Host Municipalities Learning Network
3rd Annual Peer-to-Peer Event
Local Economic Development in Host Communities

Divan Hotel, Gaziantep, Turkey
November 19-22, 2018

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OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

This report provides a summary of the technical presentations and discussions that took place on November 19-22, 2018 in Gaziantep, Turkey, during the 3rd Annual Peer-to-Peer Event of the Host Municipalities Learning Network (HMLN). The event focused on “Local Economic Development in Host Communities” and was targeting 70 local and central government representatives members of the HMLN from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Turkey, as well as 20 representatives of Syrian organizations, civil society organizations, and international partners. The event also hosted 8 selected representatives from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda in light of a development grant and a new parallel knowledge exchange initiative for South-South learning on Local Economic development (LED) and private sector mobilization in communities hosting refugees, IDPs and returnees. The full event program as well as events’ presentations and pictures are available here.

The 3rd Annual Event of the Host Municipalities Learning Network was hosted by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and organized by the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) in partnership with the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the World Bank Group, with the support of the World Bank’s South South Facility, United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and Western Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA), the International Center for Advanced Mediterranean Agro-Economic Studies (CIHEAM) Bari, and the International Labor Organization (ILO). The event offered a stocktaking of the HMLN’s work in terms of learning on LED through network building and collaborations. It also allowed participants to strengthen partnerships, deepen their knowledge on applied practical solutions and increase networking around LED in forced displacement contexts.

SUMMARY OF MAIN EVENT OUTCOMES

During the last day of the event, country delegations gathered in working groups to set their country and theme priorities for the HMLN’s agenda for next year. Drawing from the Competitive Cities’ “mayor’s wedge”, delegations from Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey developed country action plans, which were then clustered into a HMLN action plan around the following themes and requests:

Themes and priority areas:

1. **Local Economic Development and job creation** remain the main priority: Network members showed interest in learning on the implementation of risk management plans for natural and unnatural disasters, and on how to strengthen the role of the LED council within the municipality (e.g., by making the Council more inclusive with strong private sector members), as well as on how to engage the private sector and develop the right skills to match the job market demand.

2. **Public-private partnerships (PPPs):** how to communicate with the private sector, how to engage it, how does the private sector function. PPP-approach also demanded for strengthening the power of education, sanitation, and other municipal services.

3. **Data collection and analysis:** Network members came up with the idea of creating a municipal database for municipal performance indication, and M&E. Data collection and analysis will also serve to develop targeted skill development programs and training.

4. **Renewable energy,** e.g. also a solution to power cuts.

5. **Inclusiveness (youth, women, refugees, IDPs) and integration** for both social cohesion and refugee labor market (economic) integration.
6. **Participatory approaches and awareness raising** for citizen on the displacement issue, including the role of the press and media in shaping citizens’ views.

7. **Stakeholders’ integration and stakeholders’ analysis**, including marketing for municipal projects.

8. **Need of a stronger collaboration and coordination between municipalities (in-country and cross-country)** and among municipalities, central government, private sector, NGOs and CSOs (ex: inter-municipal cooperation or better coordination with donors and the municipal sectors). This could also serve to solve the missing link between humanitarian (provision of basic services) and development (sustainable job creation and LED) in the framework of municipal work.

9. **Focus on sustainability**: e.g. labor-intensive techniques and decent work conditions to provide long term jobs, as well as innovation and creativity in projects: e.g. using new techniques, new technologies.

**Feedbacks and requests:**

- General request to have a **deep dive approach** with a focus on the tools for LED and a sector-based approach: e.g., education, energy, health, participatory approaches, communication with private sector, etc.
- Positive feedback on the **twinning work and the HMLN**: twinning groups had the time to exchange during the event, and one new twinning group was formed between the Municipality of Qaraoun, Lebanon, and the Municipality of Beylikduzu, Turkey to exchange on sustainable tourism. A number of participants showed very strong interest and clear commitment to the CMI Host Municipalities Learning Network and its peer-learning methodology.
- The role of the **C4D Collaborative Online Platform** was confirmed as a positive tool for knowledge sharing.
- Importance of **regional collaboration and exchange** was confirmed.
- **Recommendations for the next event:**
  - More hands-on and practical exercises
  - More success stories, also on the theme of social cohesion. Interest to hear from European countries.
  - More testimonies also from not successful experiences
  - Shift the focus from Syrian refugees only to forcibly displaced in general
- The union of Palestinian associations suggested to involve in the HMLN an **experts hub created by GIZ**, composed by experts specialized in several technical topics.

After their role as observers during the event, new participants from Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) also shared their country and thematic priorities in hosting forcibly displaced. In particular, a common ground for knowledge needs was found with the HMLN on the following themes:

**Knowledge needs and areas of exchange with the HMLN:**

1. **Training on Local Economic Development (LED) and LED planning.**
2. **Registration of refugees, including data gathering and analysis** of refugees’ skills and experiences in the labor market.
3. **Rural-urban linkages and agriculture**, including agribusiness development (Afghanistan)
4. **Cultural heritage protection and tourism.**
5. Enhance **social cohesion and socio-economic integration** as refugees start moving out of camps, in a way that benefits both them and their hosts (HoA)

6. **Access to finance and support of skills** through education (e.g. “talent attraction” program in Universities)

7. **Private sector mobilization**: need to exchange on construction permits, how to easy business licenses process, how to work with business associations.

**Lessons learned and feedbacks from the event:**

- Interest in exchanging through the **C4D Platform** as observers, and then to create a own East Africa / Afghanistan C4D Platform and CoP.
- Importance and interest to have a **peer-to-peer learning network** coordinated by CMI.
- Importance to **raise awareness and development responsibility among local governments** on the refugee issue (HoA: local governments do not involve refugees in their development plans).
- **Need of knowledge- and experience-sharing** at country and regional level

**CMI – HMLN Agreement:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>HMLN Network’s areas of interest and actions</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
<th>How to make progress?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LED Planning - Deep Dive</strong></td>
<td>• Develop / Implement action plan; stakeholder mobilization / participatory planning; effective NGO collaboration</td>
<td>HMLN; Twinning groups, with CMI Support</td>
<td>C4D; webinars; Annual Event; CB WS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills &amp; Innovation</strong></td>
<td>• Socio-economic inclusion; skills assessment/building; Sustainable jobs; Labor-intensive techniques; Talent attraction</td>
<td>CMI / Experts with support of HMLN members</td>
<td>C4D; webinars; Annual Event; CB WS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enterprise Support &amp; Finance</strong></td>
<td>• Private Sector mobilization; PPPs; Entrepreneurship; Business support services; Investment policies promotion &amp; aftercare measures</td>
<td>CMI / Experts with support of HMLN members</td>
<td>C4D; webinars; Annual Event; CB WS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-thematic focus</strong></td>
<td>• Technical Deep-Dives • Municipal partnerships / collaborations • Interest in tools, case studies • Social cohesion • Sector-based zoom (e.g. Health/Education, municipal infrastructures)</td>
<td>HMLN; Twinning groups; with CMI / Experts support</td>
<td>C4D; webinars; Annual Event; CB WS</td>
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DETAILED SUMMARY OF EVENT SESSIONS

Official Opening
The event was opened by Osman Toprak, Vice-Mayor of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. Mr. Toprak underlined the efforts of Turkey and Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipalities in hosting Syrians since the start of the Syrian conflict, and the social, economic and cultural aspects of Gaziantep’s local response and adaptation to the crisis. As an example, he mentioned how Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality created a new settlement consisting of fifty thousand houses and facilitated the employment of four hundred forty Syrians in the construction sector and one thousands in municipal projects for tree plantation and clean water generation. Finally, he reiterated Gaziantep’s main objective of securing a safe return to Syrians once the conflict will end.

Ximena del Carpio, Program Leader at the World Bank warmly thanked Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality for welcoming the cross-regional delegation to this event. She emphasized the Gaziantep’s willingness to welcome refugees and also to share their experiences with peers. Ms. Del Carpio then highlighted the critical role of coordination between the central and local level to face these kinds of crisis and the crucial role of sharing experiences and knowledge among countries. She mentioned the current challenges local and central governments face, including finding ways to complement the existing workforce rather than creating competition on jobs and improving basic service delivery.

Katerina Kratzmann, Manager of Forced Displacement, Migration, Return at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) talked about the areas the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) focuses on, such as tackling the roots causes of displacement and reintegrating refugees after their return mainly targeting Syria’s neighboring countries, the Horn of Africa and Sudan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Balkans, and Ukraine. She underlined the need to enable the displaced populations in the short and long term in order to avoid dependency. Finally, she reiterated the importance of a deep knowledge of the challenges and opportunities in the local context.

Janette Uhlmann, Senior Operations Officer at Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) presented the collaborative nature of the HMLN’s key annual event. After thanking the Mayor of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Fatma Sahin and the municipal staff for their collaboration and partnership, she highlighted the multi-partner nature of CMI. Mrs. Uhlmann then acknowledged the progresses reached by the HMLN in the last three years and the importance of knowledge sharing and learning in enhancing skills for refugees and locals and improving economic opportunities from refugees’ entrepreneurs. She then closed the official opening with an encouragement for the local and central government representatives to participate, engage, and share.

Summary of the country contexts for host governments
This panel discussion aimed to provide an updated overview of host countries and their economic and social contexts affected by forced displacement, seeking to give insights in dialogue and collaboration between central and local governments in their efforts to address pressing local economic challenges in link with forced displacement. The panel was moderated by Varalakshimi Vemuru, Lead Social Development Specialist at the World Bank and included Abdullah Aksoy, Vice Secretary General of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey; Darah Hasan Rasheed, Deputy Minister of Reconstruction and Housing, Republic of Iraq; Feda Gharaibeh, Director of Humanitarian Relief Coordination Unit at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; Safwan
Mostafa, Legal Advisor to H.E. Minister of State for Displacement Affairs, Republic of Lebanon; Tawfiq Budeiri, Director General of the Municipal Development Lending Fund at the Ministry of Local Government, West Bank and Gaza; and Abdul Baqi Popal, Deputy Minister of Municipalities at the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The very diverse nature of the panel allowed to give insights on the main challenges in the context of internal and international displacement, as well as proposed solutions.

The panel underlined the following issues and needs:

- The urban nature of displacement brings much strain on public services and makes the need to provide education, social inclusion and economic opportunities to avoid a lost generation and take the most from the presence of the displaced impellent. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, for instance, provides education and health services free of charges for refugees, and is benefitting from the presence of some two thousand Syrian-owned small and big companies. In Jordan the situation is different as most Syrians do not have an industrial background but rather agricultural skills.
- Skill assessments are needed in order to come up with a viable strategy to employ the displaced and to overcome difficulties in refugee registration.
- An approach linking the humanitarian and development spheres can help turn displaced into an opportunity by integrating them in the local economy with sustainable job opportunities.
- Coordination between the local and central level is perceived as a priority, also concerning the regulatory framework for business licensing and registration. In this respect, a LED plan made in coordination with the national strategic plan may help local governments find solutions to the lack of finance by attracting the private sector and generate more municipal income.
- Some of the represented countries face the double issue of displacement and internal conflict: while the necessity to fight violent extremism is impellent in Iraq, Afghanistan is experiencing strong displacement influxes deriving from both Afghan refugees returning and IDPs caused by draughts. This poses a threat to the sustainability of refugee integration programs and makes the need to sustainably include the displaced in the economy and society, also through their employment, more impellent.

Year in review of the Host Municipalities learning Network

Janette Uhlmann, Senior Program Officer at CMI, presented the year’s activities of the HMLN, which now involves more than 260 members from 117 local governments across 5 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region, and new representatives from Afghanistan who joined selected activities to benefit from the exchange with peers. Ms. Uhlmann highlighted the thematic focus of the HMLN’s exchanges, which is on LED and private sector mobilization since 2017, and mentioned the new South-South exchange that will start soon with the involvement of local and central government representatives from Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. A video describing the achievements of the HMLN in 2018 is available here.

Presentation of Survey Results

Sara Bouhedir, Urban Consultant at CMI, gave an overview of the survey results from participating municipalities highlighting local governments’ LED challenges and priorities. Main results of the survey are following:
1) LGs face important challenges in regard to their local economies and the impact of forced displacement is perceived as negative for a majority (63%), including with increasing unemployment, competition for livelihood and tensions on the housing market.

2) Participating LGs are already developing actions for LED: 86% of the participants are engaged in LED Strategies or planning; key actions include infrastructures work, vocational training, improving business regulations, specific sectors’ projects (tourism, environmental), partnerships with the private sector.

3) Specific Challenges and priorities:
   - **Unemployment** is a major concern for LGs, as 80% of them consider forced displacement had a negative impact on the matter. A majority of LGs are already involved or interested in providing worker skills development and training, including for refugees; support home-based businesses, improving data on existing skills and on job offers, providing public jobs, were also mentioned as solutions to improve job opportunities for refugees.
   - **Infrastructure and municipal services** maintenance, upgrading, and development to improve the enabling environment for businesses remains the main lever of action for LGs, and where they still see large areas for improvement;
   - **Partnering with the private sector and attracting large investments** appears as a challenge for a majority of respondents. Simplifying business regulations is one of the incentives LGs would envisage developing;
   - **Financial and budget constraints** remains an important impediment for many LGs, together with issues of collaboration with central government and LED stakeholders (such as private sector key players).

Detailed results of the survey are available [here](#).

**Presentation of the new Compendium: “Experiences in Hosting Refugees: Local Economic Development in Host Communities”**

CMI collected for the second year local governments’ experiences in hosting refugees, with a focus this year on Local Economic Development. The Compendium (available [here](#) in English and Arabic) was presented by Gilda Borriello, CMI, followed by presentations by selected HMLN members of their experiences in enabling the local business environment and mobilizing the private sector.

- **Rami Sharrack, Deputy Executive Director of the Syrian Economic Forum**: the experience of “Rukhsati” consists in collaborating with Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality to license more than 500 Syrian-owned companies and raise awareness among Syrian business owners about Turkish taxes and doing business regulations, leading to improved refugee integration and decreased informal economy which resulted in revenues for the municipality.

- **Khalaf Alassem, Mayor of Sarhan Municipality, Jordan**: the small municipality of Sarhan managed to attract Syrian and other foreign private investors to create jobs for Jordanians and Syrians alike and produce goods to be exported in the U.S. and Europe. After the establishment of two private factories, the Municipality took advantage of the momentum to improve the industrial area and create a training center in consultation with local communities to upgrade the skills of youth while diversifying the agricultural local economy.

- **Mohammad Zawahreh, Director of the Local Development Unit at Zarqa Municipality, Jordan**: the “My Job from Home” project implemented in collaboration with the United Nations Development
Programme (UNDP) improved the regulations and infrastructures for creation of home-based businesses and allowed housewives upgrading their skills and to unlock their economic potential.

- Georgia Papathanasiou, Compliance and Information Manager of MEAL & Performance Quality at Solidarity Now NGO, Greece: this European experience in hosting refugees also responded to local market needs in an area affected by high emigration of locals and a declining local economy. The “Insular Lab of Solidarity and Sustainability” implemented in the small island of Tilos, Greece, allowed for the revival of local economic sectors of agriculture, restauration and tourism, while strengthening social cohesion and socialization among refugees and locals.

The experiences presented and the full compendium is available here in English and Arabic.

**Toward Competitive Cities in Forced Displacement Contexts: global insights**

This session consisted in a technical presentation by Ashutosh Raina, Social Development Specialist at World Bank complemented by practical examples from Önder Yalçın, Head of Migration Office at Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. It provided insights on key LED issues and solutions that are being developed in forced displacement contexts globally, based on specific examples from the World Bank “Competitive Cities” approach.

Mr. Raina first underlined the urban dimensions of displacement, with clear links with its economic dimension linked to LED. National policies, regulations and legal barriers all have a significant impact of LED in forced displacement settings and influence levers for competitive cities divided in the following categories: inclusion and social cohesion, development of job opportunities and market-oriented skills, business environment and investment attraction, business-supportive infrastructures, private sector mobilization, support for the informal economy, capacity gaps. He then described the different actors accounting for LED in the Competitive Cities approach (central government, local governments, private sector) and the four “levers” driving city competitiveness (infrastructure & land, enterprise support & finance, skills & innovation, institutions & regulations) and drew examples on the possible actions of local governments (the “mayors’ wedge”). In Kigali, Rwanda, the local government led a post-conflict initiative by creating an investors’ forum, doing an assessment to identify lagging areas in doing business, and developed a very well designed and marketed master plan. In Georgia, a national-led initiative focused on tourism and cultural heritage to improve the LED with investments in infrastructure, country marketing and promotion, and travel facilitation. Finally, Uganda focused on the district side and engaged in capacity building, skills development and linking market demand with value chains to support locals and refugees through the improved business environment. to form community organizations linked to the market. Although these examples did not act in every of the four city levers, they managed to improve their local economy.

**How Gaziantep implemented the four levers of the Competitive Cities approach:**

- Overall, Gaziantep’s governance system was altered to manage the influx of refugees with an increased municipal capacity and the establishment of new municipal departments to coordinate, collaborate and manage new projects in collaborations with international and national organizations, NGOs and INGOs.
- A project in partnership with GIZ led to the creation of 1,500 temporary jobs for vulnerable Syrians in municipal works, 10% of which was turned into a permanent job.
- Demographic changes deriving from the influx of Syrians were dealt with periodically: infrastructures were strengthened to answer to refugees’ needs and avoid putting pressure on the local Turkish community by increasing the capacities of public transport, industrial areas and sanitary supplies including clean water.
With reference to pressures on housing, 50 thousand new housing solutions will be built in cooperation with the central government. However, the Turkish law establishes a quota for foreigner house-owners, which has already been reached in Gaziantep resulting in the impossibility for Syrians to buy a house there. Despite this, the Municipality predicts that local Turkish will buy the new housing arrangements, which will be then rented to Syrians thus proposing a solution to the pressure on housing.

To strengthen integration, social projects led by the Municipality include both Turkish and refugee communities, and a particular focus is given to women and youth.

Importance of national and local regulations: given the Turkish central regulations, Gaziantep Municipality managed to implement some of these projects thanks to central government agreement, while small and medium projects can be implemented without consulting the central level.

Expertise & Peer-to-Peer Learning Collaborations for LED

The HMLN Twinning Groups: Cross-country collaborations on LED

This session showed the new twinning approach of the HMLN with presentation of three of the cross-country twinning arrangements. Nicolas Meyer and Janette Uhlmann from CMI presented the twinning approach, initiated by HMLN members during the Capacity Building Workshop “Strategic Planning for LED” held in March 2018 in Amman, Jordan. Twinning groups are composed of two cities getting together in a systematic way to exchange and discuss on a specific topic(s) linked to LED in forced displacement context. They are focused on peer-learning, without presenting any hierarchy in the exchange.

- **Raida Hanania**, SDIP Coordinator, Director of Quality Management Unit and General Secretary of the LED Council, Bethlehem Municipality, Palestine and **Kawkab Albadawi**, Director of Planning and Development Unit, Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan presented their twinning group focused on the comprehensive theme of Strategic Planning for LED. Both Municipalities are characterized by a big size in terms of urban space and inhabitants, the provision of infrastructures, tourism, the presence of Syrian and Palestinian refugees and support from international donors, INGOs and private sector stakeholders. The specific challenge targeted by the twinning group is to reduce unemployment, support the production and marketing of local products, and enhance partnerships with the private sector. To tackle these challenges, the two municipalities are benefitting from comparing similar approaches on renewable energies, waste management, and partnering with the private sector and assist each other by informally reviewing project documents and giving advises on project implementation.

- **Haneen Hassouneh**, Director of Local Development Unit at Sahab Municipality, Jordan and **Ahmad Omais**, Vice Mayor of Qaraoun Municipality, Lebanon presented their twinning group focused on renewable energies. Both cities have been affected by a very high influx of Syrian refugees, which they are facing on top of other issues such as pollution and water scarcity. Their specific challenge is to improve the electricity provision system and overcome the lack of funding for establishing sources of renewable energy. Due to the comparable size and context, the two cities manage to exchange their positive and negative experiences in facing the refugee influx while improving the natural environment for the benefit of all their residents. Although the twinning is still unofficial, the Municipality of Qaraoun is preparing for an official field visit to Sahab and sign an official twinning agreement.

- **Mohammad Abu Gaoud**, Director of Local Development Unit at Greater Madaba Municipality, Jordan and **Hamza Dalia**, Head of Cities and International Organizations Division at Ramallah
Municipality, Palestine presented the twinning focusing on sustainable tourism in a crisis context. Both cities showed a decline of tourism due to the instability of the region and the high presence of displaced and want to take the most from their presence through an approach focused on LED. By leveraging on their geographic and cultural closeness, Madaba and Ramallah want to establish a touristic loop to link the Amman airport, close to the city of Madaba, to Ramallah and its touristic sites. This will create new jobs thanks to a new transport company as well as new touristic infrastructure. The cities of Madaba and Ramallah have been corresponding regularly for 7 months, have already completed a field visit to Ramallah, and plan to sign a formal MoU.

Working Group Sessions: collective problem solving for improving LED

Three working groups invited participants to brainstorm through a case study problem-solving approach on a bottleneck encountered by a HMLN member and to come up collectively with innovative solutions. Working groups were led by a technical expert who facilitated the group discussion and gave input to the case study’s bottleneck presented by one participant.

- Working Group A: “Enterprise support & Financial Environment”: Isabelle Kronisch, Technical Officer at the International Labour Organization (ILO), introduced in plenary the topic, mentioning the need of financial inclusion for refugee enterprises useful to ease social tensions, enhance their local economic contribution and sustain refugees’ working conditions. During the Working Group A, Saleh Abou Mansour, President of Union of Municipalities of Jabal El Sheikh presented the case of the “Green Pyramid”, an urban agriculture solution developed to provide employment for vulnerable locals and refugees, sustain livelihood and fight water scarcity and chemical contamination. The main bottleneck presented was the difficulty to gather ground investment fund for such a project benefitting to potential business owner being vulnerable. Finally, the group proposed innovative solutions to better attract investors and donors.

- Working Group B: “Skills and Innovation”: Ximena del Carpio, Program Leader at the World Bank introduced in plenary the topic of skills and innovation. During the working group, Yunus Kul, Foreign Relations and R&D Department Coordinator, Sancaktepe Municipality, Turkey, presented the difficulties faced by its municipality in registering refugees and obtaining enough information (on skills and work history) in order to support them. The group suggested various solutions in order to better reach out to refugees, and also build trust, and was backed by Ms. del Carpio, who reminded that the role of municipalities is to collect services under their roof and coordinate them within their district: in this respect, once data are collected, municipalities can be source of information for firms who want to hire refugees.

- Working Group C “LED Planning & Private Sector Mobilization”: Ashutosh Raina, Social Development Specialist at the World Bank introduced in plenary the topic of the working group, where Iyad Hammad, Head of Planning, Yatta Municipality, Palestine, described the bottleneck faced by is municipality in attracting investments, due to a lack of trust of citizen in the municipality. With the support of Mr. Raina, the group came out with three levers to build trust: i) participatory planning and decision making – multi-stakeholder platforms and committees helping building consensus around municipal actions; ii) increased transparency and accountability through information sharing and monitoring and evaluation ; iii) easing doing businesses through one-stop shops and procedure manuals.

Full working group reports are available here.
Technical Session - Building a favorable enabling environment: financial and regulatory incentives for private investments

This session focused on the incentives for increased private investments, including refugee-owned businesses, from the viewpoint of international organizations and Syrian stakeholders. **John Speakman, Adviser at the World Bank**, talked about the regulatory framework for doing business in forced displacement contexts drawing from his experience in Afghanistan, Middle East, and Turkey. He discussed how business regulations have a major impact on productivity and can also be applied at the city level. In the case of Afghanistan, regulations on construction permits are critical for establishing a business or a factory and are a major lever of the municipality. Concerning Syrians, regulations are important for business entry and operations, freedom of movement, and banking restrictions, even though each country has its unique regulatory framework, with different constraints and positive aspects. Mr. Speakman mentioned that in Jordan, for instance, Syrians are not included in the quotas for the highly innovative IT sector, or that Syrian firms in Turkey face obstacles in exporting goods for visa restrictions. He concluded by saying that the role of municipalities could be that of asking central governments for a change in some regulatory barriers Syrians face to provide adequate skills for the new businesses to grow.

**Jimmy Graham, Research Assistant at the Center for Global Development**, gave an overview of the growing interest in refugee-owned businesses by development financial institutions and philanthropic institutions, such as the TENT Partnership for Refugees or the International Financial Corporation. By investing in refugee-owned businesses or businesses that employ a large number of Syrians, the host communities will also be supported thanks to refugees’ contribution to the host economy in exports or increased investment networks. Mr. Graham drew a number of recommendations for central and local governments to invest in refugee businesses while supporting the host community: lowering movement restrictions, better connect investors with companies, encourage joint venture between refugees and locals to create more joint growth and unlock refugees’ knowledge of foreign languages and markets, implement business and language trainings, improve business climate regulations, and invest in infrastructure. In addition to this, central governments can attract investors creating entrepreneurship competitions between refugee-owned businesses to gain international attention and help find investments for businesses or share data on refugee-owned businesses to get to know where the opportunities are. In parallel, a significant role can also be played by NGOs and other non-governmental actors by supporting governments in these kinds of initiatives.

**Rami Sharrack, Deputy Executive Director of the Syrian Economic Forum**, presented the Syrian private sector from the perspective of Small-Medium Sized Entrepreneurs. He explained how Syrians who own a SME do not expect host governments to change their regulations for them, but rather to comprehend that Syrian investments represent an opportunity to support the host local economies. He mentioned the difficult Syrians have in accessing information on available incentives for a particular business area or location that can be useful to understand the added value they can bring to the host economy, as well as the difficulty of freely moving within and across countries, which can be an impediment for trade and business promotion. In the case of Turkey, Mr. Sharrack acknowledged the big network of Syrian investors in the country and the need of trust between Syrians and Turkish local authorities so as to build good partnerships. One example is that of Gaziantep, where Syrian businessmen mostly work in the carpet making business and do not compete with locals and make exports grow.

Finally, **Nasser Youssef, Board Member of the Syrian International Business Association (SIBA)**, completed the panel discussion with a second perspective from Syrian entrepreneurs. He first introduced the structure of SIBA, an association supported by the World Bank representing Syrian businessman
outside Syria. Mr. Youssef then talked about a possible strategy for Syrian entrepreneurs to be considered in a long-term perspective with a set of priorities in the economic development and creation of employment in communities hosting refugees. A network for communication of Syrian businessman living outside Syria, such as SIBA, answers to the double aim of business and trade exchanges and reinforcement of communication channels between the Syrian community. Mr. Youssef highlighted how communication is important to enhance economic opportunities in the context of the Syrian diaspora community, and presented a new project implemented by SIBA called “Made by Syrians”, which covers Syrian investments and aiming to protect Syrian manufacturing and its quality brand image, to enable products to go out in the international business arena, and to increase sales for Syrian products.

Development Agencies & Local / Central Governments Get Together: Unlocking Collaborations for LED

Movie Presentation: “The Ideal Way: new life in Turkey”

Yasmine Haloubi, Syrian Social Gathering, presented a short movie on the Syrian organization “Syrian Social Gathering” produced by the German Technical Cooperation GIZ. In particular, she presented a community center in Mersin, Turkey, and its social and recreational activities for both Syrians and locals., as well as creation of short-term employment opportunities. Ms. Haloubi then described the main problems faced by Syrians who escaped the war, including language barriers and documentation issues. She concluded by underlining how the Turkish community benefitted more and more from the community center and its employment program.

Success stories and current priorities: how to engage for better LED in hosting contexts

Successful Local Initiatives for LED: What areas for Support?

This session showcased examples of collaboration between central and local governments, donor agencies, and development organizations and highlighted current strengths and areas of support for LED in forced displacement contexts.

Gabriele Muehlig, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Yusuf Izzettin Iymen, Deputy Secretary General, Gaziantep Chamber of Industry jointly presented a program led by GIZ for supporting the local economy in Gaziantep, Turkey. Ms. Muehlig started by presenting GIZ projects for Syrian refugees in Turkey, consisting of an education community center, cash for work projects in craft and industry, and a project focused on education. She then focused on the cash-for-work project, which focuses on training and giving financial support to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Turkish households reaching almost 16 thousand beneficiaries in the short term. Together with GIZ, the Gaziantep Chamber of Industry is providing day and night training to 600 beneficiaries including Syrians, as well as job placement through face-to-face recruitment to secure a stable job opportunity. Mr. Iymen also explained the work permit mechanism in Turkey: refugees can apply online with their ID number and have a simplified the application procedures for a one-year work permit, and employers are also given supervision and counseling.

Ziad Al Chami, CIHEAM-Bari Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari offered a different perspective on the Syrian crisis with a presentation on CIHEAM’s Agriculture and Livestock Support for Syrian People program, focused of displaced Syrians inside Syria working in agriculture. Mr. Al Chami explained how CIHEAM provided services and veterinary vaccinations to Syrian farmer’s livestock in order to secure food production and income for IDPs. Finally, he talked about the psychological effects of displacement that
can be mitigated by job creation by giving Syrians a sense of hope. Mr. Al Chami also mentioned the cost recovery approach implemented by CIHEAM, which sponsors 30% of the goods and services’ price. This approach makes sure that a full chain made up of transportation, farmers, etc. recovers by lowering prices, making goods and services available, and restoring competition. In this line, bringing goods from a country outside Syria and distributing them in local markets would disturb the chain hindering traders’ sells. Finally, he delineated that the project is based on the needs of the Syrian community with a participatory approach. Thanks to the participatory approach, CIHEAM had consultations with local councils to determine the real needs of displaced farmers and define the project’s methodology.

Ximena del Caprio, Program Leader at the World Bank, shared a video interview to present the World Bank portfolio in Turkey with a focus on supporting data on refugee skills and local labor market need. Ms. Del Carpio mentioned projects in collaboration with the EU for education facilities, and a livelihood pillar in support of the Ministry of Labor to help the work permit system have a better outreach. She then talked about a project on public employment to improve the national system on the IT side to register refugees and profile their skills, which will be a big technological investment to direct appropriate support to Syrians. At the same time, the project is offering cash-for-work activities for those who need a longer period of training, direct job placement to those Syrians who are already skilled, and basic support to those already employed. In addition, Ms. Del Carpio described two grant programs to facilitate the creation of business who hire refugees and host community members, one of them specifically targeting women through an incubator for business support. Finally, she highlighted the collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and partners in the private sector for a labor market absorption analysis to check the real demand of skills at the local level.

Bilge Coban, Field Coordination Officer, International Labour Organization (ILO) presented three integrated pillars of ILO in Turkey: i) investing in people and skills to provide labor supply in the Turkish labor market; ii) providing better jobs; iii) provide support through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Ms. Coban then focused on the SADA Women Development and Solidarity Center implemented together with the Gaziantep Municipality to strengthen the resilience of Syrian and host communities. The Center supports women from different backgrounds, including Syrian and Afghan refugees, and Turkish women. Training is provided, especially language training since the 70% of Syrian women do not speak any Turkish. In addition to this, Ms. Coban explained that ILO also carries out a value chain analysis on the Gaziantep’s shoe and olive oil sectors to identify job opportunities for women. In the Center, 1,200 women completed vocational training and seminars. Finally, Ms. Coban mentioned that ILO will start entrepreneurship programs soon, after noticing the demand for such trainings, and it is currently choosing the candidates for the first phase of the program. Ms. Coban also mentioned the other nationalities covered by the project Turkey, such as Afghans, who are around 400,000 to 500,000 in Turkey, mostly living in Istanbul.

Jamil Ahmed Awan, Program Officer Livelihood, UN Migration Agency (IOM) presented IOM’s programs in Turkey, focusing on graduates who want to open their own business, job placement for Syrian and Turkish companies, and community farming livelihood for those living in rural areas. The project encourages beneficiaries to work on their business plans and distributes conditional grants in kind to beneficiaries selected on the basis of feasibility of their plan and vulnerability, who can only use the grants to buy specific equipment so to insure sustainability. He showed the good results of the project in increasing the beneficiaries’ income and setting the basis for future employment. As an example, he mentioned that once a barber was delivered an equipment kit, he partnered with another barber to expand its business and employ more people. Mr. Awan then explained another project on
entrepreneurship training and grants, focused on Syrian and Turkish recent university graduates and offering guidelines to start a business and training on legal rights and funding opportunities to start a business with a partner of the opposite community to increase integration.

Varalakshimi Vemuru, Lead Social Development Specialist, and Ashutosh Raina, Social Development Specialist, World Bank gave a joint presentation on the World Bank strategies for forced displacement in Eastern Africa. The program covers 8 countries, of which 4 are hosting refugees, and 4 are the countries of origin. They highlighted the connection with climate change, which highly impacts the region through desertification, and the diversity of refugee policies, focused on camps in all countries except Uganda, where a very progressive policy allowing refugees to live and work among host communities is implemented. The displacement challenge in the region dates back 25 years ago, now moving toward a development approach. Ms. Vemuru and Mr. Raina then explained in detail the Development Response to Displacement Impact Projects (DRDIP) regional program, with a portfolio of more than 500 million USD and covering three groups: i) refugees only, ii) host communities only, and iii) mixed groups of hosts and refugees. The project supports enhancing the capacities of existing agencies in the targeted countries and to let local governments lead the development response to forced displacement in coordination with local agencies and UNHCR. This way, the program aims to tackle issues arising from forced displacement, social tensions and climate change with a comprehensive approach. Ms. Vemuru and Mr. Raina explained that the program objective is to support both refugees and host communities by increasing their income and opportunities through a community-driven approach and participatory planning, where communities identify their needs. Access to finance is also secured starting with communities’ own savings and then with grants through a partnership with commercial banks, with a special focus on encouraging activities for youth. Finally, they showed how the program plans to integrate infrastructure with value chains, for instance through market chain or irrigation works. The project also increases savings and engagement in livelihood activities. Ms. Vemuru and Mr. Raina illustrated that the program is built on existing programs including on their lessons learned on LED in forced displacement contexts. Preconditions are a market-driven approach with national and subnational support teams, a phased implementation approach, and a monitoring system to identify the lacking areas for capacity building.