



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

GENEVA SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
AND MANAGEMENT

MADE51

Name: MADE51

Organization: United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

Year launched: 2016

Countries: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Thailand

Users: 996 refugee artisans

Tech used: website, network of social enterprises and refugee artisans

“How can we get our products to the market?” Whether in a refugee women’s center in an urban area, or in a remote camp, the question remains the same. For many individuals who trained as artisans, and come from generations of tradition creating crafts, being forced to flee their homes meant they also lost their livelihoods as artisans. Though their skills remain with them, most refugee artisans don’t have the support needed to re-start their work or a viable market in which to sell their products.

Recognizing the importance of access to economic opportunities for refugees and internally displaced people, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) was exploring ways to support the ethical and sustainable inclusion of refugees in global value chains. Betsy Lippman, Chief of Section at the UNHCR, proposed investigating the potential of the artisanal sector. Lippman spent years working in refugee camps around the world and saw first-hand the untapped talent and ambition of refugee artisans who, though they were forced to flee their homes, carried with them their skills, traditions and culture.

Initial scoping of the sector led to a pilot project in 2015 in Burkina Faso, designed to link Tuareg refugees from northern Mali who specialize in leather and metal work with sales opportunities outside the two camps where they are based. UNHCR kick-started the initiative with an assessment of the market viability of their jewelry and home decor, and then provided direct support in product development and sales. Though the products piqued buyer interest, it was quickly apparent that UNHCR needed strategic partners with industry knowledge and expertise to scale the idea from a pilot and to a sustainable business model.

To lead this effort, UNHCR brought in Heidi Christ, an artisan value chain expert with extensive experience in social enterprise development. Christ envisioned a global approach in which UNHCR would act as a convener and facilitator to connect refugee artisans with global markets under the auspice of a brand, MADE51.

In this model, UNHCR brought together NGOs, IOs, and for-profit companies. By working in partnership, UNHCR was able to focus on their mandate to protect refugees and promote refugee livelihoods while ‘Strategic Partners’ used their comparative advantage in design, marketing, business management, fair trade, social entrepreneurship, logistics and beyond to help develop and deliver high-quality refugee-made products under the MADE51 label. In getting these products into

global markets, MADE51 was able to promote livelihoods, but also to demonstrate the positive impact refugees could have for host countries' balance-of-trade and to amplify the message that refugees were talented contributors.

"The model is about pieces coming together," Christ explained, "...it's about each Strategic Partner being responsible for one piece." The companies that engaged with MADE51 to provide technical expertise largely provided their time and services pro bono. Though MADE51 applied a rigorous selection process for partners, they benefited from the ability to aligning themselves with UNHCR's strong brand—and the opportunity to act as joint collaborators on something that felt profoundly engaging and meaningful. Though managing a broad array of partners could be a challenge, the return on investment was tangible for MADE51.

In every country where MADE51 was working with refugee artisans, they also connected with local social enterprises already established in the artisan sector. These organizations worked directly with refugee artisans to develop unique product lines that could complement their product range, and then incorporated them into their established collection and marketing channels. Both non-profit and for-profit, each involved enterprise shared UNHCR's mission to deliver social impact while utilizing a business lens.

While MADE51 was new to UNHCR, investments in programming around crafts was not. MADE51 built on existing UNHCR programming: 43 UNHCR projects throughout the world involved crafts activities but they were mostly psychosocial in focus, helping refugees process their experiences through craft. These projects helped to form strong groups of women who worked together in a safe space. However, they were not designed to help refugees actually earn an income through their handiwork.

In the first year, MADE51 grew organically, moving forward with implementation in a few camps while UNHCR and Strategic Partners refined the model. Focus was placed on responding to demand from UNHCR regional and country offices—and from refugees themselves—for artisan-sector livelihoods support. In this way, MADE51 gained enough momentum to start convincing management that the project deserved support, funding, and visibility.



Figure 1 : An example of MADE51's unique product lines : traditional metal and leather hammered bowls created by Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, with support from partner Afrika Tiss.

A unique challenge the team faced was around UNHCR's funding cycle. Funding was annual and project based. Funding was injected at the start of the year, reevaluated at the end, and then either continued or cut. Due to budget constraints, the funding was often delayed or cut. MADE51's initiatives required seed funding: initial investment that set up a long-term sustainable system. Channeling this kind of funding through partner organizations rather than directly through UNHCR, without a set project cycle, represented a new way to think.

While the MADE51 model will get products to market, the initiative will not be considered a success unless refugees are actually making an income on their craft. Christ was clear that this is a vital part of the initiative, "the ability to scale an

innovative idea isn't enough: for MADE51 to be meaningful it has to deliver an impact that improves the wellbeing and livelihoods of refugees and host communities.”

Christ expected that it would take 2 to 3 years for MADE51 to become sustainable as the profit from goods sold covered the expense of training artisans, working out bottlenecks in production and bringing goods to market. At the time of this case already, however, the initiative was meeting a real demand, and UNHCR field staff were committed to brokering the right kind of partnerships to reach as many refugee artisans as possible. The initiative had already developed 12 distinct product lines, sourcing products through partner enterprises from nearly 1,000 refugee artisans. By the end of 2018, UNHCR expected 6450 refugee artisans to be added to the artisan value chain, with benefits from their livelihoods impacting over 32,000 dependents.

MADE51 was not just reaching artisans, but it was carving out a new space of support within UNHCR. “It has a lot of ripple effects through the organization,” Christ explained. Ten new private sector companies joined MADE51 as global Strategic Partners, nine of these were first-time supporters of UNHCR. With increased visibility, the initiative had the potential to create new donors and open up new partnerships for other new initiatives within UNHCR.

Key success factors: strong demand driven from field; diverse partners all focused on social impact

Key challenge: ensuring the project actually generates income for refugees and isn't just one more great idea without measurable impact

Summary	Tech		Scale	Partners	Impact	Success Factors	
Network of social enterprises connecting refugee artisans to market	LOW TECH	Primary tech used: None used	SCALED	Private sector, non profit	INTERNAL	Initiative: Diverse partners, user driven	Organizational: Dedicated team