



UNHCR-UMT Municipal Coordination Event on Refugee¹ Inclusion and Participation in Municipalities 12 – 13 May 2022, Adana

Executive Summary

The ***Municipal Coordination Event on Refugee Inclusion and Participation in Municipalities*** was co-hosted by the Union of Municipalities in Turkey (UMT) and UNHCR Inter-agency/Information Management in Adana on 12 and 13 May to provide a platform for municipalities in Turkey to share good practices of **refugee inclusion and participation in municipal services, decision-making and strategic planning to address common challenges linked to hosting refugees**.

The workshop was **in-person** to facilitate greater interaction between the participants to enable them to engage with each other to identify opportunities for concrete improvements in the way refugees are assisted and supported by municipalities, contributing to local development and social cohesion. **Nearly 100 participants from 26 municipalities at various levels, donor organisations, NGOs and UN agencies** attended the workshop.²

Under the **main theme of refugee inclusion and participation in municipalities**, discussions and presentations took place under **three thematic areas** including **leaving no one behind, municipalities' role in harmonisation and collaboration and coordination**. Discussions were held on the governance aspect of refugee inclusion, financial limitations experienced by municipalities in the context of refugee influxes, social cohesion efforts and challenges in the current social and political context, the significance of and gaps in the bilateral dialogues between municipalities and the international community, and the needs for supporting capacity-building with regards to programming and access to external funding. In presentations and during the “marketplace tour”, municipalities shared **good practices** of inclusive and participatory projects and innovative ideas in various areas including providing protection services and social support, creating livelihood opportunities, and providing solutions to problems related with environmental issues.

As a result of the workshop, participating municipalities **enhanced their technical knowledge** on refugee inclusion and participation in municipal service delivery and governance structures and **strengthened their peer networks**.

The workshop materials, including the concept note, agenda, presentations, market place posters and supporting documents, can be accessed [here](#).

Event Highlights

The aim of this report is to provide highlights of keynote speeches, a summary of the thematic discussions and proposed next steps. The report also provides a summary of good practices shared in the marketplace and an analysis of the satisfaction survey of the Coordination Event (in an annex). The summaries are presented under four thematic sessions.

¹ For the purpose of this document, references to the term “refugee” should be read in accordance with Turkey’s legal and policy framework, notably the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, as well as the Temporary Protection Regulation, that govern the treatment of Syrians under temporary protection, international protection applicants and status holders in Turkey.

² Please see the annex at the end to see the participating municipalities.

I. Thematic Session: Leave No One Behind

Keynote speech: Rights-based approach to refugee inclusion & participation, UNHCR

Municipalities have a crucial role in terms of ensuring refugee inclusion and participation based on a rights-based approach. With respect to the **inclusion of refugees in municipal planning**, examples of **Uganda** where refugee representatives can join the municipal decision mechanisms and city councils, and **Glasgow, Scotland**, where a refugee has recently been elected to the local council, were provided. In relation to **access to services**, removal of **language and procedural barriers** was emphasised. Five concrete areas were highlighted as important standard practices for the inclusion of refugees, migrants, internally displaced & stateless people, and to make sure that they have the basic building blocks for establishing their lives and exercise their rights: involving refugee residents in needs assessments, information for refugees on service availability, removing rules and conditions that newcomers cannot meet, ensuring everyone can access support, adopting a long-term lens related to inclusion beyond the immediate reception phase.

Discussion: Experiences, needs, challenges, and solutions

Municipal governance structures

- Municipalities underlined that **city councils** have a significant role in the representation of refugees, in reflecting their needs and problems as well as presenting pertinent solutions
- Some municipalities underlined the benefits of **establishing municipal departments specialising in migration management** to directly address refugee needs in a coordinated way; however, it was also highlighted that municipalities should be mindful of the risk that dividing governance structures and service provision for refugee and host community might work against inclusion, and mainstreaming refugee response to existing structures.
- Participants stated that the provision of **guidance** by those with greater experience in establishing such structures would be greatly beneficial for the other interested municipalities.

Social Cohesion

- Municipalities face problems related to **social cohesion** aggravated by the current **polarising** political and media discourse and the increasing **politicisation** of migration and asylum matters, particularly in the current **pre-election period**.
- Some municipalities added that the diverging political dynamics within municipalities in relation to the **trustee appointment process** may have adverse effects on the implementation of social cohesion activities.
- Some municipalities stated that there should be greater **awareness-raising efforts** to increase the level of participation to language courses to overcome **language barriers**.
- Some municipalities recommended **improving the living conditions of Turkish citizens** as well to avoid social tensions. However, it was also emphasised that the two groups have different needs, requiring greater levels of specific budget and staff.
- Some participants highlighted the lack of a **common migration and asylum policy across municipalities** and stated that if it existed it would enhance their efforts in establishing social cohesion.

Financial Limitations

- Municipalities experience extensive **financial limitations** since their budget is allocated centrally and as per the size of their Turkish citizen residents. In addition, municipalities stated **challenges and concerns in fundraising** due to donor organisations' attention becoming fragmented because of various new crises such as Ukraine situation.

- **Border districts and provinces** should be targeted more effectively as these receive the highest numbers of refugees. Also, while those with greater financial stability eventually leave for metropolitan cities, the most vulnerable continue to stay in these border areas, exacerbating the pressure on these areas.
- Some municipalities stated the level of needs is high at the district level where **limited sources are available for infrastructure and public services** for transportation, garbage collection, etc.

Capacity-building needs

- Many municipal departments still have a high demand of support for **capacity-building trainings** targeting staff technical capacities for service provision in various areas such as protection services, social support, providing quality and effective language and vocational training opportunities, in addition to migration management.
- The capacity-building needs are especially salient concerning **project cycle management**.

Evidence-based programming and implementation

- Some municipalities stated they have access to **demographic data** of refugees to provide efficient services in a data-driven fashion by contacting the relevant public authorities based mostly on **individual efforts**.
- **More comprehensive needs assessments** should be conducted in close coordination with municipalities to understand their needs and those of persons of concern. In fact, it was shared that overbroad, short field visits by key stakeholders are not providing the municipalities the platform to share their unique challenges and seek solutions in collaboration.
- Some participants expressed concerns about **measuring the impact** of their activities in an evidence-based manner.

II. Thematic Session: Role of Municipalities in Harmonization

Keynote speech: Harmonisation Strategy, PMM

Multi-stakeholder approach and significance of municipalities in Harmonization Strategy and National Action Plan was highlighted. PMM has established a **department for coordination with municipalities** under the DG of Harmonisation and Communication. Politicization of the refugees in the current context, impact of media and false facts; possible implications in the strategy development process was recognised. The efforts towards harmonisation as the establishment of common living space for the host community and refugees may effectively be achieved through the inclusion of both groups.

Keynote speech: Role of Municipalities in Harmonisation, TBB

Importance of referring to social inclusiveness in designing SC policies and providing services was shared. The **six thematic areas** (social cohesion, information, education, and health, access to the labour market and social services and assistance) of PMM's harmonisation strategy were highlighted and the **good practices** from various municipalities pertaining to these were presented. Challenges including financial constraints of municipalities, flexibility, mobility and technical capacity of staff and need for support are highlighted.

Discussion: Experiences, needs, challenges, and solutions

Social cohesion mechanisms

- According to the results of several impact analyses, many efforts have been undertaken to **promote horizontal social cohesion (cohesion within the community)**, yet vertical social cohesion is not adequately addressed (cohesion within the community and authorities).

- It was stressed that there should be a greater focus on **refugee participation in the local and national decision-making processes** to satisfy the requirements of vertical social cohesion.
- Some municipalities suggested that municipalities should engage more in social cohesion and form **platforms to discuss challenges** in this respect since there are still problems faced regarding the inclusion of refugees irrespective of the nationality of refugees.
- The need to ensure the **participation of all affected communities** including refugees and Turkish citizens in social cohesion activities was highlighted. Some participants highlighted the **lack of inclusion mechanisms** in municipalities.
- Some participants shared observations that **refugee councils** were not highly effective as they only included members from one refugee community, hence comprehensive representation of refugees is not necessarily ensured through these mechanisms.

Social cohesion in current context

- Some municipalities are concerned they may not be able to openly carry out social cohesion **to avoid backlash from Turkish citizens**. However, it was also highlighted that the degree of such concerns in the pre-election period may vary across municipalities based on the diverse stances of their mayors.
- Several municipalities highlighted the **significant role mayors can play** considering the high level of politicisation, requiring the provision of objective information to mayors on refugee issues.
- Turkey already has a **large youth population**, and its **higher number of young refugees** puts further pressures on the national job market. It was **also** highlighted that refugee population in Turkey is not homogenous but very diverse, unlike some other refugee hosting countries.

Social cohesion and coordination

- Some participants emphasised that municipalities need to be better informed on **the relevant coordination structures such as the 3RP** since aligning projects with the priorities of such platforms would render them more in line with the requisites of funding evaluations, adding that donors do not directly fund municipalities and rather support them through UN agencies and NGOs.
- It was also suggested that municipalities should plan **longer-term projects** that consider **sustainability** in the aftermath of the specific support projects and their funding.
- In terms of promoting and communicating the social cohesion activities, some municipalities shared concerns over creating social tension, and doing more harm than good. In order to overcome such concerns and ensure effective dissemination of information about social cohesion activities, some participants reminded that communication networks of refugee communities are very strong, and these networks can be used strategically to **ensuring visibility of activities and increase participation**.

III. Good Practices in Coordination

Inter-agency efforts to support Municipal Coordination, Inter-agency UNHCR

- General information on the 3RP coordination framework, particularly relating to the projects providing support to municipalities in Turkey, was provided.
- The high numbers of urban refugees have inordinately increased the demand for services of municipalities vis-à-vis their centrally designated budgets based only on the number of Turkish citizens, leading to **extensive imbalances between the existing budgetary resources and the demand-driven pressures**.
- 3RP partners have been providing support to municipalities since 2014, with the **improvement of service provision and inclusion capacities** recently being the preeminent area of focus.
- IA/IM tools and efforts help coordination of support, works to engage, and inspire new municipalities and partners and identify gaps. The **mapping exercise** covers the municipal support projects in Turkey during the period between 2014-2021. [English](#) and [Turkish](#) versions can be accessed through the links.



- UNHCR guidance material for all refugee hosting municipalities, titled “Effective Inclusion of Refugees: Participatory Approaches for Practitioners at the Local Level” was briefly presented, stating purpose and content of the handbook, the links for [the global webpage](#) and the [Turkish version](#) were shared.

[Gaziantep Declaration & GTFM, UCLG–MEWA](#)

- United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia (UCLG–MEWA) section of the world UCLG world organisation provided information on their coordination framework.
- The key highlights of the **Global Task Force on Migration (GTFM)** focusing the municipal activities in 20 countries were provided.

[Istanbul Municipal Coordination Platform, UNHCR](#)

- The aim of the Platform for the Municipality Coordination within the Context of Refugees was stated as to support local governance structures in **Istanbul and Marmara region through assessing local needs, strengthening local partnerships, and encouraging the sharing of good practices.**

[Resilience in Local Governance in the face of Syrian Migration Crisis, SALAR-RESLOG](#)

- Resilience in Local Governance (RESLOG) Project in Turkey have partnerships with UMT, Marmara Union of Municipalities, Çukurova Union of Municipalities and highlighted the importance of the **multi-layered governance** and collaboration to have a holistic view enabling positive impacts at different municipal levels.

[Discussion: Experiences, needs, challenges, and solutions](#)

- The needs for both **local and national meetings on municipal coordination** for bringing solutions at the local level and **advocacy efforts** at the national level were emphasised.
- Participants stated that with **Gaziantep Declaration**, mayors and stakeholders are committed to supporting efforts to **transition from an emergency to a resilience approach** globally in responding to complex refugee and migration situations.
- There were some expressions of concern regarding the **impact measurement** of Gaziantep Declaration in terms of how municipal initiatives were influenced by it.

IV. Thematic Session: Collaboration, Coordination & Next Steps

[Discussion: Experiences, needs, challenges, and solutions](#)

Collaboration

- It was highlighted that it is crucial for municipalities to learn about funding mechanisms and procedures of donors which would help set the expectations by establishing a mutual dialogue on how to work together to harmonise procedural processes.
- It was also highlighted that **donor organisations and international institutions should also increase their knowledge of legal framework and operational dynamics of municipalities.**
- Some donors underlined the significance of 3RP coordination, and importance of coordination of efforts in their decision making for providing funding to municipal support programs.
- Some municipalities shared that the need for **infrastructure and other material support** from donors and international/national organisations is greater than that for consultancy or capacity development support.

Coordination

- Some municipalities highlighted the challenges experienced due to the high turnover rate of the staff deployed under the specific support projects. However, they experienced that **developing specific project teams** is helpful to overcome this problem, adding the possible challenge of having to work with one project department despite the diverse service provision necessities.
- Some participants stated that the same municipal personnel receive the same trainings more than once sometimes. If this can be prevented, more municipal staff could partake in **effective coordination**.

Possible solutions

- An **information note** may be prepared and/or **advocacy efforts** may be undertaken to increase the level of **mutual information** of donors/international organisations and municipalities about each other's structures and procedures.
- Several participants raised problems about most refugees living in **metropolises, leading to a high density of population there, and the need to create opportunities for them to move to more medium-scale provinces by providing livelihood opportunities**.
- Some municipalities suggested the provision of a relevant support to municipalities for **increasing tax contribution margin** based on the numbers of refugees as well, particularly for border provinces/districts.

Marketplace Tour

The workshop had a designated part for a “marketplace tour” when the good practices of/related to various municipalities at different levels focusing on diverse areas were presented to encourage **peer sharing on information** and **networking**. Project(s) and the related municipalities are shared below:

Adana Metropolitan Municipality - Meryem Women Cooperative: The cooperative focuses on the provision of employment opportunities in areas including mask production, fruit and vegetable drying for women through sustainable projects targeting both economic growth and social justice.

Adana Seyhan District Municipality - Women's Production Cooperative: The cooperative targets enhancing the self-reliance of women and refugees through production of various handicrafts such as ceramics, textiles, paintings, soaps and aromatic products.

Ankara Metropolitan Municipality

International Vocational Training Centre (UMEM): Under the project, vocational trainings are provided to refugees in five different areas related to cooking, pastry, graphic design, textiles, and mechanics in collaboration with UNHCR.

Women's Counselling Centre: Ankara Metropolitan Municipality: The centre undertakes various activities relating to its projects concerning schooling of girls (2017-2022) and facilitation of employment participation of women victims of GBV (2022-2023).

Bursa Yıldırım District Municipality - Yıldırım Social Cohesion Center (YILSUM): The centre has Turkish language and literacy courses and provides various other trainings in different areas including social cohesion and fundamental employment skills.

Gaziantep Şahinbey District Municipality



Şahinbey Women Cooperative: The cooperative supports women refugees through the provision of a platform where they can partake in production of various food products to increase their self-reliance.

Şahinbey Social Cohesion Centre Project: Under the framework of this project, courses on areas such as handicrafts, Turkish language and kindergarten education are provided.

Husbandry Support Project: The municipality has supported 40 families in need with the provision of livestock in collaboration with IOM.

Hatay Metropolitan Municipality – Volunteer Firefighting Project: The first response trainings in case of fires, that may occur in rural areas of the city, are provided to volunteers. Project included firefighting volunteers from refugees along with Turkish citizens in various neighbourhoods and villages; involving communities in protection and preservation of the environment, and also providing them opportunity to work towards common targets.

İstanbul Zeytinburnu District Municipality – Snow Finch Project: The project aims to strengthen the social harmonisation process of migrant women by providing trainings on diverse areas including legal rights and domestic communication and a platform for them to produce handicrafts to support themselves.

İstanbul Sultangazi District Municipality – Supporting Innovative Entrepreneurial Women Project: In the framework of the project, women from the host community and those in need of international protection receive trainings through kitchen and sewing workshops, then enabling them to open online stores.

UNDP Turkey Resilience Project in response to the Syria Crisis: The project supports institutions and infrastructures of municipalities in the most affected provinces through establishing facilities, mechanisms and supporting technical capacity of staff. In turn, project aims to create positive impact on service provision, and decrease the pressure on affected municipalities by contributing to economic and social resilience of Turkish citizens and refugees.

Next Steps

As a result of the workshop, below shared **next steps** were determined based on the presentations and discussions to focus on as the part of the way forward. Next steps will be taken in consideration with respective stakeholders, including UMT, regional union of municipalities and respective units of UNHCR.

- **Recurrence of collaborative and consolidative meetings** focusing on municipal coordination at the national level as relevant. Recurrence of such meetings at national level can be established by collaboration of UNHCR and UMT, as well as active and strategic participation of UNHCR at levels and roles alternative to co-chairing the event.
- **Following-up the national meeting with regional and local meetings** that approach the needs of municipalities and the affected populations in a more focused and concrete manner. Considering the positive feedback from the meeting, and identified needs for more localised discussions and solutions, it is deemed appropriate that respective UNHCR unites take the initiative to follow up this event with coordination meetings or workshops at regional and local levels.
- **Providing more detailed and effective introductions for the relevant coordination mechanisms and tools** to the relevant stakeholders as needed and applicable. IA/IM may take the lead role in such introductions in coordination platforms, events and workshops concerning inclusion and participation of refugees in municipalities. IA/IM can also support interested municipalities at technical level, such as developing effective data management and impact measurement.

Annex 1 – Participating Municipalities

- 1. Adana Metropolitan Municipality**
- 2. Adana Karataş District Municipality**
- 3. Adana Seyhan District Municipality**
- 4. Adana Yüreğir District Municipality**
- 5. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality**
- 6. Bursa Yıldırım District Municipality**
- 7. Çukurova Union of Municipalities**
- 8. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality**
- 9. Gaziantep Şahinbey District Municipality**
- 10. Hatay Metropolitan Municipality**
- 11. Hatay Reyhanlı District Municipality**
- 12. İstanbul Sultanbeyli District Municipality**
- 13. İstanbul Sultangazi District Municipality**
- 14. İstanbul Zeytinburnu District Municipality**
- 15. Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality**
- 16. Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality**
- 17. Kilis Provincial Municipality**
- 18. Konya Metropolitan Municipality**
- 19. Malatya Metropolitan Municipality**
- 20. Mardin Kızıltepe District Municipality**
- 21. Mersin Metropolitan Municipality**
- 22. Samsun Metropolitan Municipality**
- 23. Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality**
- 24. Şanlıurfa Akçakale District Municipality**
- 25. Osmaniye Provincial Municipality**
- 26. Yozgat Provincial Municipality**

Annex 2 - Satisfaction Survey

At the end of the event, participants filled a satisfaction survey and were asked to share their comments and suggestions. The analysis of the key survey [findings](#) shows:

- **Most of the responding participants agreed or totally agreed that the workshop was effective and efficient** regarding the issues of its focus, particularly for **increased networking possibilities**, the ability to jointly **identify common gaps and opportunities** and share **technical information and good practice examples** that are compatible with the participants' field of implementation.
- Some **areas for improvement** were identified. This included focusing on the **existing coordination mechanisms to include local authorities and services** and more in-depth discussions on the **specific roles of municipalities in ensuring and maintaining social cohesion**, as highlighted by approximately a one-third and a quarter of the respondents respectively.
- The respondents found the workshop beneficial in relation to its being in-person and thus, **providing opportunities for networking and further collaborative efforts** between municipalities and for **enhancing coordination** through the provision of information on the relevant platforms, good practices and gaps pertaining to the common challenges.
- To improve communication and coordination, respondents highlighted the following **possible next steps: regular organisation of municipal coordination events** also at the regional, **increased efforts to overcome financial limitations** of municipalities and obstacles preventing refugees' effective participation in local structures, possible establishment of **regional municipal task forces** based on the socio-economic and demographic differences and enhancing sibling city activities.
- In terms of the organisational specifics, all responding participants stated that they found the **agenda and session themes** and the **diversity of the participant institutions** either successful or very successful, with possible areas for improvement with respect to physical capacities and presentation materials and timing issues.