

Brussels IV Conference

Joint submission of the host community and refugee-led organisations in Turkey to the Brussels IV Conference on the future of Syria and the region

Written feedback on Livelihoods and Durable Solutions

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the conflict in neighboring Syria in 2011, 11.8 million Syrian women and men have been driven from their homes, resulting in 6.2 million internally displaced persons and 5.6 million refugees⁽¹⁾. 3.6 million of all Syrian refugees, or 64% of them escaped to Turkey⁽²⁾.

Considering the high number of refugees in the country, combined with an already protracted refugee situation and negative economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on the refugee and host communities in Turkey, it is imperative to invest in increasing the economic self-reliance of Syrian refugees, reduce their humanitarian dependency, and create an environment for them to become actively included members of society.

It is also necessary to diversify options for refugees, and to create the environment for them to make a totally free choice of either remaining in Turkey, settling in a third country or returning to their country of origin.

The undersigned national and refugee-led organisations in Turkey recommend the following steps with the hope that these could support both refugee and host community members in the economic recovery phase in the context of COVID-19 and pave the way towards self-sufficiency and self-autonomy of refugees.

Supporting Livelihoods and Inclusive Economic Recovery for Refugees in Turkey:

- Make extra funds available for the Emergency Social Safety Net for Refugees in Turkey (ESSN) Program and expand its coverage to support both Syrian and non-Syrian refugees. This will facilitate refugees' economic recovery from Covid-19 through the economic recovery period and ensure their access to necessities such as food and cash. In the long-term, invest in integration of the ESSN program into the existing national social security system of the government which provides immediate basic support to economically vulnerable Turkish citizens, and make appropriate investment to ensure that the system covers all refugees in the country.
- Government actors in Turkey must ensure that the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Coordination Committee⁽³⁾, established in response to Covid-19 works to develop and expand social protection systems, safety and hygienic working and living conditions for Syrian and non-Syrian refugees as well as host community agricultural workers, especially women.
- Direct economic support mechanisms for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), including cooperatives run by women to weather the immediate loss of income due to COVID-19 and to ensure that jobs provided by SMEs are not permanently lost due to economic recession. European financial institutions can work with the government of Turkey in expanding and increasing credit mechanisms for SMEs and women's cooperatives with the engagement of the banking sector in Turkey.
- The Government of Turkey and the international community (including the EU, UN, World Bank, IMF, G20 etc.) should explore measures such as concessional loans, preferential trade agreements, loans in local currency, non-conditionality in aid, counter cyclical loans, among others to help expand the fiscal space, job creation and improved livelihoods for refugee and host community members.

[3] The committee includes the membership of governorates, Agriculture and Forestry Directorate, Provincial Health Directorates, Provincial Disaster and Emergency Management Directorates, Provincial Directorates of Migration Management, local government, the Chamber of Agriculture, among others.

Supporting Livelihoods and Inclusive Economic Recovery for Refugees in Turkey:

- The international community should exercise responsibility sharing by strategically targeting investment towards businesses with potential for employment creation. These investments could consider sectors which are severely impacted by the Covid-19 and sectors with high potential to increase employment of refugee and low-income women such as agriculture, services, renewable energy, and care economy.
- All investments made by the international community and the government of Turkey should factor in the education levels and experiences of refugee and low-income host-community women, and their labor profile to ensure that they are included and able to benefit from these investments. They should deliberately and systematically invest in applying existing regulations on the prevention of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Invest in the protection of labor rights, and the creation of safe working environments for host community and refugee workers, especially women, in both formal and informal sectors. These investments should accelerate efforts to reform the current economic structure so that the bargaining powers of refugees and low-income workers are increased within the system.
- The Government of Turkey must take measures to promote access to employment with full legal protection for Syrian and non-Syrian refugees. To this end, the government can take steps such as changing the legal framework by delinking the work permit for refugees from employee sponsorship; further expand equivalency programs; provide skills-matching, language education, and training opportunities, including on-the-job trainings; and enable refugees to become shareholders/members of alternative business models such as social cooperatives.

Durable Solutions

- The international community should extensively increase the existing resettlement quotas not only as a component of durable solutions, but also as a critical component of international responsibility sharing.
- The international community should invest in alternative pathways, such as humanitarian admission, family unification, work & study programs, promotion of private & community sponsorship to encourage alternative pathways for resettlement.
- Provide long-term, predictable and adequate funding in a gender sensitive manner to support Turkey in meeting the needs of both refugees and host community in areas such as education, including education of children with special needs, health, social protection and employment.
- Facilitate and support gender sensitive legal reform to ensure the equality of all refugees before the law in Turkey. Develop options for long-term and predictable legal status such as permanent residency with accompanying working rights.
- Work with local actors, including municipalities and media in addressing discrimination and xenophobia and promoting diversity. Invest in measures that can facilitate inclusive and cohesive coexistence, including deliberate and consistent promotion of communication between refugee and host community members, language training and expansion of spaces for social and cultural exchange.

Durable Solutions

- Strengthen the role of host community and refugee-led organisations in refugee response, especially in the context of Covid-19. Recognise, value and utilise the expertise, knowledge and experience of refugee-led and host community organisations; recognise the role of informal social support networks the refugees and host community built; support them to scale up local refugee response mechanisms they have developed, including through enhanced participation in policy making processes regarding refugees at national and international levels.
- Ensure involvement of the host community, refugee-led civil society organisations and other local actors in long term planning, design and implementation of programs and budgets. Design direct funding mechanisms for host community, refugee-led and women's organisations and Adjust and ease administrative and bureaucratic procedures and requirements to allow flexibility for host community and refugee-led civil society organizations providing support to refugees, especially emergency support within the context of COVID-19.
- Engage with all internal and external stakeholders involved in Syria to ensure a political solution to the ongoing conflict in the country. Support the UN Secretary General's call for global ceasefire to focus on fighting the pandemic in Syria and elsewhere.
- Develop and support strategies to enable refugees to contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Syria through their free movement between two countries, without the need for permanent repatriation (pendulum migration).
- Invest in peace making and peace building, including local peace initiatives run by women and communities, facilitate refugees', especially refugee women's involvement and leadership in the planning of peace and reconstruction processes in Syria. Promote and support the leadership of Syrian organisations inside Syria, refugee-led organisations and diaspora in rebuilding Syria, including investments in improving basic social services such as health, education and creation of jobs and employment.

SIGNATORY ORGANIZATIONS

**Afghanistan's Hazaras Culture
and Solidarity Association**

**Afghan Refugees Solidarity
Association (ARSA)**

Biz Buradayız Association

**Foundation for the Support
of Women's Work (KEDV)**

**Hatay Solidarity Association
(HAYAD)**

**Human Resource Development
Foundation (IKGV)**

Watan Foundation

**International Blue Crescent Relief
& Development Foundation (IBC)**

Sened Association

**Solidarity with Syrian
Refugees Association in İzmir**

**Support to Life Association
(STL)**

**The Research Centre on
Asylum and Migration (IGAM)**

**The Association of the Refugee
Rights Development (MHGD)**

Yuva Association