

CONFERENCE DECLARATION: **'MEET, SHARE, INSPIRE'** INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF GOOD PRACTICES ON REFUGEE¹ PROTECTION

24-26 SEPTEMBER 2019, ANKARA

Co-organized by **Support to Life (STL)** and the **Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM)**, with support from **European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)** and **Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH)**, the conference 'Meet, Share, Inspire: International Conference of Good Practices on Refugee Protection' took place in Ankara between 24-26 September.

Globally, 200 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance to continue their lives in dignity and safety while the number of refugees has reached to 25.9 million. An international conference in Ankara brought together 23 panelists from 11 countries spanning 5 continents, accompanied by 6 expert moderators to discuss protection solutions and response strategies. At the opening session, public officials from key ministries and public institutions in Turkey, as well as representatives of civil society organizations working on refugee protection welcomed the participants with opening speeches addressing three protection issues: child protection, access to rights and services, and gender based violence. Each day of the conference focused on one of these three main topics, with keynotes delivered by experts followed by panel discussions on good practices. During the final session of the conference, three parallel roundtable discussions took place, the outcomes of which will feed into a comprehensive report.

The conference opened with speeches by Mehmet Sinan Yıldız, Deputy Director of Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM); Dr. Manuel Paulus, Development Counselor of German Embassy; Claudia Amaral, Head of the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Office in Turkey; Michael Hansmann, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe EU Representative and Sema Genel Karaosmanoğlu, STL Director. The speakers highlighted the current situation of refugees in Turkey and in the world and highlighted the need to develop holistic, coordinated, needs and rights based activities offering durable solutions.

The first day's theme was child protection. The keynote speakers and panelists from national and international NGOs as well as public institutions focused on protection of child rights, psychosocial support for children affected by war and conflict, specific methodologies, lessons learned and achievements. Good practices on child protection and child participation were presented from Egypt, Lebanon, Malaysia and Turkey.

The second day focused on refugees' access to rights and services. The discussions focused on rights-based approaches; strengthening cohesive relationships between refugees and host communities; community-based initiatives; committees mobilizing refugee communities; livelihood schemes providing durable solutions; and refugees' access to information.

The final day of the conference focused on a human-rights violation that continues to be an enduring problem all around the world: gender-based violence (GBV). The keynote speech

¹ The term refugee is used in this document in accordance with international law: According to 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."



focused on the relationship between forced displacement and GBV. Thematic panels of the day included four good practice examples from Lebanon, Jordan, India and Turkey and focused on specialized services as well as community-based protection activities.

More than 200 participants coming from public institutions, civil society organizations, academics and private sector attended the conference. The final day concluded with roundtable discussions focusing on specific recommendations and priorities for each theme.

A conference report on the conclusions will be accessible on www.good-practice.com, in Turkish and English. A digital exhibition, 'We Are What We Share', which compiles human stories and photographs from Support to Life's field operations, is also accessible on the web site.

CONFERENCE DECLARATION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION THEME

- 1. A holistic approach combining child protection and social protection enables actualization of child rights and increases child welfare.** Child protection aims to achieve full actualization of children's rights in relation to protection from violence, neglect and abuse under the umbrella of laws, policies, regulations and services. Social protection aims to prevent, mitigate and eradicate socioeconomic risks and vulnerabilities and targets families, individuals and children. Child protection and social protection cannot be reduced to one another but there are many areas in which they are intertwined. Thus, child protection and social protection should be identified as a single holistic approach and implemented accordingly.
- 2. Designing and implementing child protection policies that are non-discriminatory ensures that the child's best interest is upheld.** Policies and practices related to child protection must be designed in a manner that targets all children equally and that places "the child" at the center while upholding the best interest of the child. Irrespective of their country of origin or their ethnicity, all children must be protected against risks and their access to related mechanisms must be ensured.
- 3. Every child's uniqueness and special needs must be taken into account.** In order to protect the rights of all children and to leave no child behind, children's needs and their special circumstances must be taken into account, and services must be provided in accord with these needs and circumstances.
- 4. Child participation must be adopted in all activities involving children.** Child protection activities should not be developed and implemented *on behalf of* children, but *with* children. We should move away from a 'helping' mentality to enable refugee youth to become empowered enough to create social change, and transition to an 'ally' mentality in which we place them at the center of all activities.
- 5. All institutions working with children must mainstream child safeguarding, and when conducting their activities, must take all measures to eliminate risks of harm.** Developing and applying Codes of Conduct, stakeholder mapping, risk analysis, data confidentiality of children, child participation and feedback mechanisms are examples of mainstreaming child safeguarding and minimizing risk.
- 6. Establishing a Ministry of Children will be the guarantor of the rights of children.** It is paramount to emphasize continuously in every sphere that every right of every child is equal. Conditions should be created for every child to equally benefit from their rights. Establishing a Ministry of Children will be that guarantor.



- 7. Prejudices can be overcome and social cohesion can be reinforced through the design, implementation and dissemination of good practices.** Anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment is on the rise in Turkey as it becomes increasingly legitimate to voice such prejudices. It is paramount to tackle these misperceptions so that activities can be implemented and policy changes can be made. Tools and methods utilized to this end, such as the 'box game' presented at the conference can be shared and used by all organizations. Funds allocated to social cohesion projects need to be articulated in a manner that is not only refugee-focused, but that includes the host community as well. Key stakeholders to social cohesion activities are municipalities, media, teachers, families and community leaders.
- 8. In psychosocial support activities, specialized services must be delivered by trained and specialized personnel.** While community services that include psychosocial support activities such as safe spaces for children can be delivered by trained field staff, specialized counselling support must be provided by psychologists.
- 9. It is crucial to work in coordination and form strategic partnerships in child protection.** Permanent solutions can be reached only if stakeholders work together when dealing with multi-stakeholder issues such as forced early marriages and child labor. Partnerships among affected and at-risk communities, public institutions, civil society and private sector are of critical importance. This will pave the way for a joint solution, conducting mutually complementary activities, sharing and disseminating successful practices developed as well as help share the lessons learned. Rather than being project-based or resource-dependent, these partnerships need to be strategic and transformative. Besides; it is crucial to create platforms via which good practices, developed tools and acquired experiences can be shared so that we can learn from one another.
- 10. While upholding international standards, child protection is most effective when delivered through localized responses and effective coordination at the local level.** Local coordination networks and partnerships must be formed for holistic interventions facilitating the participation of children as well as their families and the communities in which they live. Stakeholder mapping is crucial for identification of local needs, possibilities, opportunities and actors. Localized coordination structures focusing on child protection can be introduced by the relevant directorates at the provincial level, such as the Directorate of Family, Labor and Social Service and the Directorate of National Education in Turkey.
- 11. Civil society organizations must assume a complementary, observant and advocating role in child protection.** Civil society has many crucial roles to play in child protection. Identifying the risks that children and the whole of society is faced with, utilizing all available strategies to mitigate these risks, and bringing relevant actors in contact with society are a few examples of how this can be done.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND SERVICES THEME

- 1. A rights-based approach must be adopted in the area of refugee protection.** A rights-based approach prevents ad-hoc practices while also enabling protection activities that go beyond addressing immediate needs for limited periods of time, helping pave the way for sustainable responses. A rights-based approach helps overcome negative perceptions in public opinion by highlighting the fact that services provided to refugees are not only a part of the state's legal commitments but also are reflections of principles addressed in international law. With a rights-based approach, existing institutions can be strengthened



in accord with international principles and existing laws can be implemented more effectively.

2. **In addition to rights-based approach, adopting a community-based approach is essential.** We must adopt an approach in which refugees identify their own needs, design the processes and modalities through which these needs are addressed, be engaged in implementation, and evaluate the impact. Experiences demonstrate how positive results are achieved when refugees are included in decision-making processes.
3. **The language and terminology used in refugee protection is key to principled action and advocacy.** It is crucial to use the term 'refugee' in order to adopt a rights-based approach. This way we can facilitate access to rights that hold the refugee status even though they are not officially recognized as such. Transforming the use of 'guest' or 'non-host community member' to more egalitarian, non-discriminatory choice of words reduces the risk of 'other'ing.
4. **Activities on refugee protection need to be inclusive and be able to provide feedback.** Interventions are successful when they challenge the passive role attributed to refugees and turn them into active agents. While receiving feedback from refugees, it is crucial to develop a two-way communication system in which information and feedback is fed back to refugees.
5. **Community level interventions have the potential to develop durable and sustainable solutions to protection and social cohesion.** Working at the neighborhood level in cities where refugees live has the potential to pull in community volunteers, municipalities, local businesses and local public institutions. Projects focusing on refugee protection on neighborhood scale can be included in 5-year strategic plans of municipalities.
6. **Activities that implement the contact hypothesis prove effective.** Contact theory argues that under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact could be one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members, reduce stereotyping and increase social cohesion. Good practices on gastronomy, permaculture, and cultural ambassadors presented at the conference help overcome the language barrier and help establish social connections.
7. **Social cohesion refers to a multilateral cohesion process that respects diversity, not a unilateral process of integration.** Cohesion policies are most effective when based on diversity and are developed multilaterally. Thus, when developing social cohesion policies that include all stakeholders, the diversity and differences of all parties need to be taken into account.
8. **There is a need for more spaces in which good practices can be shared.** In order to maximize impact, more spaces must be created for refugees and community members, civil society initiatives, municipalities, local public authorities, and local businesses to come together; build solidarity networks and include diverse groups in local decision making processes.
9. **Public inspection mechanisms are complementary in refugee protection interventions.** While efforts are being made to secure protection for refugees, monitoring and reporting of human rights violations is critical to making responses effective.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) THEME

- 1. Humanitarian interventions must include GBV prevention and response interventions as well.** While GBV is taking place everywhere, all the time, its frequency and severity increases at times of humanitarian crises. Even before violence breaks out in a conflict setting and a humanitarian intervention is planned for GBV survivors, activities mitigating the risk of GBV must be included into local programs. GBV prevention and response should be taken equally important alongside other program priorities.
- 2. We must acknowledge that violence is violence in all contexts and we must develop activities accordingly.** Violence to the host community members or refugees are no different and no one should be discriminated due to their status. Bringing communities together around issues of GBV and building solidarity in the face of these issues will contribute to the healing process.
- 3. All interventions and services delivered must be based on a survivor-centered approach.** In this approach, the main actor is the GBV survivor and the support provided aims to empower the individual, enabling the person to lead the process based on own decisions. All support must be personalized, reflecting the survivor's wishes and choices.
- 4. Services need to be designed in ways that address the specific needs of LGBTI+ groups as one of the high at-risk groups in reference to GBV.** An LGBTI+ community member that survives GBV must receive specialized and personalized support based on a comprehensive and personalized assessment of special needs and circumstances.
- 5. All interventions that aim to prevent GBV must be participatory, community-based and appropriate for implementation.** A community-based approach must be adopted throughout all the entire cycle of project design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Programs must focus on existing capacities and build on these while addressing acute needs.
- 6. Multi-stakeholder approach is crucial for an effective response to GBV.** Partnerships among the diverse group of civil society actors, including women/LGBTI+ organizations themselves, are necessary for coordinated efforts and focused impact. Achieving collaboration of all stakeholders at the local level for solutions to a common problem maximizes impact and enables effective use of resources.
- 7. Aid workers dealing with GBV cases need to be supported.** Professionals working with GBV survivors need training and supervision as well as psychological care in order to maintain their well-being as facilitators and care givers. Appropriate and timely services, roadmaps, reference laws and other useful information can be made accessible through an online portal.
- 8. Availability of around-the-clock support hotlines and urgent access to information and support is critical for GBV.** Overcoming the language barrier, having multilingual versions of information materials is effective in reaching out to and attracting GBV cases to services provided.
- 9. Specific to Turkey, sexual assault crisis centers must be established in accord with law no. 6284 and regulations should be updated to enable survivors applying to civil society organizations for support.** It is crucial that mechanisms are established so that survivors are provided with a safe space, are able to access the appropriate services for their needs, and are supported by experts.



- 10. Clinical management of rape must be managed carefully.** Emergency health services and access to PEP kits, specialized psychosocial support, GBV survivor-focused activities, sensitive case management based on gender identity are important steps in this process and must be managed appropriately according to the needs of the GBV survivor.
- 11. More awareness-raising is needed for overcoming prejudices in GBV. It is important to prevent stigmatization and feelings of guilt among GBV survivors.** GBV is a crime committed by and a choice made by the perpetrator. The topic of GBV and refugees need to be taught in legal faculties in order to raise awareness among students of law. The role of media and their use of language also plays a crucial role in how awareness is raised and how prejudice is overcome.
- 12. Men should also be included in interventions that aim to prevent GBV.** Men should be included and actively involved in GBV-specific activities.
- 13. Establishing a Ministry of Gender Equality will be the guarantor of the rights of women.** An executive body that deals with all aspects of gender issues, including GBV, will be effective in developing policies, delivering specialized services, conducting monitoring, and measuring impact. Achieving gender equality and preventing GBV is dependent on the development of such new structures.
- 14. Safe shelters need to be offered for GBV survivors and existing shelter services must be reviewed.** In Turkey, women do not want to stay in increasingly common shelters. In addition to a serious capacity problem, it is not possible to provide an environment of rehabilitation, empowerment and non-return to violence environment. On the other hand, existing shelters cannot meet the housing needs for LGBTI+ individuals. For refugees, the problem of language barrier and discrimination within the shelter is a challenge. All children under the age of 18 have the right to protection with their mother regardless of their gender. Boys over 12 years of age are not allowed into shelters with their mothers. Additional support mechanisms should be developed for this purpose. All of this needs to be assessed and improved. In order to do this, feedback should be obtained from GBV survivors, women or LGBTI + organizations specialized in their fields and humanitarian organizations.
- 15. Access to employment is key for GBV survivors.** Special employment programs can be introduced for GBV survivors to create incentives.

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