

Redefining Compliance

Sourcing from refugee artisans through MADE51

The content of this document was initially developed and published by Common Objective (CO), a global platform supporting responsible sourcing and sustainable fashion partnerships, to provide an overview of MADE51's compliance approach for brand collaborations. Updated: April 2026

Introduction:

In today's global marketplace, responsible buyers prioritise ethical and sustainable compliance in their sourcing decisions.

MADE51, created by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is the pioneering link between refugee artisans and the global marketplace.

This initiative transcends traditional supply chain mechanisms to create dignified work opportunities for refugee artisans, enabling them to earn fair wages for their skills and heritage.

This overview explains how the MADE51 ecosystem meets and exceeds responsible sourcing standards, including internationally recognised labour rights and compliance codes. Built in collaboration with the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), the MADE51 model gives buyers a high level of assurance about the working conditions behind every product they bring to market. It is a model designed to bring confidence, transparency, and accountability to collaborations with refugee artisans.

Refugees operate in a uniquely vulnerable context, without the protection of a national government and with heightened risks in both life and work.

Through UNHCR, the MADE51 model provides a structured and ethical approach for companies to source from refugee artisans.



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UNHCR in the Field:

The global refugee crisis continues to escalate. In 2025, UNHCR confirmed that, for the first time on record, more than 117 million people were forcibly displaced by conflict, violence, and persecution. When people flee, they often carry only their skills, traditions, and cultural heritage with them.

Fashion brands and retailers can be part of the solution, but they need a sourcing pathway they can trust. Decent work is one of the clearest ways for refugees to rebuild their lives while living in displacement, yet many face legal and practical barriers to accessing local labour markets. UNHCR works to advance the economic inclusion of refugees in both local and global supply chains, including the artisan sector through MADE51.

The MADE51 model is designed to ensure the well-being and protection of refugees and the host community members who sometimes work alongside them while they engage in artisanal production.

The first step in launching MADE51 in any country is a feasibility study using UNHCR's operational environment assessment tool. This assessment determines whether conditions are suitable for MADE51 to operate safely and successfully. From there, MADE51 follows a carefully structured due diligence pathway that includes protection assurance and alignment with Fair Trade standards, described in detail in the sections that follow.

This process reduces risk for refugee artisans and provides fashion brands and retailers with a sourcing model aligned with the highest ethical expectations. MADE51 serves as UNHCR's global framework for responsibly engaging refugees in the artisan sector across its field operations.



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Protection Assurance:

Many refugees live in remote locations, including camps and settlements. UNHCR field operations are uniquely positioned to reach these areas, map refugee artisan groups, and monitor production conditions and payments. UNHCR completes an artisan mapping tool to record key details about each group. This is followed by a Protection Assurance process, which ensures that refugees' specific needs are addressed as they begin working with the local social enterprise (LSE) partner.

UNHCR staff in each country continuously monitor and engage with refugee artisans. They ensure compliance, uphold protection standards, and maintain complaint mechanisms and whistleblowing channels so refugees can safely raise concerns.


Compliance with Fair Trade and Ethical Labour Standards:

MADE51's practices meet, and often exceed, credible international standards, including UN and International Labour Organization conventions and OECD guidelines. The initiative partners with the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) and upholds its ten principles of Fair Trade:

- 1** Creating opportunities for economically marginalised producers
- 2** Transparency and accountability
- 3** Fair trade practices
- 4** Fair payment
- 5** Ensuring no child labour or forced labour
- 6** Commitment to non-discrimination, gender equity, and freedom of association
- 7** Ensuring good working conditions
- 8** Providing capacity building
- 9** Promoting fair trade
- 10** Climate action and protection of the environment

These principles closely reflect UNHCR's own protection principles for engaging with the private sector. By upholding established Fair Trade standards, MADE51 gives buyers confidence in the compliance and sustainability of their sourcing decisions.

MADE51 integrates compliance from the start of every new supplier relationship. All social enterprise partners undergo a thorough application process, managed by WFTO and UNHCR, as part of a robust onboarding pathway. Each refugee artisan group works with a registered enterprise in their host country, which manages production, quality assurance, and exports. MADE51 carefully matches refugee artisan groups with social enterprise partners, taking into account location, working conditions, and protection needs.



UNHCR field staff are on the ground all the time; their mandate is to protect refugees. This greatly strengthens the MADE51 model.

MADE51 reviews all products and costing sheets thoroughly to ensure transparent, competitive pricing that protects fair payments for refugee artisans. Local social enterprise partners also receive sensitisation training on working with forcibly displaced people. This training highlights protection concerns, referral pathways, and grievance mechanisms to safeguard workers and ensure they have safe channels to raise issues.

Impact Measurement and Reporting:

MADE51 requires social, environmental, and financial transparency from all social enterprise partners. Each partner measures and reports impact, which is consolidated in an annual impact assessment. For larger brand collaborations or co-created products, MADE51 uses an additional impact measurement system. Social enterprise partners complete standardised production monitoring tools linked directly to artisan payments. This allows for consistent data collection across all production locations. During the order process, UNHCR and partners also conduct focus group discussions with artisans to monitor progress and inform impact reports.

Comprehensive bespoke reports are not feasible for every order. However, they are produced for major collaborations, such as Chloé and UNIQLO, so brands can clearly demonstrate the product's positive impact on their customers. (Examples [linked here](#).) These reports can be used on websites, social media, and in sustainability and CSR reporting. Increasingly, shareholders and investors request this information to support Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) commitments.

MADE51 partners with social enterprises based in refugee-hosting countries, utilizing their sector expertise to integrate refugee artisans into viable, fair and inclusive supply chains.



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The New Benchmark:

MADE51 empowers fashion industry buyers to source ethically while supporting the economic inclusion of refugees. By going beyond traditional compliance checks and integrating with standard supply chains, MADE51 addresses buyers' concerns, ensures protection, and maintains transparency at every step.

Through its commitment to responsible and sustainable sourcing, MADE51 sets a new benchmark for working with refugees in the fashion industry. The model strengthens collaboration between brands and refugee artisans, giving buyers the confidence to share how their products are made, who made them, and under what conditions.