



Policy Options for Maximising the Development Potential for Refugee Hosting Countries

Executive summary

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While there is **global responsibility** to respond to international protection needs, neighbouring countries in a region experiencing a conflict are those chiefly responsible for hosting the majority of refugees. The Syrian conflict and refugee displacement demonstrates this issue: millions of Syrian refugees are hosted within the region (ca. 3.6 million in Turkey, ca. one million in Lebanon, ca. 670,000 in Jordan), while only ca. 115,000 Syrian refugees have been resettled across the globe (from 2014-2017 the EU resettled ca. 37,000 Syrians and also granted 765,460 positive asylum status) and return to Syria has been reported in the thousands (for Lebanon) and several hundred thousand (for Turkey).

What does this mean for refugee-hosting countries? It means that, now almost eight years after the start of the conflict, **millions of Syrians remain in limbo in host countries**. Many refugees remain unable to work legally, may not have a legal status and may have difficulty accessing essential services. This will have long-standing impacts on this population, including children, as well as the community hosting them (including upon potential return to Syria).

The large numbers of refugees hosted has also had a **significant development impact on and contribution to host countries**: on the labour market, the economy, education and schooling, healthcare, the property market and housing, environment and waste and on politics (both internal and diplomatic).

Policy Recommendations

To respond to these challenges and opportunities, ICMPD, with co-funding from the OPEC Fund for International Development, conducted a “Study on Refugee Protection and Development: Assessing the Development-Displacement Nexus in Regional Protection Policies”. Our study aimed at **developing policy options that respond to the needs of both refugees and host countries**. These policy options have been developed based on desk research and consultations with stakeholders (government institutions, NGOs, chambers of commerce, UN agencies, donors).

However, in the context of mass arrivals and protracted displacement, **national stakeholders must define the prioritisation of their responses** and how they can best integrate development approaches within their humanitarian responses. This prioritisation (including of the below policy options) will be based on an assessment of immediate, mid-term and longer-term needs, as well as available funding. Not all policy options will be possible from the start, thus smaller-scale or pilot versions, or gradual implementation, should be considered. While donor decisions on funding areas have a major impact on which policy options can be implemented, the interests and needs of the host country should remain paramount.

These policy options focus on the key areas of work and related policy options, which should be considered from the time of first arrivals:

1) Analyse the situation and design a tailored approach to it:

Host countries (and donors) must ensure that all relevant information on refugees has been collected and assessed, in order to design and prioritise the most appropriate actions. Similarly, a participatory approach should be taken to programme and policy design to ensure the effectiveness of policy implementation.

- Register all refugee arrivals and collect information on skillsets and needs.
- Ensure a participatory approach (horizontal and vertical) in programme design: from donors to policy makers to humanitarian agencies to refugees to businessmen, and across levels of national administration.

- Conduct a labour market assessment.
- Assess (and adapt) service provision (e.g. health, education, social services) to improve outreach to refugee and host communities, as well as to communicate needs to donors and shape responses.
- Consider large-scale and multi-year funding (for donors).
- Consider multi-country approaches within a region.
- Balance expediency and accountability in terms of reporting requirements to donors (for donors).

2) Communicate host country needs, raise awareness and coordinate response:

This means engaging the appropriate entities (governmental and non-governmental), and communicating one's approach within and outside the national context to ensure a unified approach.

- Establish leadership (focal Ministry and focal points within Ministries or other institutions).
- Establish and empower structures to coordinate action and responses and ensure against repetition and gaps.
- Promote awareness to counter misinformation about refugees and promote social cohesion.
- Acknowledge the host country's efforts financially, politically and rhetorically (by the international community).

3) Integrate development perspectives into service provision:

This entails ensuring practical applications in policy implementation and social service provision.

- Adapt relevant policies to plan for needs and responses to mass arrivals and protracted displacement, including: contingency plans, national (and regional) development plans, migration and refugee policies, and sector-specific plans (e.g. on education, health, energy, etc.).
- Enrol refugee children and other vulnerable populations (host, migrant) in school.
- Integrate refugees into the existing service infrastructure (water and waste services, health services, social services, welfare services, education, etc), where possible and avoid creating parallel (unsustainable) structures.
- Integrate host populations (particularly the most vulnerable) into programmes, such as vocational trainings or job placement programmes, awareness raising activities, community-building programmes, basic service provision services, etc.
- Strengthen national institutions, through capacity building and technical assistance that will have longer-term impacts (e.g. staff training, infrastructure development, etc).

4) Boost business and decent work:

Policy options here focus on matching efforts in service provision with business development.

- Certify and train based on the needs of host country markets and potential future labour markets (country of return or resettlement).
- Employ refugees, based on a labour market assessment and refugee skills and capital.
- Focus on decent work.
- Support business development by promoting investment and entrepreneurs from the refugee and host community.



Project Publications

Policy recommendations: Hendow, M (2019): “Bridging refugee protection and development: Policy Recommendations for Applying a Development-Displacement Nexus Approach.” Vienna: ICMPD. Available also in Arabic and Turkish.

Analysis of the refugee situation in and impact on Turkey and Lebanon: Memişoğlu, F (2018): “Assessing the Development-Displacement Nexus in Turkey.” Vienna: ICMPD. Kabbanji, L. and J. Kabbanji (2018): “Assessing the Development-Displacement Nexus in Lebanon.” Vienna: ICMPD.

Graphic: Four Main Areas of Policy Options

The below table summarises the four main areas of policy options, as well as the concrete policy options, to be taken under consideration by refugee-hosting countries as well as by donors and implementing agencies.

