

“Protection and Solutions in Urban Settings: Engaging With Cities”

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The Eleventh High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges
18 & 19 December 2018, in Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
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Date of Submission: 07-04-2019

Date of acceptance: 23-04-2019

I. Introduction

Member states adopted the refugees compact in the 17th (general assembly in UN in New York). This compact contributes to the milestone of refugees crisis as a responsibility of the international community. Host countries with limited resources than others find difficulties to respond to refugees needs or to respond shortly. International community needs to invest on sustaining those countries plans for refugees in order to ensure sustainability, saving life, to ensure education and create jobs for refugee communities.

The compact wants to offer opportunities to all of that. It will be an institutional place where communities will be organized, find solutions to refugees. One way to do so is the inclusive approach with keeping in mind to support refugees to come back home when they can.

Humanitarian actors cannot do that alone, they need partners. The compact is very clear and descriptive. Its main aim is to institute group of partners. Ex: the World Bank as a new financial instrument. The high commissioner stated “We’ve calculated the model of the compact considering 15 countries, we estimate the need to invest 6, 5 billion to develop partners, mainly NGOs”. As example, in Kenya the WB new approach for refugee’s inclusion is simply ensure refugees involvement in the country’s economy. The WB and the Kenyan government count on refugees to stimulating the economy.

Recommendation 1: Morocco as one of the main countries supporting the compact could elaborate a national partnership of NGO, private sector and OG to support the inclusion of refugees on the Moroccan economy officially rather than letting them acting in the black market with no accountability

UN Habitat has expertise for urban responses and will put tools to face the following challenges:

- A large refugee movement in some countries more than others,
- The need of implication of cities (Mayors and municipalities),
- Lack of financial instruments to initiate refugee inclusion in cities.

Governments and mainly cities are invited to be in touch with UN Habitat to discuss support for refugees’ need of decent life.

Recommendation 2: Moroccan Cities and government are advised to get in touch with UN-Habitat for an overall citizenship strategy with respect to the Moroccan plan of habitat

The Last Marrakech international forum of migration endorsed the global compact even before its official endorsement on the 17th of December in New York. Marrakech forum came out with synergies with the global compact, as a main example (IOM and HCR) will help cities and local authorities to overcome their main challenge that is: Lack of resources, and crimes. IOM and UHCR will support cities to advocate for more resources from government.

Recommendation 3: Morocco has more migrants than refugees. It is advised that UNHCR and IOM work together with the same partners to reinforce their advocacy in a way to join efforts

1. The first plenary session

Summary of interventions of panellists

This panel regrouped mayors from Switzerland, and Turkey, governor in Kenya, UN-Habitat, IOM and one refugee. They discussed the challenges faced by their countries to host refugees and the main actions that have been taken in place to face those challenges. Those challenges are as follows:

- To develop a globally endorsed and locally adopted strategies and action plans at a city level;
- To fight against racism;
- To offer health care;
- To integrate the work labor;
- To offer security against harassment;
- To offer basic needs of life (water, food...);
- To offer schooling to kids ASAP;
- To decide either to create camps or to support habitat in urban areas and ensure integration

Panellists concluded that a camp is not the best solution of refugees. It is a mean of exclusion, not inclusion. Cities need to think for a new interventions as follows:

- To open discussion with stakeholders (subnational and national government) to find sustainable solutions;
- To create a comprehensive refugee framework that involve also the private sector mainly when it comes to jobs;
- To initiate a refugee legislation for each country with respect to human rights;
- To focus more on economic issues: Long term sustainability of hosting refugees, expansion of skills, implementing skills.
- To create a dynamic city: make those people self-sustainable;
- To elaborate policies and programs to help cities as the main respondents for refugees;
- To generate exact data and target of social mechanism;
- To focus on local population: visiting and seeing how poor population suffers from social exclusion.
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Recommendation 4: Morocco is advised to involve more cities' responsibility towards refugees inclusion with the support of UNHCR, OIM, CS...etc.

2. Round table on the MENA region

This round table aimed to share experiences of MENA cities regarding response to cities. It regrouped mayors from different Arab countries and civil society who shared their experience on the field. The main addressed question in that panel was: what are the protection and solutions in urban settings engaged with cities in MENA region?

The main debated points about the engagement of cities were as follows:

- To train the presidents of local municipalities on how to deal with refugees;
- To give priority to a decentralized approach of assistance to refugees over the countries;
- To define the right to refugees to have access to basic services;
- To investigate on a proper national law that regulates services for refugees;
- To recognize health and education as major basic needs besides water, food, and housing;
- To push women in the MENA region to be engaged in education for kids;
- To consider mental health as one major health issue of refugees that need assistance;

The shared solutions were as follows:

- Invest on youth peer educators better than community leaders;
- Peer educators need to be youth, knowledgeable, able to educate and share best practices, multi-disciplinary team;
- Invest on inclusion and gender to fight against early marriage and human trafficking;
- Invest more on women and youth to get access to information regarding their health, education, and employment;

Recommendation 5: Morocco is advised to invest more on awareness, access to information for refugees and to adopt the peer educators approach for a better dispatching of knowledge and more shares of difficulties

3. Panel 3: The global compact of refugees and cities

Cities are the first to receive and the first to welcome refugees. Cities are assisting refugees as a main role. Cities of solidarity initiated 2004 in Mexico declaration insisted on the major role of hosting cities regards refugees. This role has been discussed and defined as follow:

“Humanism and solidarity are fundamental principles that should continue to guide State policies on refugees” (Mexico, 2004)

From that perspective, the panel discussion was based on the following points:

The role of cities regarding refugees’ needs to take into consideration:

- Decrease gaps between refugees and hosting citizens;
- Offer soft skills training;
- Offer information and awareness;
- Give opportunity for refugees for a better integration
- Create a monitoring commission for most affected cities.

Recommendation 6: It is advised to Morocco to create a monitoring and evaluation committee in the biggest hosting cities of refugees to share monthly the difficulties faced by refugees especially that they are not in big number until now in Morocco: situation is under control.

4. The Global Youth Advisory Council

UNHCR has formed a Global Youth Advisory Council (GYAC) in 2015 in the aim to serve as a consultative group on issues relating to the protection and development of young people who are refugees. The GYAC presented in its panel the main engagements and work done until today mainly in term of information regarding their peers.

Youth claimed on that panel the problems facing youth and kids refugees that have negative impact on refugees even if their life goes better after. Those problems are as follow:

- Feeling a lone
- Receiving a little help
- Feel discrimination: xenophobia and stigma
- Youth with full of energy and lack of resources

The main solutions regarding youth refugees discussed on that panel were as follow:

- Use the technology knowledge of youth in order to support refugees (information, awareness)
- Implicate the private sector on youth employment
- Encourage self-employment of youth
- Integrate refugees on the sustainable development of cities

Recommendation 7: Partners in Morocco who work with youth are welcome to organize a round table with GYAC representatives in Morocco about how to take profit from Youth knowledge for the better of refugees communities

5. Mobilizing communities support for solutions

Communities play an important role on supporting refugees. There is a need to better support refugees through sponsorship, housing, and education. It is good for host communities and refugees to work together to produce value. House supporting from communities to refugees enable refugees to not feel alone and encourage inclusion. Another raised point is refugees with disabilities. They need to be treated separately because of their vulnerability that makes them in difficult situations.

Finally, being safe is not enough; promote cohesion starts by language and education. Hosting committees need to help refugees to share languages and culture in order to be integrated.

Recommendation 8: Morocco is advised to consider disability of refugees as priority and integrate them in disability centres.

6. The closing panel

This session is a summary of the whole discussions and sessions that occurred before . It was stated as follow: Cities are the first welcoming and receiving refugees. They need empowerments to sustain their resources . Refugees need to be shown as an opportunity and not as a threat. Cities are in the front line before the government is involved in action. Cities start taking actions before every one to promote refugees’ inclusion. Stakeholders need to come together to create the atmosphere of solidarity. NGO role is very important they are belonging to society and involved in solidarity. The whole society approach needs to be involved to move on a welcoming environment. It is time to involve our communities and share our value and invest in inclusion and welcome refugees as member community members.

II. Conclusion

Recommendations for national government from the plenary

- Local governments deserve to be supported, mayor s need to participate more and more to such conferences to be aware of international treaties and share experience;
- Create a coordination mechanism in every city and mobilize resources;
- Measurement: Cities need to be accountable and develop indicators. They are accountable locally and globally: specific assessment tools need to be development;
- The Need of a holistic definition of basic needs that cities need to be involved in;
- The need of inclusive leadership: invest stakeholder’s champions;
- Interaction between host and hosted communities;
- To create a global network of knowledge using technology;
- National programs need to transit from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development;

Recommendation9: Refugees need to be considered as assets and not as liabilities, especially that Morocco is suffering from older population and need more youth to work and be involved in national economy

IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM) is UGC approved Journal with SI. No. 4481, Journal no. 46879.

Fadoua Bakhadda. " “Protection and Solutions in Urban Settings: Engaging With Cities”". IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM), Vol. 21, No. 4, 2019, pp. -.29-34