Framing note for Thematic Session III: Local Economic development and labor market inclusion

Introduction:

- The shift of the international community’s direction from humanitarian aid to integration support put on more pressure on hosting communities to formalize and organize already burdened labor markets.
- Hosting communities’ ability to integrate refugees in the labor market comprises of different aspects including skill development and skill transfer, job creation, labor market dynamics and acceptance of hosting community’s job seekers.
- There is an important distinction between refugees and economic migrants as this concept impacts how one can approach the Syrian crisis and its impact on host countries labor markets. There are three main categories of job focus in the Mashreq:
  - job creation (for nationals and Syrians)
  - formalization of jobs Syrians already hold
  - substitution of (Syrian) refugees into jobs currently held by economic migrants.
- Refugees working or seeking labor in hosting communities have added many deficiencies to labor market such as; expanding the informal sector, crowding out local employees and job seekers, decreasing quality of job environment (lower wages, longer working hours, etc.).
- The majority of refugees are currently employed in the informal sector, which poses a huge challenge as no accurate data is available on this front. It is also important to acknowledge that the informal sector existed in host countries before the arrival of Syrian refugees and exists in all countries to greater and lesser extents. It remains an important issue to tackle and the may be an opportunity to make positive transformative changes in the region. The informal sector exists because formalization is expensive/bureaucratically burdensome. Formalization can be done but requires that the Govt is ready to address some deep issues.
- Jordan and Turkey have taken different strides towards integrating refugees in the labor market in aims to benefit from their long-stay in host communities and to regulate the labor market.
- Integrating refugees in the labor market is a process that requires quick but educated policy decisions, whereby locals’ right to access decent jobs shouldn’t be compromised. This in itself is a huge challenge as it would require job creation in large numbers for both refugees and locals.

Objective of the session:

- Present experiences of fair interventions to facilitate refugee integration in the labor market.
- Discuss challenges and opportunities of labor market integration for refugees
- Transfer of knowledge and exchange of best practices through Peer-to-Peer Learning for Municipalities and other actors on supporting the integration of refugees in the labor market whilst preserving right of locals to decent jobs and similar opportunities.
Guiding questions:

- What are municipalities currently facing when it comes to refugee employment in host communities?
  - How is Syrian employment in informal/formal sector affecting national or other foreign workers?
  - Do refugees have access (on the same terms as citizens) to jobs and training opportunities? If not, what are the differences and what are the implications of these differences?
  - How has informality changed as a result of the presence of refugees? Is it a change in magnitude or a change in the nature of informality?
- What are good practice examples on labor market integration across and beyond the region that can support municipalities?
  - What is the role of the municipality in issuing work permits? Is information about procedures and policies widely known and consistent across the country?
- How can municipalities be concretely supported in integrating Syrians into the workforce by ensuring labor supply to its own citizens?

Expected Results:

- Share experiences on refugee employment issues; challenges, gaps, etc.
- Present and identify potential solutions that support hosting communities and refugees.

Thematic session III-Introduction - Local economic development and labor market inclusion

**Working Group III.1. Developing shared growth in areas affected by the refugee crisis: from national to local actions**

This session will include a presentation of experiences used to integrate refugees in the host community labor markets through enhancing economic zones and trade, through enabling investment and enhancing business startup.

*Presentation: John Speakman, Advisor, World Bank: “Jordan Special Economic Zones”*

*Discussants: Maha Kataa, Coordinator for the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan, International Labor Organization (ILO); Abdel Majeed Alharahsheh, Mafraq Governorate, Jordan*  

*Q&A and Open Discussion*

*Moderator: Susan Razzaz, Expert*

**Working Group III.2. Increasing the absorption capacity of the host labor market and refugees’ access and capacities to enter it**

Skill development and skill transfer is key in the process of integrating refugees into host community labor markets. Skill transfer can be utilized to give skills to locals and skill developing and enhance refugees’ skills to benefit local markets and eventually support rebuilding of Syria.

*Presentation: Mohammad Amoush, Director, Princess Basma Youth Resource Center (PBYRC), Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), Irbid, Jordan*

*Discussant: Hania Bitar, Director, PYALARA, Palestinian Territories*

*Q&A and Open Discussion*

*Moderator: Cyril Dupré, Regional Program Coordinator on Civil Society, ACTED*
Working Group III.3: Developing the agriculture sector and jobs in rural communities affected by the Syrian refugee crisis

*Presentation:* Bruno Minjauw, Lebanon Resilience & Liaison Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
*Discussant:* Rania Hokayem, National Project Coordinator in Lebanon, International Labor Organization (ILO)
*Q&A and Open Discussion*

*Moderator:* Dorte Verner, World Bank