

Executive Summary

Livelihoods for Syrian Refugees:

Transitioning from a Humanitarian to a Developmental Paradigm *Labour Market Integration in Jordan and Turkey*

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- Countries that have hosted large numbers of Syrian refugees since 2011 have recently begun experimenting with integrating them into their respective labour markets. Amongst Syria's neighbours, Jordan and Turkey are two of the pioneers in this regard.
- This development represents part of a paradigm shift in which host countries are changing their policy assumptions with regard to Syrian refugees. Instead of designing policies from a 'temporary and humanitarian' perspective, governments are increasingly seeking more 'developmental and (semi-)permanent' solutions.
- The drivers of this change in thinking are country-specific, but tend to include:
 - The acknowledgment of the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis;
 - The potential risk of social tensions within host countries;
 - The unsustainability of providing social protection (education, housing, health care) to large numbers of Syrians, while receiving little state revenues in return;
 - Exploitation in the labour market;
 - The necessity for Syrians to retain skills in order to be able to return and rebuild Syria; and
 - A potential decline of international aid and increasing pressure from the international community to find 'solutions in the region'.
- Initiatives that have been adopted to better enable labour market integration and economic independence of Syrian refugees in these two host countries, tend to focus on: creating and formalising jobs; education with a specific focus on labour market requirements; attracting foreign investment and ensuring access to finance; increasing access to external markets; and attempts to mobilise the private sector, both domestically and internationally.
- As the need to provide a pathway to economic independence for Syrian refugees has become a priority, donors have slowly begun to focus their efforts on assisting refugee-hosting countries in turning the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity. The international community has significant potential to support the laudable efforts of governments in the region.
- There is an urgent need to establish innovative, scalable ways to create jobs that benefit refugees as well as host communities. Promoting solutions-driven and innovative thinking that directly links the supply side (marketable skills) and the demand side (availability of jobs) should be at the core of policy-makers' approach to tackling barriers to labour market integration.

- International development agencies that provide education and opportunities for livelihoods for refugees can help by designing their programmes in such a way that they:
 - Encourage self-reliance, entrepreneurship and the establishment of SMEs;
 - Ensure that initiatives are based on labour market needs assessments and where possible linked to employers; and
 - Leverage technology, MOOCs, as well as desktop and digital skills where possible.
- International companies could explore employment opportunities for refugees to work remotely. For several segments of the labour force, a (partial) solution could be explored which is less geographically limited and takes into account the vast opportunities offered by current-day technology, the global skills gap, remote working opportunities, current education-for-employment initiatives and donor behaviour.
- International donors could design initiatives aimed at benefiting refugee communities in a way that also supports local populations, as per the example in Jordan where development initiatives (including education and employment) for refugees also need to include 50% Jordanian participants.
- Foreign governments and international entities can encourage international companies working in countries hosting large numbers of refugees to create vacancies or internships for refugees.