Framing note for Thematic Session IV: Building and strengthening social cohesion between refugees and host communities

Introduction:
- Nowadays around 80 to 90% of the refugees are living in urban settings, whereas only a small number is staying in camps (between 10 and 20%).
- Therefore, municipalities are confronted with several social and economic challenges.
- More and more studies are dealing with the reasons of tensions between refugees and host communities, especially in areas with a large refugee population.
- People in host communities are often equally vulnerable and generally not considered in the humanitarian response. At the same time the host population fears security threats, such as crimes, sexual harassment, threats to sectarian balance and increasing terrorism. Shortages of basic services and sharing already scarce resources, such as drinking water and energy, aggravate the situation. As a result, people are getting more and more vulnerable which often leads to poverty.
- Stigmatisation, discrimination, harassment and violence towards refugees appear. Which in turn cause refugee women not to leave the house and children to stay absent from school. Furthermore, employment and livelihood opportunities get reduced.
- The resulting frustration often leads to child marriage, child labour, domestic violence, drug abuse and radicalization.
- World Vision summarized different organisations’ studies on the main challenges for social cohesion:
  - Jordan: socio-economic factors as poverty and pressures on public services as a result of demographic shifts, safety and security, unemployment, negative role of media.
  - Lebanon: competition over resources as housing, economic competition, lack of access to quality education and international aid, shortages in water and electricity, diminishing quality of public services, rising inflation, differences in social norms, negative role of media, lack of social networks between the communities.

Objective of the session:
Knowledge transfer and exchange of experiences and innovative practices through Peer-to-Peer Learning for Municipalities and other actors on strengthening social cohesion between refugees and host communities.

Guiding questions:
- What are municipalities currently facing when it comes to the co-existence of a large number of refugees and host communities?
  - How do municipalities (mayors, administrative staff of the local authorities) perceive the co-existence between refugees and host communities?
What are the major social and economic tensions communities are currently facing and what impact does this have on the co-existence between refugees and host communities?

What are the peoples’ perceptions on the equal vulnerability of host communities and refugees and in how far are these perceptions considered by the municipalities in their response?

- How do municipalities cope with these tensions, what are good practice examples on conflict prevention and what is done to strengthen social cohesion?
  - How would host communities and refugees build coping mechanisms and resilience to foster social cohesion?
  - How important is the role of the municipality in this endeavor?
- How can municipalities be concretely supported in building and strengthening social cohesion between refugees and host communities?

Expected Results:
- Exchange of experiences and innovative practices of how to strengthen social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities
- Present and identify potential solutions that support host communities and refugees
- A ‘guidance note’ in written form as conclusion of the discussion
- Commit on an ongoing Peer-to-Peer learning on the topic of social cohesion

Introduction to Thematic Session IV: Building and strengthening Social Cohesion between Refugees and Host Communities

Working Group IV.1. Innovative examples on strengthening social cohesion: multi-service centers for vulnerable populations and collaboration between NGOs and municipalities

Presentation: Ümit Algan, Researcher, International Middle East Peace Research Center, Turkey
Discussant: Bryn Boyce, Technical Coordinator Community Empowerment & Livelihoods, Danish Refugee Council
Q&A and Open Discussion

Moderator: Michael McDonald, Northern Jordan Area Coordinator, ACTED Jordan

Working Group IV.2. Coping with extreme refugee influx: developing best practices for building and maintaining peaceful co-existence

Presentation: Ali Afan, Mayor of Sarhan, Jordan
Discussant: Caroline Boustany, Health Coordinator, International Rescue Committee, Jordan
Q&A and Open Discussion

Moderator: Heidemarie Gutsche, Advisor, Global Program Refugees, GIZ

Working Group IV.3. Non-violent approaches to conflict-resolution in host communities: international experiences in conflict mediation

Presentation: Mark Clark, CEO, Generations for Peace NGO, Jordan
Discussant: Halil Ibrahim Akinci, Director of the Strategic Development Department, Sultanbeyli Municipality, Turkey
Q&A and Open Discussion

Moderator: Britta Krueger, Policy Advisor, GIZ