

# Minimum Economic Recovery Standards and UNHCR Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming: Alignment and Synergies

The Minimum Economic Recovery Standards are the internationally recognized consensus on best practices for building economic resilience for crisis-affected communities. **To learn more, visit [www.mershandbook.org](http://www.mershandbook.org)**

The Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming are operational guidelines that UNHCR and partners in the field should fulfill when planning, implementing and monitoring livelihoods programmes.

UNHCR's Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming	Actions	Relevant MERS Standards
<b>1</b> Context Analysis and Socio-economic Assessment	UNHCR operations conduct a protection and solutions context analysis to gain a full picture of the economic, legal, civil-political socio-cultural and environmental context, and related challenges, opportunities and protection and solutions risks and benefits for persons of concern.  Operations conduct a socio-economic assessment, informed by the context analysis, analyzing the socio-economic situation and livelihoods strategies of persons of concern.  These provide the basis for strategic planning and designing programmes that respond to the livelihoods needs and capacities of specific target group(s) in support of protection and solutions.	<b>Assessment and Analysis Standard 2</b> Scope of assessment is determined by how data will be used  <b>Assessment and Analysis Standard 4</b> Analysis is useful and relevant
<b>2</b> Livelihoods Market Analysis	UNHCR operations carry out livelihoods market analysis to identify which markets (or sectors) have potential to provide real economic and self-reliance opportunities for persons of concern. Livelihoods market analysis includes two steps: 1) Operations select high-potential sectors using existing market analyses and/or through a rapid sector selection; and 2) Operations conduct a value chain analysis of the selected sectors, examining different functions and actors in the value chain as well as protection and other risks, challenges and support needed for persons of concern to participate in and benefit from the value chain  Information from these analyses helps operations develop strategic plans and design programmes supporting protection and solutions, with strong market orientation.	<b>Core Standard 1</b> Humanitarian programs are market aware  <b>Assessment and Analysis Standard 4</b> Analysis is useful and relevant  <b>Enterprise and Market Systems Development Standard 2</b> Implement market system analyses early and adapt frequently  <b>Enterprise and Market Systems Development Standard 5</b> Support viability and growth of enterprises and market systems  <b>Employment Standard 2</b> Interventions are labor market-based
<b>3</b> Sustainable Partnerships	UNHCR operations conduct an institutional mapping to identify existing programmes and services in the country, which could include persons of concern, as well as potential partners, including from the development community and private sector.  If facilitating access to financial services for persons of concern, UNHCR operations partner with sustainable financial service providers.  Operations utilize monitoring data on progress towards relevant livelihoods results to assess the performance of partners implementing livelihoods activities with UNHCR funds, retaining partners only if they are able to achieve and demonstrate sustainable impact in terms of employment and/or income and in support of protection and solutions.	<b>Enterprise and Market Systems Development Standard 4</b> Work with Existing market actors and use facilitation approaches  <b>Financial Services Standard 3</b> Use existing formal financial service providers for cash transfers
<b>4</b> Context-specific Livelihoods Strategic Plan	UNHCR operations develop a 3-to-5 year context specific livelihoods strategic plan, based on socio-economic assessment, context analysis, livelihoods market analysis and institutional mapping, to provide strategic direction for livelihoods programming that clearly aligns with and is designed to contribute to the achievement of the overall protection and solutions objectives of the operation	<b>Asset Distribution Standard 1</b> Asset programming responds to identified needs
<b>5</b> Expertise	UNHCR operations with a livelihoods program budget equal to or above USD 1.000,000 (OL partners+direct) have a dedicated livelihoods expert	<b>Core Standard 3</b> Staff have relevant skills
<b>6</b> Targeting	UNHCR operation develop clear, explicit eligibility criteria, based on the needs and capacities of persons of concern and the programme objectives, remaining consistent with the operations overall strategy. This allows operations to properly target livelihoods interventions, ensuring the support appropriate, effective and efficient.	<b>Core Standard 5</b> Intervention strategies for target populations are well defined
<b>7</b> Monitoring	UNHCR Operations collect baseline data on targeted persons of concern before implementation of any programme to capture the socio-economic situation of participants and enjoyment of related rights at the start of interventions. Operations collect and analyse endline data after interventions to measure impact achieved since the baseline. Operations monitor wage and/or self-employment of targeted persons of concern. Where programming aims at self-employment, operations report on the livelihoods Global Strategic Priority indicator, "% of persons of concern (18-59yrs) with own business/self-employed for more than 2 months."	<b>Assessment and Analysis Standard 6</b> M&E occurs throughout the program cycle

**UNHCR Protection Concerns**

- Core Standards 4:** Do no harm
- Assessment and Analysis Standard 3:** Field work processes are inclusive, ethical and objective
- Enterprise and Market Systems Development Standard 3:** Be adaptive and risk aware
- Financial Services Standard 5:** Follow consumer protection regulations