience of war or the details of their journey, as many refugees have survived traumatic experiences. An interview is not the right moment to talk about them.

### Contracts and work permits

A work placement or employment contract is usually prepared in the same way as it is for local employees. The process of applying for a work permit varies from one country to another. For this reason, it helps to work alongside local authorities during the recruitment process.

It's all about getting to know a person and building up mutual trust. Be sensitive, compassionate and avoid inappropriate questions.

During the application process and interview, bear in mind the background and the experience of the refugees. Remember that refugees may often feel unwelcome and unproductive in their new host country, but want to contribute in any way they can.

Tip



### Training and onboarding support

Integration doesn't work by itself. It is essential to provide training and onboarding support for the refugees within the company, including intercultural training sessions for refugees and employees, as well as regular project updates to everyone involved.

A well-devised training and onboarding set-up helps to speed up the integration process. Refugees should be closely supported, especially in the initial period. Every participant is given an introductory timetable to structure the process and set dates for regular feedback and follow-up meetings. Each participant is also given a mentor to act as their point of contact during the introductory period – someone

who looks after and supports them. If the introductory phase is carefully organised, it will take less time to reach the desired standard in participants' work.

### Intercultural training

It's not unusual for refugees to lose their job after just a short time because of conflicts, misunderstandings or unfortunate events at work that are due to cultural differences. Some rules and values vary greatly between different cultural groups, such as punctuality, gender equality and the strict separation of work and private lives. Intercultural training is usually helpful, but you should expect that it can take quite some time until refugee participants adjust to their new circumstances and host culture.



Photo: TILLTALANDE, a handmade collection co-created with Jordan River Foundation, made by Syrian refugee women and Jordanian artisans.



## IN OUR EXPERIENCE

### Provide training at every step

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“At the start of each work experience cycle, there is a two-day intensive training session in which refugees learn about fundamental values and rules of the local work culture. Then, during the work placement, refugees are supported with follow-up training sessions to refresh and deepen their understanding in the context of daily work. The training provides a good platform for sharing and for helping with specific incidents or questions.”

*Regula, IKEA Switzerland*

### Keep integration at the heart

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“We don’t recommend placing refugees in departments such as IKEA FOOD or Logistics because of the limited speaking opportunities these jobs offer. We make sure every participant has at least one mentor from their department. Teachers from the language school train our mentors on how to contribute in language learning of their mentees and what to expect during the project.”

*Dan, IKEA Norway*

### Discover and nurture new talent

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“We believe people develop the most when they can be themselves. We designed the selection process around this belief. At the assessment day, one of the activities we set was to assemble an IKEA product in small groups. Afterwards the groups reflected on what had happened; who led the task, who did what, what their strengths were as a team etc. We ended the day with one-on-one interviews – this helped the management get a good overview of every person before selecting the participants.”

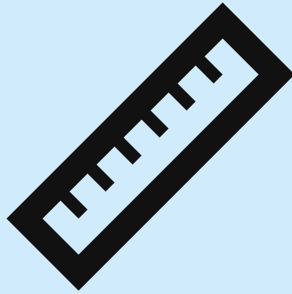
*Niloufar, IKEA Sweden*

### Keep building bridges

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“Initially, participants are often reluctant to sit next to other co-workers in the canteen. Buddies and managers need to be aware of this and invite participants to join them, involve them in conversations and ask questions. Over time co-workers started to take action, too. For example, when a co-worker saw how difficult it was for refugees to meet local people, he invited them to his American football club training.”

*Regula Bächli, IKEA Switzerland*



## 5. Follow up and measure

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The participants are in place, now what? Regular evaluation, such as written questionnaires, can help keep the initiative on track. The idea is to keep measuring the outcome both during the process and when it's finished. This means that outcomes on people, business and community will improve over time.

### Follow-up

Remember, there will always be unexpected challenges. The more involved you are in the process, the quicker you can act. Once the project has been running for a few weeks, it's recommended that follow-up sessions are offered to all participants and people involved in the initiative, such as buddies, direct managers, peers and local partners.

These sessions are an opportunity to share findings, positive experiences, potential challenges and any changes that may be needed. In short, it's a chance to find out how things are working on the ground. They also reassure employees that the project is well-managed and that they will be supported every step of the way.

### Suggestions for follow-up sessions:

- Working in a new country
- The rules of the local culture
- Social manners
- Tips for communicating
- Awareness of cultural differences (including gender equality)
- How integration works
- Conflict resolution

We recommend that the follow-up process is carried out in writing, using standardised questionnaires throughout and at the end of the programme. That way you get results that can easily be compared. These can then be turned into interim reports and a final report. If you decide to make a pilot initiative in one of the units, an evaluation will help to highlight any necessary changes in the time for the roll-out to other units.





See headlines people

### Measuring success

After establishing a clear purpose and setting the goals, it's important to decide how to measure the programme's success. This is why Ingka Group has used an overarching framework called Theory of Change (ToC) to map out what happens at each stage of the programme to achieve both short- and long-term goals.

Based on the ToC, we have defined six indicators that must be tracked for all initiatives connected with the refugee commitment. Impact on people indicators help us understand the effect of the programme on the lives of the participants, as well as how it's being received by the rest of the workforce. Impact on business indicators help us to track how Ingka is affected in terms of recruitment, retention and reputation, which will give us more to stand on when building the business case for these or similar initiatives.

### Other indicators

If your project covers areas that this ToC doesn't include, it's possible to create a more specific ToC for your project. Extra indicators will help you understand and track unique elements of your initiative. There are several sources of support online on how to do this, including [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.org)

### Our six indicators

The six indicators we will use to measure success are:

#### Impact on people

- 1 Absolute number of participants
- 2 Percentage of participants who got a job at IKEA or outside IKEA vs. number of participants (measured 18 months after completion of the training)

#### Impact on the business

- 3 Retention rate of the participants who got a permanent job at IKEA after the initiative (measured in 18 months)
- 4 Sales of textile range made by refugees and local women in Jordan
- 5 Brand trust / Positive Societal Impact Positioning Index



## IN OUR EXPERIENCE

### Follow up the success

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“It’s also important to follow up after the programme and find out where participants took their new skills. We have a number of success stories. One refugee went on to train as a cook at a well-known restaurant chain in Switzerland, leading to a professional federal certification with the opportunity to go on to higher education.”

*Regula, IKEA Switzerland*

### Build in extra structure

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“IKEA Spain and its partners measured the success of the programme, including the employability of refugees participating. We divided our indicators in four phases, giving further structure to what should be measured and when it’s best to do so: selection of participants, employability programme, awareness campaign, post-programme monitoring.”

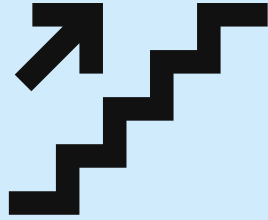
*Laura Escalante, IKEA Spain*

### Encourage conversation

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“Throughout the programme training we invited people to share stories from different cultures, giving participants and co-workers new perspectives and opening up other ways of thinking. This contributed to a higher level of integration between co-workers and refugees, as well as an increase in awareness of the value diversity brings.”

*Sara Vitale, IKEA Italy*



## 6. Evaluate and improve

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Incorporating new findings is crucial for the initiative's success. Learning as you go is not only important during the process, but also afterwards. So don't forget to evaluate, learn and improve for the next round.

## IN OUR EXPERIENCE

### Adapt as you go

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"Being able to adapt throughout the project is important. For example, when a participant found a job during the project, we fully supported it, as this is the goal of the project. During the summer holidays, we arranged summer school to keep the language levels up. When we saw that lack of local language skills was having an effect on customers, we provided badges on the participants' shirts saying 'I am learning Norwegian', which made customers much more understanding."

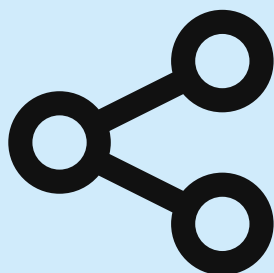
*Dan, IKEA Norway*

### Preparing for the next round

An evaluation is a useful way of looking back at how successful a project has been and also for improving processes for next time. Ideally you'll do this during the training round and at the very end of the programme.

Experience has shown that many insights are brought to light after a project, which are very helpful when designing the next round of the initiative.

On the following pages you'll find useful insights from units that have already introduced a refugee initiative.



## 7. Change the narrative around refugees

Through communication activities we can create an even bigger impact. We can help transform negative misconceptions about refugees by highlighting the value they bring to businesses, host communities and society at large.

### How we create, tell and share the stories matter.

We can help transform negative misconceptions about refugees by highlighting the value they bring to businesses, host communities and society at large.

The current narrative around refugees is often based on fear of the unknown and what it means for me. This means refugees are often perceived as 'disturbances' to the host communities' equilibrium.

The narrative that we want is proving that refugees bring value to host communities, businesses and society. Refugees' contributions to society and businesses can be significant. They help strengthen the economy, fulfil labour needs, counter ageing demographic trends. When the rights of refugees are upheld, they will be better able to integrate and contribute to the economy by fulfilling local labour needs, paying taxes and buying local products and services as consumers. This will improve the social cohesion in the host communities.

### Key movements for changing the narrative:

Inspire the private sector to engage in refugee employment and advocacy.

Improve awareness and perception of refugees amongst our co-workers, customers and neighborhoods.

Engage and share knowledge with decision makers and opinion leaders.

Powerful storytelling and partnerships are key enablers for changing the narrative around refugees.

Focus on the value refugees bring.

Focus on the individual, not refugees as a group.

Always portray people in a positive way.

Always make sure you have their consent/ model agreement.

Follow-up of stories to see what happens after

Prioritise what makes refugees similar to host communities.

Include a call to action where possible.

Co-create together with refugees

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

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## What we've learned so far

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A number of units across 24 countries have been running our Skills for Employment initiatives for several years. Here we share some of the valuable lessons they've learned.

### Internal communication is essential

Clear and timely communication is at the heart of a successful initiative. For example, Q&A sessions for employees prove to be especially helpful. The relevant department needs to set out what has to be done to help refugees integrate into the workforce. It's especially important to communicate with managers, so they can respond to co-workers' questions.

We have seen that there is great interest amongst employees to find out more about the circumstances and background of refugees. Creating a factsheet about the refugees' countries of origin turned out to be very much appreciated and also helpful in preventing possible prejudices. Ideally the factsheet provides basic background information, including ongoing conflicts or crises, ethnicities, religions, human rights situations, etc.

### Internal commitment is crucial

Internal acceptance of, and support for, a refugee project is essential. A well-prepared initiative, when teamed with good communication, can help bring even critical voices on board.

### Define project management responsibilities

Depending on the scale of the initiative, appointing a project manager may be necessary. If it's a national project that takes place in different units, you might need a person working full-time to set up and carry out the project.

### Set up intercultural training

In the initial evaluation of the training for both refugees and employees, the intercultural training was considered particularly helpful and beneficial.

### Equality, diversity and inclusion

The make-up of teams at IKEA is often very international and employees are familiar with working with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Integrating refugees is therefore not an entirely new idea.

### Sample questions for Q&A sessions

- Why do people flee their country?
- What is the situation like for refugees in their host country?
- Do refugees have permission to work in their new country?
- Why are we getting involved?
- How is the initiative structured or what kind of commitment are we making?
- Who is responsible internally?
- Which parts of the company are involved?
- In which areas/departments will the refugees work?
- What happens to the refugees after the initiative?
- Will existing jobs be put at risk due to this initiative?
- Where is further information available internally?

**Define responsibilities clearly**

It's important that responsibilities are clearly defined, both internally and with any possible partner authorities or organisations. Everyone who is involved must know what their role and responsibilities are. This is the only way to make sure everything runs smoothly.

**Prepare your recruitment process**

It's important to secure the knowledge and competence to recruit refugees (refugee rights, legal issues etc.). Be aware that a digital recruitment process can also be a barrier for potential participants. It's essential to work closely with your local partner in the recruitment process to secure the best set-up.

**Language is the biggest challenge**

In the questionnaires, all the participants expressed an urgent desire to improve their local language skills. However, often language courses are only funded up to a very basic level, which in our experience, is not always sufficient for day-to-day work. One idea is to find people, such as retired teachers, who are prepared to volunteer.

**Women are not always able to work full-time**

IKEA takes gender equality very seriously. Experience shows that refugee applicants were almost exclusively male. One of the reasons is that, often, families send fathers and sons ahead to host countries with other family members following later. Also, many of the female refugees may be mothers. For that reason, it's difficult for them to manage a full-time workload. To overcome this, it's crucial to allow flexible alternatives (50–70% of working hours).

**Buddies are a key success factor**

It's important to set up proper onboarding for the participants as well as for the buddies, who have a crucial role in the process. Please consider sufficient time for the buddies as they are a key success factor.

**Be prepared for a slower start**

It's obvious that the work performance of refugees may initially lag behind that of the regular workforce. We recommend that you treat your commitment to refugees as a social

responsibility. Keep your expectations of their performance realistic and evaluate on a case-by-case basis while bearing in mind the long-term potential impact.

**Don't underestimate cultural differences**

Employers may encounter views and values held by refugees that are different to their own. Changing habits takes time, so have patience. Everybody needs to be aware of these differences and accept them.

**Have empathy**

Some people may have the unreasonable expectation that refugees who have been granted asylum should express nothing but gratitude. Don't forget that many refugees may be dealing with a number of heavy burdens including trauma and worries about family members who have been left behind - all while attempting to work and integrate to a foreign place. This would be a difficult adjustment for anyone and requires patience. It is important to have empathy.

**There will be many win-win experiences**

Every IKEA country or unit that has carried out a refugees' Skills for Employment initiative has found it to be mutually enriching. It's about meeting as equals and helping refugees become independent in their new environment. Employees and teams have said that the experience has broadened their mindset – now they feel they're truly living the values of equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Consider the local context**

Be aware about the local context and the perception of refugees. Business have an important role to play in changing the narrative around refugees in the community. Communication activities around the Skills for Employment initiative can add value to the local conversation.



Photo: HANTVERK, a handmade collection co-created with social entrepreneurs from Jordan, India, Thailand and Romania.

## Success factors

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Here is some advice from our stores and markets who have already set up initiatives you may find helpful:

- **Ensure ownership** from country/unit management
- **Design processes** that fit with your existing way of doing things, such as using part of the existing onboarding/training processes
- **Secure balance** between newcomers and host community needs. The Skills for Employment initiative for refugees complements local community engagement, it doesn't replace it
- **Team up with local authorities**, non-governmental organisations and/or social businesses who can bring expertise to areas where we lack the knowledge and can support with extra administrative tasks
- **Encourage passion**, solidarity, positive support and adaptation from our talented co-workers
- **Communicate with co-workers**, partners, participants and other stakeholders. Make them aware of the goals and outcomes. For example, after the initiative, some of the refugees will be invited to apply for vacancies that will be open to everyone
- **Present refugees as talents** with valuable experience and skills to contribute – share best practice
- **Commit to gender equality**. Make efforts to attract and enable women refugees to take part in the initiative



**GET INVOLVED**

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See differences similarities

## Let's take action, together.

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Helping refugees find work isn't just a humanitarian effort. It's good for business.

More than 30 million refugees were forced by conflict, persecution or natural disaster to leave their homelands. Wherever they've come from and for whatever reason, all refugees are people like everyone else. And they bring with them skills, talent and hope.

Supporting refugees' integration is something that everyone can get involved in, as an individual, society, government or business.

We believe more companies, big or small, have important and unique roles to play for labour integration of refugees. Companies can choose to see opportunities, not threats. Refugees provide an opportunity to bring diversity, talent, innovation and resilience into your

company. Work brings human dignity to people and enable individuals to participate in social and economic life, which are crucial to build a place to call home.

We see that refugees can bring great value to business and society – if we enable them to. We support refugees because it is the right thing to do and because it makes business sense.

When we developed the concept for refugees Skills for Employment initiative, we already knew that great things are achieved when people work together toward a common goal.

That's why we believe everyone needs to be involved. **Including you.**

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For more information visit

<https://ingka.com/projects/skills-for-employment/>

**VERSION**

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