

From Resilience to Development

A High Level Stakeholder Conference on the Syrian Refugee Crisis
Center for Mediterranean Integration, Marseille, September 7, 2015

Context

The conflict in Syria has entered its fifth year and its impact both in Syria and in neighboring countries has had disastrous humanitarian, social and economic consequences. In Syria, the death toll is estimated at over 220,000, and there are about 7.6 million Syrians internally displaced (IDPs). The crisis is deepening and is likely to continue as no political solution has been found. As Syria is facing important human lives and physical infrastructure damages, neighboring countries have also to cope with an immense pressure. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syrian refugees in these countries¹ who are registered and awaiting registration have grown tremendously, reaching almost 4 million as of May 2015. This amount is expected to grow to 4.27 million by December 2016, making Syria the largest displacement crisis globally.

The Syrian conflict exacerbated existing problems in affected neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, who have to weather an additional external shock through the influx of sizable refugees: in Lebanon, Syrian arrivals represent roughly 25% of the population²; in Jordan, while some of the Syrians are living in camps, the majority—as much as 70 %—are staying in urban centers, where they share space, resources and services with their Jordanian hosts, and in some cases increase cities populations of more than 45%. The surge in population puts an additional strain on scarce resources for local communities. Public services are overwhelmed, economic growth has faltered and unemployment is rising to record rates. As social tensions grow, governments are concerned about protecting its fragile internal stability and weathering the adverse economic and social impact of the Syria crisis. However, the arrival of Syrian refugees can also have a positive impact on economies. The middle and upper classes invest and spend in hosting countries. Their presence can add dynamism to the region.

To address the urgent humanitarian and developmental needs in these countries, donors have provided assistance to deal with refugee inflows primarily as direct support to refugees. Much less amounts have been directed to mitigating the impact on the communities hosting refugees or to strengthen the institutions of the hosting countries such as education, health and municipal services. The United Nations (UN) agencies, European Union (EU), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and bilateral donors have worked together, while current international efforts remain largely insufficient to meet the needs of hosting governments in the region and to provide a sustainable long-term development response.³

The refugee problem is a threat for development, peace and stability in the region. Addressing effectively and sustainably the mounting tensions stemming from this extraordinary situation requires an important scale up of support and a paradigm shift in the response to the crisis. There is growing recognition that the humanitarian crisis will turn into a paramount development challenge as refugee populations are likely to stay over the medium - and long term in their hosting countries. This will require adjusted policy responses as well as international support. There will be a huge need for recovery and reconstruction when the conflict subsides, requiring a high level of financing support for Syria. The fragile middle-income hosting countries to date have shouldered the burden of hosting historically large numbers

¹ Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

² WB Lebanon Systematic Country Diagnostic, 2015

³ Funding requirements amount to 4,533 billion USD –covered is limited to 20% to date according to (UNHCR).

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (Visited June 5th 2015)



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of refugees, thus offering the world a priceless public good. These countries need support to access significant financial resources and they are not eligible to borrow at the concessional rates available to poorer countries.

Presentation of the Conference

To respond to this unprecedented situation, a high level stakeholders meeting will be to build awareness of the growing needs of hosting countries in the Mashreq due to the refugee crisis. It aims to provide a space for an exchange of experience among hosting countries to discuss appropriate shift in policies and to gather support to the idea of providing them with access to concessional funding to mitigate the crisis. The event will be co-organized in close coordination between the World Bank, the UN agencies (UNHCR, UNDP, UNESCWA), and the French Development Agency (AFD). It will bring together government officials from Syrian refugee hosting countries, development partners and potential donors, financial and development experts and practitioners familiar with fragility contexts. As a multi-partner platform that provides space for dialogue, the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) will host and facilitate this high level event.