

Discerning Ways Forward: An ILO Perspective

WCC/UN High-Level Conference:
Refugee Crisis in Europe
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Some notable elements of crisis

- First consideration for ILO, as with others, is to save lives and ensure full respect for human rights
- Appreciation for critical work of UNHCR, IOM and range of organisations/individuals working on front line
- Challenge of scale, “mass influx”, overwhelming systems, structures and response mechanisms
- Transit countries facing own significant socio-economic challenges, neither equipped nor prepared for scale of crisis – Greece, Balkan states
- Significant toxic discourse on migration across Europe (and other frontline states)
- Large differences in skills and qualifications of refugees and significant language challenges – diversity of origin countries
- Syrian crisis has been main driver of current movements, but others from different regions, many protracted – need political solutions
- Frontline states facing overwhelming challenges with far more limited resources

Employment and Livelihoods

- People do not always move for economic reasons – but ultimately livelihoods becomes focus of most if not all refugees and migrants
- Livelihoods/employment underlines nexus between humanitarian action and development cooperation – leading to adaptation of approach to refugee/migrant crises, e.g. Syria
- Livelihoods/employment can drive crisis migration (including climate change) and is also a priority response area
- ILO builds its response around all aspects of world of work
- Livelihoods/employment highly challenging, politically charged, particularly in countries where pre-existing employment and poverty challenges
- In frontline states, crises can impact negatively on economic growth and increase social tension, insecurity and instability
- Hence need to move beyond humanitarian to development response in medium- to long-term, but also in anticipation

- Livelihoods/employment creation and labour market integration are key to social integration
- Social consequences of not allowing access of refugees to labour markets – but need to understand and address negative discourse around employment issue
- Quality of employment is important, not just access, e.g. increased informality and exploitation
- Livelihoods/employment opportunities need to be expanded along migratory routes: transit and destination
- Vital in addressing root causes of movement – regular and irregular
- In frontline and transit states, significant economic development and investment is required to stimulate sustainable job creation for host and refugee communities – massive job creation needed
- In destination countries, such as in EU, need to learn from those that have adopted proactive employment responses

Ways Forward

- Support political solutions to crises
- Enhance and expand socio-economic development in countries and regions prone to migration to ensure alternatives
- Expand regular labour migration channels at all skills levels to address irregular migration – bilateral agreements
- Include development dimension at much earlier stage in crisis response – knew in 2012 that economic insecurity affecting Syrians
- Mobilise economic development/inward investment urgently
- Strengthen policy coherence, e.g. employment, migration, training
- Accelerate labour market integration efforts and activities, including education and training (language) and skills assessment – takes time and significant resources – need more efficiency, innovation and streamlining – underpinned by strong, positive communications strategy

- Stock-taking of skills and build on these
- Enhance knowledge/evidence base on all impacts on labour markets of refugees to inform national, regional and global policies, strategies and programmes, including positive impact of refugees on migration and development
- Develop employment rich responses that address skills mismatch between supply and demand in frontline, transit and destination countries – value chain analysis – public infrastructure and private sector
- Involve world of work actors in refugee response to support livelihoods/employment programmes – guidance and support
- Accelerate labour market integration efforts and activities, including education and training (language) – takes time and significant resources – need more efficiency, innovation and streamlining – underpinned by strong communications strategy
- Put refugees where jobs are – not where cheap housing is available
- Migration is mega-trend of 21st century – acknowledged in SDGs – need to reinforce governance and coordinate better between all actors and at all levels
- Closer coordination between UN agencies critical, e.g. strengthen role and activities of GMG