

CITIES IN CRISIS CONSULTATIONS - Gaziantep, Turkey

April 2016

Overview of Urban Consultations

By 2050 over 70% of the global population will live in urban areas. This accelerating urbanization trend is accompanied by an increasing vulnerability of cities to both natural and man-made disasters. More and more, humanitarian actors are responding to urban crisis. They are however often badly equipped to understand and effectively engage with cities' complex socio-economic dynamics and governance structures. Recognizing these challenges, the World Humanitarian Summit has mandated an Urban Expert Group to identify key recommendations for promoting better humanitarian response to urban crisis.

With a view of contributing to this discussion, IMPACT Initiatives and UCLG's Task Force On Local and Regional Government Disaster Response facilitated a series of consultations in six cities affected by natural or man-made disasters. In collaboration with local authorities and aid actors, each city identified key lessons and guidance to inform future responses, outlined in city-specific reports and compiled into a comprehensive report which will be presented in May 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit, in partnership with the Urban Expert Group.

The Consultation Process:

- 1 Guiding questions for all cities agreed upon with the Urban Expert Group
- 2 Bilateral interviews held with city-level authorities and civil society, UN Agencies, NGOs and donors involved in the response
- 3 Final consultations hosted by local mayor(s) to identify lessons learned and develop recommendations for future response to urban crisis
- 4 Findings from interviews and consultations summarized in city-specific and overarching reports

INTRODUCTION

Gaziantep is the economic urban heart of the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey. During the last decade the city went through an important urbanization process and economic growth driven by its business community's will to position Gaziantep as a gateway to regional markets. Located some 60 kilometers from the border with Syria, Gaziantep has historical strong economic ties with its Syrian neighbor and particularly Aleppo, 90 kilometers to its South.

Since the conflict broke out in Syria, the municipality of Gaziantep has been on the frontline in coping with the influx of refugees into Turkey. Gaziantep has since hosted refugee camps in its surroundings (with a population of 51,000 individuals) as well as an additional estimated 350,000 Syrians who have settled in the city, creating significant pressure on services as well as increasing tension with host communities. The Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep has been actively engaged in supporting Syrian refugees, adapting and developing social services infrastructures.

KEY FINDINGS

During the consultations a number of issues were highlighted in relation to the humanitarian response to the refugee influx in Gaziantep. Firstly, participants pointed to the limited coordination between humanitarian and municipal stakeholders, which inhibited synergies and effective targeting. This was partly due to a lack of understanding of and engagement with the Municipality by humanitarian actors, notably international ones. Participants also noted that, the response has been largely focused on meeting short-term needs of refugees. More focus is required in looking at longer-term solutions for providing services to the refugees, while mitigating potential tension with host communities. These solutions should be aligned and integrated into municipal plans and accompanied by required resource allocation. The following recommendations have been made:

- Strengthening the coordination among humanitarian and municipal actors;
- Promoting sustainable policies for meeting service needs of refugees, while ensuring a balance in service delivery between regular residents and refugees;
- Integrating service delivery to refugees into Municipal plans and resource requests;
- Promoting programming that strengthens the resilience of displaced persons;
- Working in synergy with local NGOs and associations of refugees.

Crisis Overview

The five years of the Syrian conflict triggered the biggest humanitarian crisis since the World War II with an estimated total of 9 million displaced individuals. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 3 million of Syrians have fled to Syria's neighbouring countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq). In addition, 6.5 million people are internally displaced within Syria.

Since the conflict broke out in Syria in March 2011, Turkey opened its border to Syrian citizens forced to leave the country. Along the five last years, their number has exponentially grown to reach (as of 11th of January 2015) 2,503,549 Syrians registered by the Government of Turkey and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) out of a total population of 78 millions. In 2015, Turkey was ranked as the country welcoming the highest number of refugees in the world and is Syria's neighboring country hosting the highest number of Syrians. 2.75 million of Syrians are expected to be registered in Turkey by the end of 2016.

In reaction to the protracted refugee crisis, international humanitarian actors have upscale their support to host countries, and are currently orienting their action towards a resilience-based approach including a response to Syrians' needs but also to support communities hosting refugees.

KEY CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN GAZIANTEP

1 Identification of reference authorities in Gaziantep:

Some aid actors, notably international ones, initially failed to approach relevant authorities to coordinate their action. This was partly due to a lack of knowledge on which authority to coordinate with. Institutions directly responsible for the Syrian crisis management are the Prime Ministry Presidency for Emergency and Disaster Management (AFAD) and the newly operational Directorate General for Migration Management (responsible for temporary protection, international protection and all migration-related matters), both present in Gaziantep. Since the beginning of the migratory influx, AFAD was the dedicated agency to develop humanitarian response and responsible for camp management.

2 Limited cooperation between international humanitarian actors and municipal actors:

Since the beginning of the crisis, Gaziantep has been a hub for international humanitarian actors settling in the city to manage activities, in a remote fashion, inside Syria. Along the time, those actors have gradually directed some of their programs to support Syrian refugees settled in the city of Gaziantep. However, collaboration between humanitarian and municipal actors remains rare, inhibiting synergies and effective planning.

3 Need of sustainable policies to face the migration influx:

With the Syrian crisis about to reach its 5th year, questions related to the duration of stay of Syrians in Turkey have been a constantly evolving issue. This uncertainty has led to challenges for the development of adapted, longer term policies towards refugees. Gradually, the different involved actors in the Syrian migratory influx to Turkey acknowledged the need to foster social inclusion of Syrians settled in Turkey, notably those in the fields of access to employment, education and health. Meanwhile the question of inclusion/integration is a very sensitive object of discussion in Turkey, especially given the potential increased in tension over employment and access to services between the Syrian and host population.

4 Impact on city plans:

The Municipalities of Anatolia's Southeastern Region were among the first to receive a Syrian refugee population with humanitarian needs. They are now directly facing the issues related to longer-term settlements of the refugee population including the continued and increasing strain on municipal services and the need to develop social cohesion programs. The number and length of stay of refugees having exceeded planning figures, municipalities are increasingly over-stretched and in need of additional resources. For example, in Gaziantep the Syrian population has led the total city's population to be already higher than the population figures planned in the Metropolitan Municipality 2036 strategic plan.

5 Lack of integration of Service delivery to Syrian People in Municipal Strategic Planning:

Municipalities which developed social services towards the Syrian population had to face the challenge of developing ad hoc solutions, with restrained support from humanitarian actors and to cope with the related difficulties linked to a rapid increase of service-delivery. The role of Municipality in supporting Syrian refugees remains unclear, hindering the development of longer term planning and service adaptation.

6 Strain on residents' living conditions and increased tension with refugees:

The influx of refugees has created a number of strains for local residents including on: infrastructures (water, electricity, waste management), pre-existing social services infrastructures, increase in housing markets' prices, discontent due to the feeling of unfair direction of social services to the sole Syrian population and competition on labour market. All these strains on residents' living conditions have raised social tensions between city-dwellers and refugees.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE URBAN RESPONSES

1 Ensuring territorial coordination between the municipality and humanitarian actors:

As the closest level of government to the citizens the Municipality could play a key role in facilitating the coordination between the different actors responding to the refugee influx. Platforms could be strengthened / established to promote coordination and synergies among all partners, including municipality as well as international, Turkish and Syrian humanitarian actors. Increased information sharing and joint planning would increase the effectiveness of targeting and resource allocation.

2 Establishing relevant tools to facilitate understanding of local structures, notably by international actors:

To overcome existing problems of miscommunication between different actors, it has been proposed to prepare a brochure for NGOs and International Organizations explaining the role of the Metropolitan Municipalities as well as the different department relevant to activities of the mentioned institutions.

3 Ensuring the balance between service delivery to regular residents and refugees:

Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality successfully integrated the arrival of refugees in its strategic planning. This puts the Metropolitan Municipality in a favorable position to take a leading role to promote a balance between service delivery to regular residents and refugees.

Best practice: The Sub-Directorate for Migration Affairs of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality

Who: Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality

The Metropolitan Municipality along the years of the crisis has been active in providing assistance refugee populations. Humanitarian needs (distribution of blankets, first aid, aid in kind etc.) have evolved over time into the provision of sustained social services to address the needs of a population settled in the city on a middle-term perspective. The Sub-Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep is a municipal innovation which allows to a reinforced city-scale migration-related activities management and vision. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has been the first and only municipality in Turkey to establish such directorate. The department has enabled coordination of all municipal activities related to the crisis, as well as planning for longer term approaches. It is also a very important step in terms of formal recognition of the role of municipalities in migration management. Many metropolitan municipalities are asking for such department to be established with relevant financial provision from the central state. They also require Gaziantep to provide support and training to their staff in this regard.

Best practice: Vocational Training Center

Who: United Nations Development Programme

UNDP is currently supporting waste management capacities of the municipality. As informal economic activities and the size of the impoverished population has been growing, it is important to provide livelihoods opportunities to both host and displaced communities. In order to support livelihood opportunities for refugees UNDP, in partnership with Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and Gaziantep Chamber of Industry, has established a Vocational Training Centre for refugees.

4 Strengthening resilience of displaced persons:

The Municipality, together with Regional Development Agencies, the ministry of Labour and the Directorate General for Migration, has a central role to play in ensuring the financial sustainability of services delivered to refugees. In addition, municipal and humanitarian stakeholders could explore targeted investments to promote a better economic resilience of refugees, for example by developing financing mechanisms to support the growth of SMEs that can benefit refugee livelihoods.

5 Ensuring that local NGOs and Associations of Refugees get access to funding opportunities and representation:

The Metropolitan Municipality could provide support to local NGOs and Associations of Refugees that cannot ensure direct access to information related to funding opportunities as well as consultation processes that are held by international and national institutions.

Best practice: Extension and adaptation of Municipal Social Services to refugee population

Who: Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality

Together with local civil society, Gaziantep Municipality has extended and adapted a number of services to the refugee populations, among which:

- Establishment of 3 public soup kitchens it provides 69,000 portions of food daily to both Syrians and Turkish citizens.
- Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Women's Shelter welcomes women victims of violence in need of support including Syrian nationals.
- Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Courses Centers (Gazmek) is currently expanding its services to Syrian nationals.
- Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipal Hospital and the medical centers provided health care to about 30,000 Syrians free of charge and a psycho-social therapy is planned to be established.
- Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality also set up the Social Research Center (SARMER) developing status and needs analysis and analyze implemented social services policy and adapt them according to needs and emergency situations interventions.

Within the Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep, there are two "Information and Education Centers for Syrian Guests". In those centers, Turkish language education is provided to about 1,400 Syrian children including Turkish language education and education based on Syrian Interim Government syllabus. Up to now 2,990 students accessed education.

IMPACT Initiatives is a Geneva-based international association, aiming to shape practices and influence policies in humanitarian and development settings in order to improve efficiency of aid responses and positively impact lives of people and their communities. IMPACT implements assessment, monitoring, evaluation and organizational capacity-building programmes and has established field-presence in over 15 countries.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is a global network of cities and local, metropolitan and regional governments. UCLG has established a Task Force on Local and Regional Government Disaster Response, in order to provide a platform for local governments to exchange knowledge and expertise on disaster management.

Cités Unies France, a federation of French local and regional governments involved in international relations and, in particular, in decentralized co-operation, is responsible for the Secretariat of UCLG's Task Force and has been directly supporting this consultation process.