



Briefing Paper 2

Working Group 2: Refugees and Internal Displacement

By the end of 2014, 59.5 million people had been forcibly displaced as a result of violence, conflict, persecution and human rights violations, 8.3 million people more than the previous year, displaying the highest ever increase in a single year. Over half of the refugees worldwide originate from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Key points

- The issue of refugees and displaced people is affecting multiple regions, countries and cities in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Europe and elsewhere. The conflict in Syria and Iraq and the consequent refugee crisis represents one of the biggest humanitarian disasters of our time.
- There are cases of refugee and displaced communities being targeted by extremist recruiters; the presence of refugees and displaced communities can lead to polarisation and tensions with host communities.
- Preventative counter-extremism work needs to be combined with broader efforts seeking to integrate refugee communities into wider society. Aid agencies need to build an understanding of radicalisation into their main practices.
- Municipalities have a key role in preventing extremist recruiters from targeting refugee populations and undermining the appeal of extremist movements and narratives within host communities.
- National authorities must recognise the important role that local governments play in coordinating short and long term approaches to refugee and displaced communities, increasing their access to resources available where necessary.

Starting points for cities

- **Know** your local community, its different neighbourhoods, segregated communities, grievances and key community leaders.
- **Locate** current initiatives operating within your city which seek to integrate new communities, and communities at risk of radicalisation.
- **Consider** how CVE prevention and integration work may be combined.
- **Ask** what lessons can be learned from the successful integration of minority communities in your city.

Key figures

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa hosts the second largest number of refugees globally, settling in an increasingly large geographical area as a result of conflict and political violence.

- There were 15,000,000 displaced people living in the region in 2015
- The surge of refugees was particularly notable in the sub-regions of the East and Horn of Africa (+562,500) and Central Africa and Great Lakes (+146,600)
- IDP's are concentrated in Sudan (3,100,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2,800,000) and South Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia (1,000,000)

Middle East and North Africa

The growing number of refugees in the MENA region largely stem from the current Levantine conflict, with displaced individuals from Syria representing a majority.

- Over 4,800,000 Syrians are registered refugees, and there were over 6,000,000 IDP's in Syria in December 2015
- A majority of Syrian refugees are registered in the MENA region, settling in Lebanon (1,200,000), Jordan (650,000), Iraq (250,000) and Egypt (130,000)
- There are over 3,000,000 IDP's in Iraq

Europe and the Balkans

Political instability, conflict and poverty outside of Europe have led to a refugee crisis of unprecedented scale. A majority of displaced individuals have come through the Mediterranean, specifically Greece's Aegean territories and Italy's southern coastline.

- Over 1,000,000 people arrived through Southern Europe in 2015. Italy received 150,000+ people and Greece 800,000+
- In 2015 Germany received 441,800 asylum requests (35.2%), Sweden 156,110 (12.6%) and Austria 85,505 (6.8%)
- 46% of new arrivals were Syrian, 25% Afghani, and 16% Iraqi

Latin America

Internally displaced individuals in Latin America are largely the result of conflict, with Columbia housing the majority of registered IDP's in the region.

- Colombia has 6,000,000+ IDP's, the greatest number in Latin America
- In 2014 280,000 Mexicans were forcefully displaced from their homes

The Role of Municipalities

Faced with the reality of sustained, large scale flows of refugees and the challenge of integrating refugee communities, municipalities need to develop sufficient short and long term mechanisms to respond effectively. Cities represent major settling places for refugees due to their economic, social and educational infrastructure and thus have a key role in addressing this delicate issue.

Both short and long term measures need to entail an effective and transparent communication strategy. This needs to be sensitive to the host communities' concerns and grievances, and inform the general public about the integration policies and initiatives which are being implemented.

The Role of Municipalities

Humanitarian and security

First and foremost municipalities must address the humanitarian needs of displaced communities. Refugees represent some of the most vulnerable individuals, and are likely to be suffering severe psychological trauma. Municipalities need to recognise these immediate needs and make available the necessary support to facilitate their transition into their host society. National governments and international organisations need to ensure municipalities have sufficient resources to support the settlement of refugees.

The response from local authorities will lie in finding pragmatic and effective solutions to the current situation as it unfolds. The priorities of authorities will be managing the impact a large influx of displaced peoples will have on their host community and municipal public services, and ensuring resources are distributed efficiently.

After the practicalities of re-settlement have been addressed municipalities need to address the vulnerability of refugee communities, and make steps to safeguard individuals from exploitation by criminal groups and extremists.

This should include integration of security and prevention priorities into humanitarian responses, including training to identify risk factors and establishing referral procedures and prevention interventions at refugee camps and reception centres. It also includes viewing sufficient strategic investments in mental health support and educational initiatives as essential.

Integration and cohesion

The long term focus of local authorities will be cohesively integrating displaced communities into broader municipal society through programmes which build language skills, education, and community relations. The flows of forcibly displaced people can lead to a rise in [anti-migrant sentiment](#) and [xenophobia](#), risks of [infiltration](#) by terrorists and targeting of displaced communities by [extremist narratives](#) and [criminal organisations](#). Municipalities will have to be proactive in countering polarisation and community isolation, through addressing socio-economic indicators of inequality.



Successful integration strategies will depend on engaging the refugee population and the host community from early on by providing them with the information, tools and assistance to integrate well into their new environment and facilitate community cohesion.

Social polarisation and 'cumulative extremisms'

In Europe the refugee crisis has emboldened and empowered right-wing nationalist parties and encouraged the rise of grassroots right-wing movements such as PEGIDA. These movements openly voice their hostility to the flow of refugees and decry a perceived "Islamisation" of the West.

Outside of the European context the scale of the refugee crisis in the MENA region has led to a substantial increase in xenophobic attitudes. Often under-reported by international media outlets, anti-refugee sentiment, especially anti-Syrian sentiment, is becoming increasingly frequent in the region.

The rise of intolerant ideologies can lead to a process of **cumulative radicalisation** whereby communities are isolated from broader society, leading to an echo-chamber of polarisation, where radicalisation on all sides becomes reciprocal.

Communications & partnerships

An effective communications strategy is vital to ease tensions between communities and counter myths and mistruths. This includes both proactive and reactive strategic communications from local governments, as well as support for the creation of counter-narrative campaigns that tackle myths and encourage cohesion between communities.

Similarly, public-private community initiatives can be mobilised to bring communities together. For example, more than 40 companies have joined together in Germany to take part in the “Wir zusammen - Integrationsinitiative der deutschen Wirtschaft” (“we together - integration initiative of the German economy”) campaign (<https://www.wir-zusammen.de/home>) which aims to promote the integration of refugees into Germany. The campaign includes videos and showcases of integration initiatives from a variety of partners on their website, with the aim of inspiring more companies to take part.

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Working Group 2: Case-book

The following examples of programmes which seek to integrate newly-arrived migrants into municipal life provide some potential models for programming which may be adapted to the current refugee crisis. These initiatives are implemented at a regional, national, and local level, and vary in their scope and objectives. Fundamentally they address issues of information and integration, housing and segregation, and social/ cultural cohesion.

Barcelona: Anti-Rumour Network

In 2010 Barcelona unveiled its long-term strategy to improve coexistence among its residents and newly arrived migrants. As a part of this strategy the city launched a public service campaign aimed at dispelling rumours, misconceptions, and myths about immigration. The city trained 'anti-rumour agents' to spread the campaign through a network of local organisations and neighbourhoods. The project identified the main stereotypes and prejudices associated with immigration including: job theft, anti-social behaviour, failure to pay taxes, and the abuse of health and social services. The city then equipped its agents with accurate information about migrants and techniques for addressing misconceptions. In order to spread the campaign the programme used a network of 80 local organisations connected by a website which offered information, training sessions, and toolkits.

Key lesson: dispelling stereotypes and prejudices associated with migrant communities needs a proactive approach.

Rotterdam: the Rotterdam debates

Between 2004/5 the City of Rotterdam organised a number of public debates on the role of Islam in the city. These debates involved Muslim and non-Muslim residents of the city and addressed the integration of Muslims and the tensions existing between different communities. The city organised expert meetings that identified issues of concern, such as value systems and norms, the situation of Muslim women, the role of NGOs, the educational situation of Muslims, equal rights, and the role of the media. Following this scoping phase the debates took place, bringing together 1,500 Muslims of different backgrounds and non-Muslim citizens. The conclusions of the debates informed the Community Charter of Rotterdam and provided a basis for the Rotterdam strategic vision.

Key lesson: an interactive approach which locates and listens to the concerns of citizens ensures that programming remains focussed.

Turin: Case del quartiere (neighbourhood houses)

Turin's Neighbourhood houses (CdQs) have become important instruments of social cohesion and integration. Broadly defined as community centres these establishments are situated in areas with substantial immigrant populations, and fill a variety of needs. The CdQs host and support community associations, local NGO's, migrant organisations,

and informal groups of citizens in developing educational, cultural, and social activities, whilst providing public services and help desks. The centres offer a space for different communities to interact and simplify the integration of new arrivals.

Key lesson: a combined approach which tends to all the needs of migrant communities can simplify integration into their new communities.

Munich: Siemens introduces sustainable programme for integrating refugees

Siemens is a global technology and engineering firm headquartered in Berlin and Munich. In Munich, the company provides practical support and donations totalling around €2 million offering internships, accommodation facilities and the establishment of training classes for refugees. The six-month training programme focusses on, among other things, language courses and vocational preparation. As a further part of its programme, Siemens is offering internships to refugees still in the process of applying for asylum.

Key lesson: private businesses are in a unique position to leverage their opportunities and funding to provide much needed access to education and work programmes often out of reach to refugees awaiting their formal asylum status.

Toronto: City of Toronto Refugee Resettlement Programme

The City of Toronto see itself as playing three main roles in the integration of 3,000 Syrian refugees; coordination, enhancement and integration. The City coordinated itself into taskforces to assess the likely impact across the provision of housing and education ensuring the required infrastructure was in place for the arrival community through the creation of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs). The City recognised the need to enhance the community provision and capacity of community assets and entered into agreements with the Arab Community Centre, Catholic Crosscultural Services and Lifeline Syria to enhance their capacity to provide support to vulnerable new arrivals. Toronto also worked closely with the local refugee council to launch a public awareness campaign against racism, violence and intolerance.

Key lesson: Investing early on in public awareness campaigns enabled a proactive campaign to tackle host community grievances.



The Strong Cities Network is run by the **Institute for Strategic Dialogue**, a UK registered charity with charity number 1076660. For more information please contact info@strongcitiesnetwork.org

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