



# CREATING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY TECH CENTER: GOOD PRACTICES

AMONG THE MANY BENEFITS TO REFUGEES OF A COMMUNITY TECH CENTER, ONE IS ACCESS TO MOBILE AND INTERNET CONNECTIVITY TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE WORLD. HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR CREATING A CONNECTED AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY CENTER.



**For a Community Center to be adequate, it must offer more than just access to technology.**

Creating a center equipped with technology and the Internet is already a step forward. But that's just the start: a connected center needs **resources**, investment, **buy-in** from refugees and host communities, and **collaboration** with partners to function well and to have longevity.

Improving digital literacy, education or job opportunities is not necessarily a direct or immediate result of building a connected center. These are often indirect longer term results.



**Technology by itself is not enough to bridge the digital divide, to make everyone move at the same speed and to bring more equal opportunities.**

For CTA (Community Technology Access) to be effective, it must fit into the local context, consider the needs, demands, the overall socio-economic environment, and benefit from the continuous support of various actors.

**Here are some good practices for creating a favorable ecosystem for a connected community tech center to thrive, inspired by CTA projects in Mauritania and Venezuela**

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## PRACTICAL SHEET



### 1. COMMUNICATE, COLLABORATE AND CO-DESIGN

- Connected centers are a **collective effort** that require constant communication with the communities involved or targeted in the project.
- In Mauritania and Venezuela, the idea of connected centers emerged from refugee communities and the project was undertaken in **consultation** with them.
- This allowed UNHCR operations and local communities to be on the same page with regard to goals and expectations, and to make adjustments where necessary.



### 2. FIND A FOCUS (SKILLS, THEMES ...)

- Improving the livelihoods, future opportunities and well-being of refugees is not just about having basic digital literacy.
- Training should focus on skills that are in demand in a **specific context**, to respond to specific challenges facing the community.
- In Caracas, Venezuela, where urban refugees have been exposed to protection risks and increased vulnerability, training focused on **online privacy and security**.
- In Mauritania, refugees discussed how poor communication and **lack of information** affects their decision-making and decided and change had to be made.



### 3. ENGAGE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

- The training must be adapted and take into account the needs of the participants. However, whether the training is aimed at young people, women or people with disabilities, it is important that the community at large is **engaged and united**.
- In order to guarantee the functioning and sustainability of the center and its activities, **ownership** and support by all parties is crucial.
- For example, training can be extended to other groups or facilitating access to specific services (cybercafé, printing house, etc.).



## PRACTICAL SHEET



### 4. MAKE A CENTER OUTSIDE THE CENTER

- Without community and human connection, there is little left of a connected community center. A center must go beyond the technological aspect to create a space for **discussion** and exchange around what is happening online and offline.
- In Venezuela, the training on privacy and digital risks also made it possible to discuss, offline, other forms of exploitation and abuse, to share **resources** and to provide support with and between participants.



### 5. CREATE A TRAINING EFFECT

- What is done and learned within the center must spread to the outside if it is to benefit the wider community as well.
- In Venezuela, for example, young people who received training in digital security and good online practices were then tasked with designing their own project to impart some of their knowledge and **build the capacity** of their respective communities.