Face-to-face technical workshop
10-12 November 2016, Sanliurfa, Turkey

“Strengthening Social Cohesion in Mediterranean Host Municipalities”

Concept Note

Background
The arrival of large numbers of refugees as well as the urban nature of the refugee influx poses a number of significant challenges to Mediterranean municipalities hosting refugees. 78% of municipalities who participated in the CMI survey “Challenges and achievements facing municipalities hosting refugees in the Middle East and Turkey” reported that they were not well or not at all prepared to respond to the refugee influx. 86% of municipalities have reported an increase in social tensions as a result of the large refugee influx. Municipalities have to adapt and develop adequate coping and resilience strategies. Understanding the root causes of social tensions presents the first step in developing mid- and long-term solutions. Rapid demographic change that follows the influx of refugees often leads to social norms and traditions being jeopardized. Locals tend to perceive newcomers as a threat, and the source of increasing rates of gender-based violence, terrorist activities or other crimes. Discrimination and rising tensions (e.g. as a result of increased competition over jobs and economic opportunities) threaten the social fabric of the community. High unemployment rates, scarce resources, health risks, and rising housing prices have an adverse effect on host and refugee communities alike and make them equally vulnerable. Impacts on children and youth are particularly pronounced e.g. through child labor, early marriage, domestic violence, or drug abuse. Often, they do not have access to educational opportunities which increases the risk of radicalization. The absence of an efficient government response to these challenges can further aggravate mistrust in government institutions among the population and therefore weaken state-society relations. For host municipalities, coordinating the development of adequate local approaches with multiple stakeholders in a participatory and inclusive way is therefore one of the key challenges. Many of them lack resources and decision-making power to appropriately operationalize response strategies and address social stressors at community level.

A first peer-to-peer learning workshop was held in Amman on May 30 – June 1st, 2016 and laid the foundation for a common understanding of the main issues faced by communities hosting refugees. The event allowed to set up a Host Communities Learning Network and to better convene host municipalities and development agencies on those issues. A range of solutions have been suggested:

- Building social networks among refugees and host communities,
- providing education and community centers to disseminate information,
- creating joint job opportunities to use the economic and social potential of refugees,
- improving basic service delivery e.g. by improving and expanding health care services for both refugees and host communities
Participants also presented various best practices from their own contexts: Multi-Level Service Centers (Turkey), Sectoral Community Level Working Groups (Lebanon), and Political Teamwork Sessions on a municipal level (Jordan) are some of the examples.

**Regional Peer-to-Peer Learning workshop on social cohesion and social inclusion**

Social cohesion has been identified as a key priority and is regarded as crucial for the stability of the region and the peaceful co-existence of different ethnic and religious groups within the host municipalities. In line with the strategic priorities outlined in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq, CMI and GIZ are therefore conducting a regional workshop as a second peer-to-peer learning event on social cohesion and social inclusion.

The workshop will be conducted as back-to-back meeting in the framework of the UCLG-MEWA Migration Summit in November 2016. About 40 to 50 representatives of municipalities, central government focal points, non-governmental and civil society stakeholders, as well as development and humanitarian institutions from the Middle East, North Africa (MENA) and Turkey will be invited. The majority of the participants will be representatives of municipalities or local authorities.

**Workshop Objectives**

The main objective of the workshop is to enhance exchange and knowledge sharing by diving deeper into the topic of social cohesion and social inclusion. The event aims at strengthening local resilience capacities and social cohesion in communities hosting a large number of refugees by

- Reviewing and refining current concepts and strategies;
- Identifying innovative approaches and good practices;
- Developing appropriate implementation, methodologies and tools to address the most urgent challenges;
- Strengthening networks and establishing a Community of Practice among municipalities facing similar challenges.

**Target Audience**

Mediterranean municipalities hosting a high number of refugees: Jordanian, Lebanese and Turkish local government representatives, and relevant social cohesion stakeholders.

**Workshop Sessions**

The workshop will take up the recommendations of the Amman workshop. For ease of discussion, the theme of social cohesion will be broken down into three sub-themes:

1. Appropriate concepts and flexible strategies and tools to implement and measure social cohesion
2. Social Cohesion as a cross-cutting topic
3. Building inclusive communities for common welfare through networks

Each session will start with a thematic input by a panel of experts and will be followed by discussions in working groups. Results will be reported back to the plenary. Workshop results
will be incorporated as best practices in the best practices compendium in order to be shared during the annual Peer-to-Peer workshop in 2017.

**Session 1: Appropriate concepts and flexible strategies and tools to implement and measure social cohesion**
- Do existing concepts, planning documents and data on social cohesion provide a sufficient basis to develop strategic responses to the various challenges resulting from the large refugee influx of refugees? Are these reflected in the development plans?
- What are appropriate methodologies and tools to plan, implement and measure social cohesion initiatives at local level?
- How can host municipalities and communities develop and implement adequate monitoring systems? Do they include standard indicators? Which ones are most relevant?

**Session 2: Social cohesion as a cross-cutting topic** (Housing, economic development, and service delivery)
- How is social cohesion manifested in the following sectors: housing, economic development, service delivery?
- How do these sectors contribute to / impact on social cohesion?
- What are experiences at the municipal level? What are lessons learned?
- What do interventions in the different sectors need to consider in order to maximize positive effects on social cohesion? What are your recommendation?

**Session 3: Building inclusive communities for common welfare through networks**
- What are good practice examples of already existing networks and cooperation, both within and between municipalities and other actors (central government, NGOs, IOs, private actors etc.)?
- How can municipalities be supported in building new networks as well as strengthening existing ones?
- Which other actors need to be considered in this endeavor and how can links to these actors be established?
- How can synergies be created?
- How can we tap into the potentials of (informally) existing communities and structures?

**Technical visits** to the “International Middle East Peace Research” (IMPR) Humanitarian Urfa Community Support Center in Sanliurfa and the “Peace and Art Center” in Gaziantep will offer the participants the chance to see first-hand a project which improved local service delivery in the field of Social Cohesion, so to discuss and possibly try to replicate such best practice.

**Expected Results**
- Further exchange of experiences and innovative practices and solutions on how to strengthen social cohesion and to promote peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities
• Identification of potential mid- and long-term solutions, which could support host communities and refugees
• Development of common methods and strategies from which both municipalities and other actors concerned with social cohesion can benefit
• Selection of good practices and experiences to be added as a contribution for the Best Practices Compendium for Communities Hosting Refugees and possible input to the CMI annual Peer-to Peer Learning event for Host municipalities