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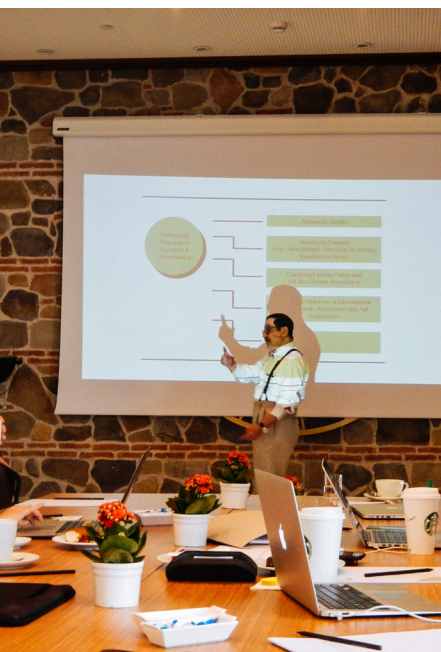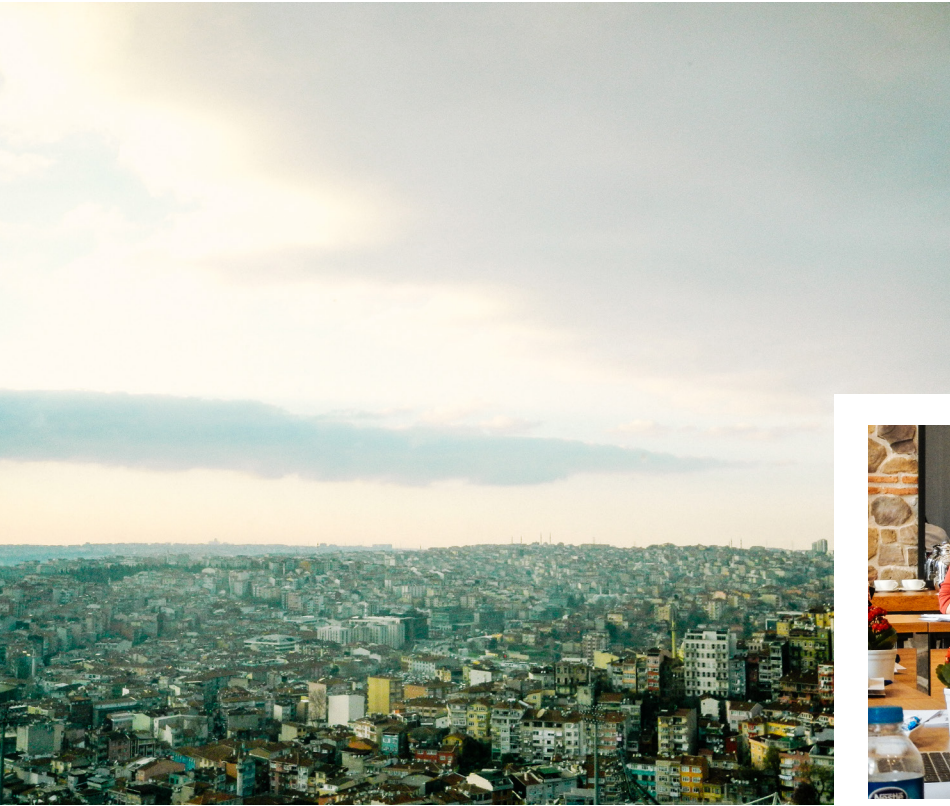
Moving Toward Dignity:
*Human-Centered Approaches for Displaced Syrians
in Turkey, Jordan, and Beyond*

A Joint Research and Policy Project
of the Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies and
the Migration Research Center at Koç University

"Education is all about building bridges" -Ralph Ellison

The Boston Consortium
for Arab Region Studies
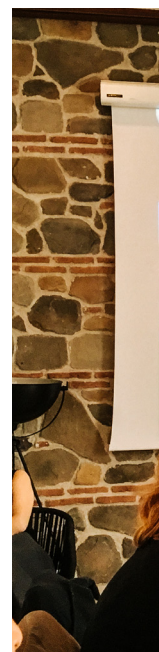
Executive Summary

Despite being host to the largest number of Syrian refugees in any single country, an important waystation for countless Syrians who have been dis-placed since 2011, and a site of numerous acts of vi-olence, until recently Turkey has not cap-tured the world's gaze. This paper, and the workshop that inspired it, attempts to turn the mirror.

In March 2016, scholars from the Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies (BCARS) and Koç University's Migra-tion Research Center (MiReKoç) met with policy experts, Turkish government officials, international NGO represen-tatives, and program implementers to discuss the impacts of migrant flows on human development.

Our goal for the workshop was to **uncover facts** and envision concrete, **actionable policy solutions** that gov-ernmental and nongovernmental actors might employ in addressing the day-to-day challenges facing Syrians—and Palestinian refugees from Syria—who have been forcibly displaced across their country's borders. Given the makeup of the workshop participants, discussion focused on responses in Turkey and Jor-dan; however, the discussion generated ideas, large and small, that could apply in any of the countries that are already hosting, or will soon be hosting, several million[1] displaced Syrians.

Our aim for this paper is to propose **creative, thoughtful, and peace-ori-ented policy recommendations** for government, NGO, and private sector actors woring on providing direct, on-the-ground support to Syrians in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and other host countries. Our thinking emphasiz-es longer-term solutions—with a view toward **sustainability** and **develop-ment-oriented thinking**.

Our specific recommendations ad-dress four key challenges—Regulatory Sytems & Governance, Capacity Build-ing, Community Empowerment, and Service Delivery—and hinge on five overarching assumptions:

1. Full acknowledgment that this is a **protracted situation**. In doing so, we fundamentally change our response, prompting a shift from a short-term **hu-manitarian aid** model to a longer-term **development aid** model that encom-passes an immediate need for a new status designation, a focus on building more sustainable infrastructure in host communities, and a plan for building local organizational capacity to support refugee mapping service delivery.[2] Our recommendations under Regulatory Systems & Governance, Capacity Build-ing, and Service Delivery speak to these issues.

2. With so many organizations' and agen-cies' eyes trained on the region, there is opportunity for more effective **coordi-nation of responses among govern-ments, civil society, and international NGOs**. Issues of capacity building—of civil society organizations and govern-

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[1] Given the nature of the current situation, there is broad acknowledgment that it is difficult to quantify how many Syrians are moving within and between countries. Tracking "registra-tions" is also problematic, given inconsistent legal status designations and differing country, regional, and international systems and policies. Hence, this paper does not attempt to provide a "current" count. Most workshop participants agreed that the issues addressed here are (at present) far more important than the ability to provide a specific number. Curious readers may review UNHCR's data at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php.

[2] This includes changing language used to describe refugees. In Turkish, for example, the word musafer is used to describe Syrian refugees and literally means "guest." In Arabic, however, musafer translates more directly to "traveler," cre-ating confusion in perception between Arabic-speaking refugees and their Turk-ish-speaking hosts. Similarly, media outlets commonly refer to refugees as "illegals," despite international guidance from UNHCR against this terminology.

ments agencies—stand out as a recurrent theme in all our recommendations. This is particularly true for Community Empowerment and Service Delivery.

3. There is a need for blended **digital/virtual and on-the-ground solutions** to serve refugee and host communities' needs while filling important gaps in data and building the evidence base for what works on the ground. Regardless of whether information is collected through technology or personal interviews, policy should increasingly be based on **evidence and data** pertaining to refugee and host community capacities and needs. All of our recommendations, but particularly those under Regulatory Systems & Governance, acknowledge this gap.

4. There is also a very real need for a **narrative shift**, one that emphasizes the need for **human security, not just national security**. The safety and well-being of host communities and Syrian refugees should be emphasized, rather than fixation on the national security paradigm of securing borders. Every one of our recommendations, especially Community Empowerment, hinges on this point.

5. Finally, there is an urgent need to **acknowledge the human dignity and agency of the Syrians who have been displaced**, and of the host communities. Creating a new status designation (under Regulatory Systems & Governance) would be a major step in the right direction. We also propose several concrete ideas for community-level sup-port under Community Empowerment. In our discussions, participants shared stories of barriers, challenges, and successes. One such success is found in a municipal mapping and service delivery platform that has been championed by the mayor of Sultanbeyli, a municipality on the outskirts of Istanbul. Several other municipalities have similar solutions, and we include a case study of Sultanbeyli to demonstrate what is possible—and what is already being accomplished—in line with our recommended actions.

Finally, underlying all of our discussions and recommendations is a clear acknowledgment, from all workshop participants, of the **need for mutuality of support**. In other words, support and services provided to refugees must, at all times, include provisions for equitable support for the host communities, many of which were already facing socioeconomic development challenges before 2011, when they began receiving Syrians. Such support benefits the entire community, and may even provide an incentive to the host community.

With this report, we have an opportunity to re-emphasize the need for the international community to take greater responsibility in responding to this crisis. Syrians and their hosts need more support, not less, as time goes on, and we are all accountable for keeping our eyes trained on the situation and doing our part to lessen their burden.

Part 1: Background

Migration has always been a fact of human life, but in the past century, especially since the establishment of the 1951 Refugee Convention, states have attempted to put more rigorous controls on who moves, where, and with what status. This sort of control is being sorely tested as the Syrian refugee crisis continues—with ramifications for global understanding of what it means to be a "refugee" and what it means to be a "host."

Questions of Status: When the fighting began pushing people across Syria's borders in 2011, the three main border coun-tries—Jordan, Lebanon, and Tur-key—generally opened their doors to their neighbors, providing an escape for those fleeing the violence, even despite a lack of clear refugee status designation or clear protections. Turkey welcomed the displaced Syrians as "guests," and even now cannot acknowledge refugee status, because the country retains a geographical limitation to its ratification of the 1951 Convention.

A new law (adopted in 2014) has extended temporary protection, enabling Syrians to register in Turkey upon arrival and obtain refugee ID cards to access basic health, education, and other services, but gaps in service delivery are a significant problem as the government struggles to meet the urgent needs of Syrian refugees and its own people. Turkey is not alone in this struggle; Jordan and Lebanon have similar stories.[1]

The myth of the "temporary" crisis is strong and incredibly difficult to dispel in such situations, being codified in international policy and practice dictating refugee movements and status. The fact is, however, that most of the world's current refugee crises are protracted. This is true of the current situation as Syrian refugees continue into and through Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and, increasingly, the Balkans and western Europe.

A primary concern for our workshop participants was the need for a new status designation, one that would help eliminate the barriers of "statelessness" for people who have fled their homes, often with no way to collect identification papers, birth certificates, marriage licenses, or educational diplomas. In Turkey, for example, a registered refugee has no right of free movement outside of a province designated by the state.

Statelessness also generates problems of perception and tends to criminalize certain categories of human existence, as the media and others begin to use terminology such as "illegal" to describe vic-tims of forced migration. Access to basic services is also much more difficult outside a camp setting when one lacks proper status or documentation.

Digital solutions may be part of the answer, complementing a new status designation and ID cards that could enable displaced people to access information and needed services, while

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[1] The geographical limitation means that Turkey offers full protection only for people from countries in Europe; those from all other countries have less than full protection. This gap in protections is cited as one reason refugees have left Turkey in such numbers for Europe.
For more details on the laws pertaining to Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan, see the 2015 UNHCR country operations profiles for Turkey and Jordan (http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html and http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566. html), and the Freedom House Syrian Refugee Legal Primer (https://freedomhouse.org/blog/syrian-refugees-primer-inter-national-legal-obligations).

amassing data that aid agencies and host governments need to understand refugee needs.

Growing Tensions Between Host Communities and Refugees: Participants discussed the everyday lives of Syrians living in Turkey and Jordan, exam-ining what it means—at the individual level—to be part of the one of the largest mass movements of people since World War II and how the presence of so many displaced Syrians is affecting community dynamics in the host countries. In Kilis, for example, which lies near the Turkish-Syrian border, Syrians now outnumber Turkish citizens, re-sulting in perceptions of insecurity from both migrants and their hosts.

Turkey's national government has responded in a variety of ways, enacting the 2014 "Law on Foreigners and Inter-national Protection" and creating a new agency, the General Directorate on Mi-gration Management (GDMM), both of which were initiated before the civil war in Syria broke out, in the context of EU accession policies. Today, with GDMM and the Chief Advisory for Migration and Humanitarian Aid (a new depart-ment founded in August 2015) attempt to provide Syrians with access to social services, de-spite their lack of full pro-tected status under current law.

Nonetheless, Syrians face steep chal-lenges if they decide to remain in Tur-key. High rents (especially in Istanbul)

are coupled with lack of employment opportunities. Despite legal assurances of access to healthcare and schooling, in practice Syrians lack full access due to limits on capacity in hospitals and schools, and they face racism and other forms of discrimination in public spaces, in part due to the Arabic/Turkish lan-guage barrier. The regulation on work permits for Syrians came into force only in Jan-uary 2016, meaning that the overwhelming majority of Syrians have been employed in the informal (i.e., insecure) labor market.

Of some 200 Syrians interviewed by one workshop participant, many saw no future in Turkey because of the lack of secure status (therefore, lack of access to basic rights, such as work or movement within Turkey). Although many hope to transit to Europe, that step comes with the fear of anti-Muslim sentiment and other trepidations. As a result, many find themselves in a state of limbo, with no future in Turkey but no clear pros-pects elsewhere. Many young Syrians lack hope; most feel disenfranchised and lack a sense of empowerment, because there is no way to make concrete deci-sions about their lives and the lives of their families.

Although there are laudable efforts to provide language training, children's ed-ucation, and access to services and jobs in Turkey, the situation seems to hinge on the lack of a clear/formal status. Participants felt it was time for policy to address issues of permanency—

providing a formal status for displaced Syrians, both to support the refugees and to enable actions that could begin to integrate Syrians and their Turkish host communities. Specifically, there is a need for:

- Legal documentation (birth certificates, diplomas, etc.) to enable children's education and support professionals to work in their areas of specialization

- Better information-sharing with refugees

- Language training for Syrians to foster integration in all aspects of daily life

- Collaboration between NGOs and local representatives, involving refugees in programming

- Information campaigns to prepare the Turkish public for the fact that their country will be hosting Syrian refugees for years to come

In Jordan, displaced Syrians face similar challenges, with 80 percent living outside camps (despite a general focus on events in and around Za'atari and Azraq). Strain on social cohesion is growing, especially as aid seems to flow away from host communities and toward the refugees. Like the other primary host countries, Jordan initially welcomed Syrians across the border, but there is a growing perception of competition for very limited resources, including jobs and education (Jordan already has a high unemployment rate, especially among youth), that donors, governments, NGOs, and local decision-makers must address if they are to alleviate the growing tensions and push toward an environment that fosters human security.

The Jordanian government has taken steps toward integration, such as opening public schools to Syrians, working with UNHCR to offer cash-for-work programs in the camps, and recently initiating a work permit program, but even these seemingly positive actions are complex. For example, overcrowded classrooms are compromising the quality of education for Jordanians and Syrians alike, and lack of trust in formal structures keeps many Syrians from signing up for programs.

Participants noted a need for community building between Syrian refugees and their hosts, but they emphasized the need for creative thinking around issues of community tensions and safety-net programs that foster better integration. Suggestions included one-to-one allotment of aid delivered to refugees and aid delivered to vulnerable host communities and programs that strengthen infrastructure designed for the medium to long term.

Above all, beyond these very real needs, participants emphasized a day-to-day need for hope: hope of return for Syrians, and hope for a brighter future, especially for their children, for Syrians as well as host communities. Even small

> **"We are not living here. It's just an existance."**
>
> <small>Refugee in Za'atari, Jordan</small>

actions, such as sports or community art projects, can help confirm Syrians' place in society and address the host communities' shared needs.

A Need for Integrated Service Delivery Options: One reason cited for Syrians' flight into Europe is the lack of access to basic social services and human rights, including healthcare and even the ability to open a bank account. According to one participant, some 55 percent of Syrians in Turkey face major problems accessing medicines, and the vaccination rate among Syrian children in Turkey is much lower than for Turkish citizens. Such gaps are looming crises of their own, for host communities and Syrians.

DELIVERING HEALTHCARE
Overall, it is committed individuals and local organizations that are filling service gaps. There was a robust healthcare referral system and supply chain between Syria and Turkey, which helped address language barriers and provide essential services. However, demand has far outpaced supply, placing incredible strain on the Turkish system and stretching the Turkish government's ability to provide translators and other service providers.

With so many Syrians in government hospitals, Turkish patients feel they are losing out on their own access to care. Participants suggested that one solution would be to make use of Syrian human capacity in Turkey, but such solutions hinge on the need for a more permanent legal status, which would provide Syrians with the legal right to work, even in support of other Syrians.

DELIVERING EDUCATION
Both Turkey and Jordan have attempted to close the education gap for Syrians through establishing informal schools in apartment buildings, "temporary education centers," and tiered schedules to enable the education of an increased public school population. Participants noted that in Turkey, legislation enacted in 2014 has attempted to bring the temporary education centers under the Ministry of Education, but the solution was to ask Turkish coordinators to work without additional compensation, creating a situation in which action depends on the depth of an individual's commitment to solving the problems.

Moreover, technological problems with the education database (duplicate entries, inability to delete a record when a family moves, etc.) make it difficult to understand how many Syrian children are actually in need and participating in the system. There is a need to address capacity building at the infra-structure level, so that programs to provide education actually reach and monitor those they seek to assist. Other burdens include lack of transport to get Syrian children to school, lack of supplies, and the need for a standardized curriculum for mother-tongue education.[1] International NGOs are filling many of these gaps in the short to medium term, but funds are in short supply.

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[1] This last point speaks to a larger question of inclusion: Will the Turkish government provide Arabic-language education, when it does not provide a mother-tongue curriculum for Kurds already living in Turkey?

SERVICE DELIVERY REQUIRES A FUNCTIONING SUPPLY CHAIN

The collapse of infrastructure due to the fighting in Syria has broken the supply chain with Turkey, which is crucial for moving medicines and commodities into Syria to support those who have not fled. Facts like this make prospects for return increasingly distant for many, and make the need to design creative solutions for service delivery (within and across borders) ever more important. In sum, there are enormous financial, logistical, and infrastructural challenges to enhancing access to education and healthcare, and a clear need for integrated solutions that do not compromise services for host-country citizens.

The underlying theme is the need to institute housing, healthcare, education, and employment programs that reflect the reality that this is a protracted challenge. As one participant put it, the question is not only how to integrate Syrians, but also when. Specific themes for integrated service delivery include **increased international funding**, as well as:

- **Keeping an eye on the most vulnerable**. There was strong acknowledgment of the particular needs of vulnerable women and children. Each of our recommended actions is versatile enough to allow for differentiated solutions to promote the dignity, safety, and well-being of women, children, and others who are among the most vulnerable refugees.

- **Encouraging diverse views**. Local government actors, international NGOs, and Syrian civil society organizations can be superb partners in addressing key gaps in services.

  Syrian groups know the target communities and have much to bring to the table, but many need institutional capacity building to function.

  International NGOs could be doing more to foster sustainable connections between civil society organizations—focusing on developing permanent capacity that will enable local organizations to carry the work forward once the larger NGOs are called to the next crisis.

- **Better government/civil society coordination and cooperation**. Participants noted the need (in Turkey especially, but with echoes in Jordan) for greater tolerance of decentralized approaches and local authority/autonomy for decision-making around service delivery.

  The final segment in this section offers a hopeful case from one Turkish municipality, Sultanbeyli, which has championed an asset-based approach that is a promising model for localized mapping and delivery of services to communities in need.

Case Study: *The Service Delivery Champions of Sultanbeyli*

Sultanbeyli, a municipal district outside Istanbul, is home to the majority of the Syrian population on the western border of Istanbul. Despite the Turkish government's overall focus on central-ized solutions, this municipality—along with several others—has found effective ways to map refugees' needs and match them to service delivery organizations operating at the local level.

To begin, municipal decision-makers organized a series of workshops with public institutions and national and local NGOs, and then conducted a survey to understand the profile of the refugee population and how it would change the municipality's social fabric. The municipality then established two formal mechanisms for supporting and tracking service delivery needs:

1. A Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance Association, whose mandate includes coordination of service delivery, which employs mainly Turkish support staff but also relies on Syrians for support staff and day-to-day work.

2. A sophisticated software package, SU-KOM, to capture and share information about refugees and their families. The municipality coordinates with NGOs and a variety of public institutions to enter information into the system (on its protected network).

The aim of the system is coordination of services: to identify who is living in Sultan-beyli, understand what their needs are, and match them with NGOs and civil society groups that can help meet those needs. SUKOM captures demographics (family members, household locations, education levels, professions, health and disability status) and details such as national (GDMM) registration numbers and vulnerability criteria, and uses the information to link individuals and families with service delivery orga-nizations. The system tracks funding streams as well, offering a glimpse of the overall development and assistance picture in Sultanbeyli.

SUKOM also offers Arabic-language messaging (via SMS) about the services available at the coordination center, which offers the following services:

Healthcare services, including inter-nal medicine, pediatrics, cardiology, women's services, and other specializa-tions, as well as a pharmacy. Physicians, lab techs, nurses, and other providers are Syrians. (Salaries have been paid via donors, but workers may not be able to obtain work permits. It is yet to be seen how the Regulation on Work Permits of Syrians Under Temporary Protection, which came into force in January 2016, will change this situation.)

Education services, integrated with Turkish schools, providing education to 900 students in grades 1 through 8 ac-cording to the Syrian curriculum. Twen-ty-seven teachers have been certified to teach Turkish as a foreign language, and one of the coordination center's teachers created an alphabet book intended for Syrian students.

Employment services, via an employ-ment office matching job-seekers with private sector employment opportuni-ties; for example, in pharmaceutical and textile factories.

MARMARA DENİZİ

KULLANIM ANAHTARI

Otoyol		Metro	
Bulvar		Hafif Metro	
Cadde		Tramvay	
Şehirlerarası Yollar		Metrobüs	
Anayollar		Demiryolu	
Köyyolu		İlçe Sınırı	
D100 Yol Numaraları		Deniz Otobüsü	

Sultanbeyli Municipality, one of 39 districts in Istanbul, is home to about 300,000 of Istanbul's 14 million inhabitants.

(Image source: The Emirr (own work); licensed under Creative Commons license CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

Services for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as matching widowed and single mothers with housing, support for rent and other expenses, and housing for orphaned children and victims of domestic violence. The municipality has also established a guesthouse, albeit with limited capacity, for Syrian women and children with no other place to live.

Sultanbeyli established this system for two reasons: first, because governmental restrictions limit the municipality's ability to carry out direct service provision; and second, to minimize perceptions that aid is being disproportionately directed toward one vulnerable community over another, thus mitigating tensions between local constituencies.

Importantly, SUKOM and the coordination center at Sultanbeyli came into being not because of new legislation, but because of dedication and innovative thinking from committed individuals, including the mayor. Workshop participants saw this as a promising model for potential replication and scale-up.

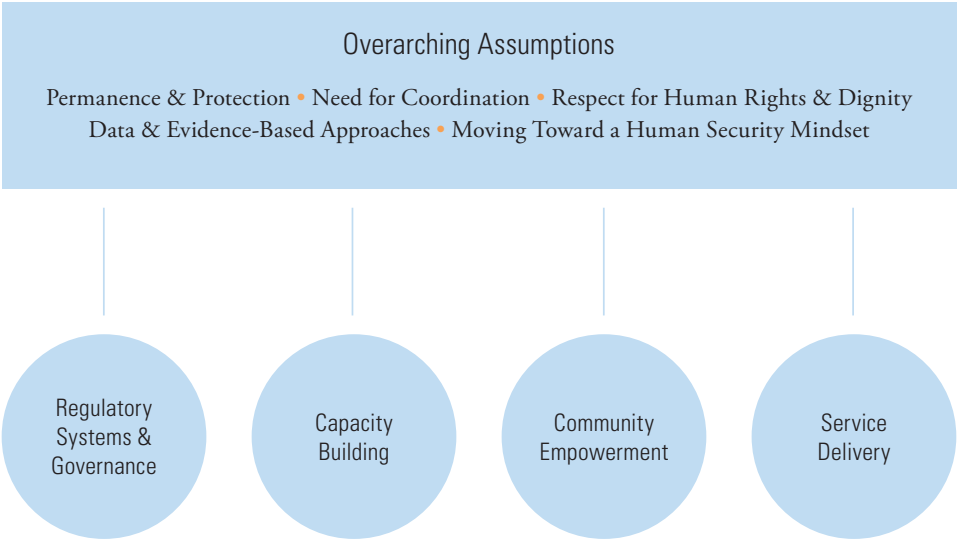# Part 2: *Possible Directions for On-The-Ground Assistance*

Always acknowledging the very large issues related to legal status designations, this workshop focused on how assistance could be provided more efficiently and with greater effect to Syrian refugees where they are. Thus, participants quickly turned from a discussion of the issues compelling flows of displaced Syrians and others across borders to a targeted questioning of how governments, NGOs, and international organizations might reconfigure their aid delivery systems and processes—starting immediately.
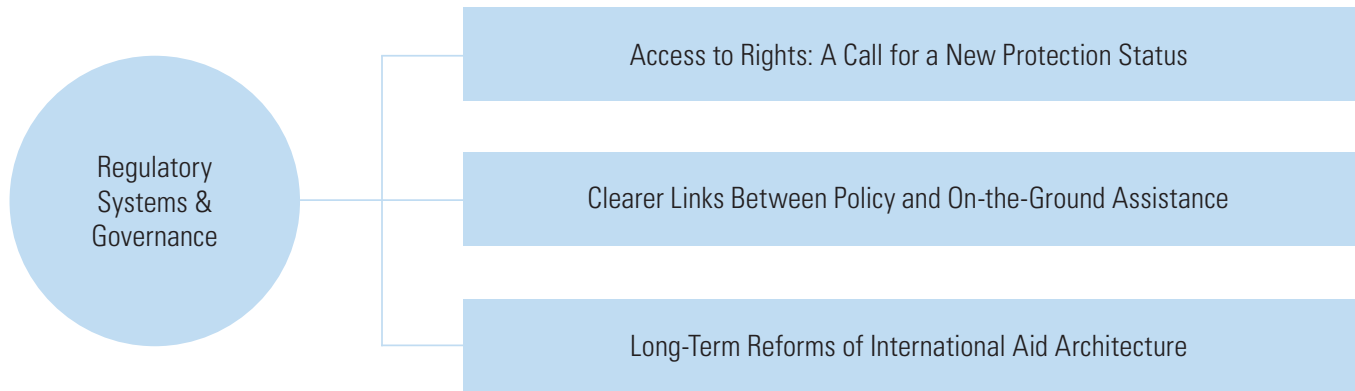
Participants conceptualized a new development assistance agenda, as follows, with four primary areas for assistance: Regulatory Systems & Governance, Capacity Building, Community Empowerment, and Service Delivery.

The next pages illustrate our collective mapping of each of these four themes, emphasizing key **actors, barriers, and specific actions**—including technology-based solutions—that assistance-focused institutions and organizations could support in the more immediate term, while looking toward the need for development-focused support in the medium to long term.

A key consideration for all areas is the need for **asset-based approaches**, including the critical need to provide **equitable assistance to displaced Syrians and their host communities**.

Envisioning Sustainable Solutions for Syrians and Host Communities

Overarching Assumptions

Permanence & Protection • Need for Coordination • Respect for Human Rights & Dignity
Data & Evidence-Based Approaches • Moving Toward a Human Security Mindset

- Regulatory Systems & Governance
- Capacity Building
- Community Empowerment
- Service Delivery

	Access to Rights: A Call for a New Protection Status
Regulatory Systems & Governance	Clearer Links Between Policy and On-the-Ground Assistance
	Long-Term Reforms of International Aid Architecture

Regulatory Systems & Governance - Expanding Access: Understanding that implementing new regulatory systems is by no means an "immediate" solution, workshop participants believe the time is ripe for countries to take joint action to **create a new protection status**, via an internationally issued legal form of identification, that would offer displaced Syrians access to basic human rights. These ID cards would provide an internationally recognized legal status, enabling displaced people to operate in society, access banking services, jobs, education, healthcare, and other benefits that the "stateless" often cannot readily access. Several participants suggested that the card should be valid for five years, and renewable after that period.

- Beyond basic access to services, the ID cards would give holders to access competency/equivalency testing to fill gaps in education documents and other paperwork, enabling them to gain employment and contribute as professionals.

- The cards should include technology features (biometrics or debit cards linked to identities, for example) that could help track migration flows, and fill crucial gaps in countries' understanding of who is moving where, and when they move.

This is a longer-term solution, but it is one that is critically needed. Once piloted with groups of displaced Syrians, such a solution could have far-reaching ramifications for providing assistance and enhancing understanding of other displaced groups. Underlying this proposal is the need for a strong coordinating body, one that can manage a vast amount of data and technology, but also readily link with and move resources into the locales where assistance is being delivered. Participants once again noted the potential to learn from, and perhaps replicate, solutions such as those in Sultanbeyli.

Workshop participants proposed an asset-based approach that (1) affirms the agency and abilities of displaced Syrians and their host communities and (2) engages them as decision-makers.

This approach emphasizes the need for a clear devolution of shared resources to the local level to enable timely, relevant actions that equitably benefit those most in need. Three existing resources could be expanded to promote capacity development of Syrian organizations on the ground:

1. **Conduct asset mapping.** In Turkey alone, there are thousands of Syrian community-based organizations. Identifying them and linking those with similar agendas would be crucial first steps, fol-lowed by mapping of organizations in the three frontline states, plus Syria, identification of technical experts and donors to support organizational capacity building, and then linking organizations with similar agendas to minimize unnecessary duplication.

2. **Link virtual and on-the-ground networks for refugee support.** We envision a virtual community (perhaps building on Planet Syria: www.planetsyria.org) to share information and identify those in need of support, and an on-the-ground association to develop the capacity of promising local organizations. In Turkey, a new Refugee Council is being developed, with the aim of coordinating all Syrian refugee support. With organizational capacity strengthening guidance, funding, and other support, these platforms could form a blended network for coordinating all refugee support services.

3. **Catalyze champions.** Once again, the Sultanbeyli's service-to-refugee mapping and linking plat-form could be a model for other local governments looking to streamline and solidify how they provide assistance to Syrians and host community members in need. In fact, three other Turkish municipalities are doing similar work, and could be linked with counterparts in other areas.
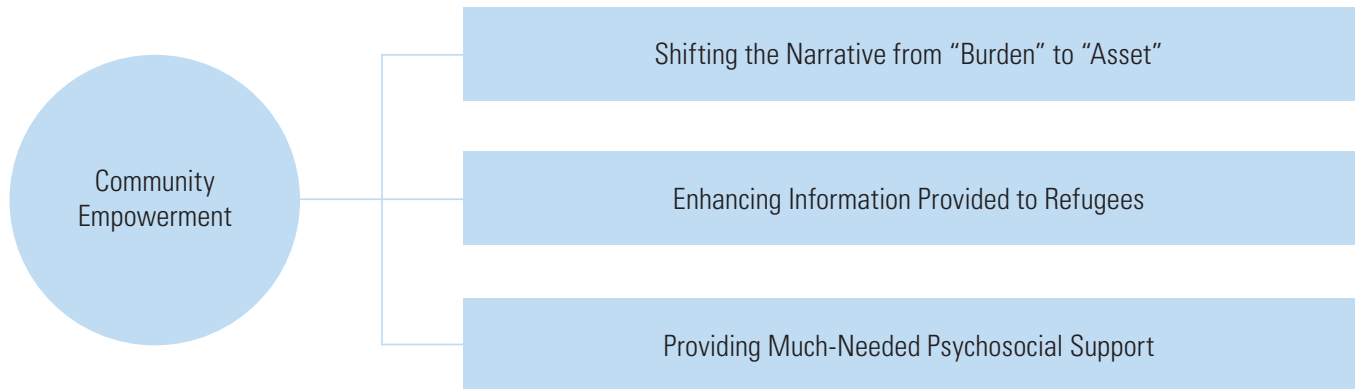
Capacity Building	Asset-Based Approach: Engage Syrians and Host Communities
	Community-Focused Organizational Development
	Encouraging Resource Sharing Based on Common Agendas

Defining "Capacity Building"

For civil society organizations, we define capacity building as "equipping an organization with the developmental tools it needs to be successful and sustainable, mission notwithstanding." This entails:

1. Results-oriented strategic planning (vision / strategy development, accountability measures, and impact analysis)

2. Business planning (funding streams, services menus, income-generating activities)

For governmental institutions, we define capacity building as "equipping the institution with systems and tools to develop results-oriented strategies, achieve goals, and promote actions sustainably, as a neutral funder."
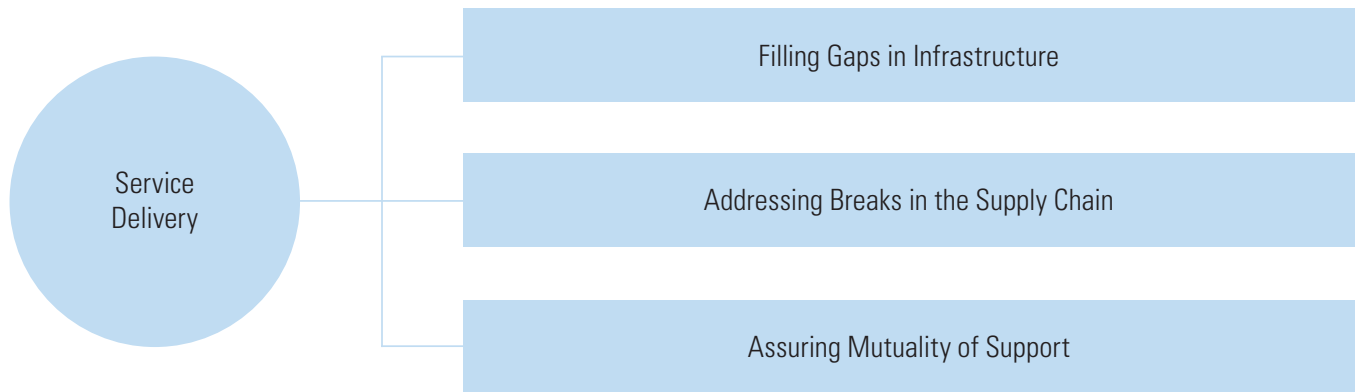
Community Empowerment	Shifting the Narrative from "Burden" to "Asset"
	Enhancing Information Provided to Refugees
	Providing Much-Needed Psychosocial Support

Community Empowerment - Shifting the Narrative: A strong theme was the need to shift the "refugee" narrative toward seeing refugees as assets—as human beings with agency to help guide decision-making and actions to improve their lives and the lives of the neighbors who are hosting them. Participants proposed several methods:

- **Disseminate standard information to refugees upon arrival.** In other words, provide consistent information to refugees about their rights in each host country (e.g., in a brochure). The key in this seemingly simple action is to standardize the information refugees receive upon arrival and provide it through sources they are more likely to trust (especially community-based organizations and other refugees). Such a brochure should feature plain language in Arabic, Turkish, and English and a clean design that translates legal information into action items for refugees.

- **Invest in media training and positive storytelling.** Changing the rhetoric used to describe refugees (eliminating the use of "illegal" to describe a displaced person, for example) is a fundamental step toward shifting perception. As a complementary action, giving refugees the means to tell their stories in the media (engaging Syrian journalists living in the host country, for example) could be an effective empowerment method.

- **Provide psychosocial support.** The fact that Syrians fleeing violence have experienced trauma is often ignored in the rush to provide essential services. To fill this gap, Syrian psychologists are already piloting "psychological first aid" programs and offering remote counseling via Skype and by phone. Similar solutions should be tested, engaging Syrian doctors in the host countries or members of the Syrian diaspora, to support those recovering from the traumas of violence and displacement.

At every step, Syrians must be part of the conversation, the solution, and the implementation.

Service Delivery
Filling Gaps in Infrastructure
Addressing Breaks in the Supply Chain
Assuring Mutuality of Support

Service Delivery - Acknowledging Long-Term Needs: Participants emphasized the need for mutuality of support to address infrastructure and service delivery gaps. Many host communities were in need of development in these areas when refugees arrived, and the additional population—coupled with inadequate coordination of existing resources—thinned resources that were already in short supply, exacerbating animosity between refugees and their hosts. Participants offered several ideas for mutually supportive service delivery approaches, some of which have been tested in Jordan and elsewhere:

- **Let go of short-term thinking.** The camp model relies on "sunk costs" and short-term solutions, such as slums and tent communities. Alternative approaches require a longer view that acknowledges the protracted nature of this crisis and a focus on overall community development. Examples include involving refugees in building their own houses, sourcing IKEA readymade homes (as in Lebanon), or offering housing upgrades to homeowners who agree to take in refugee families (as in the "Kafala" system in Jordan, in operation until 2015).

- **Expand "virtual infrastructure."** Work with the private sector and IT companies to map service delivery locations (aid mapping), help with scheduling, review services, and provide skill-to-job and need-to-aid matching. Part of this work requires encouraging large employers to see refugees as a valuable part of the labor pool.

- **Share and replicate successful local approaches.** Workshop participants again turned to Sultanbeyli as an example of an effective community-empowerment approach to service delivery. To encourage other municipalities to consider similar solutions, Sultanbeyli's representatives could create a workshop for other localities hosting a high proportion of Syrians. Given enough time and momentum, such systems could be scaled to the national level.

Next Steps

The findings from this policy workshop represent an early step in a lengthy and evolving response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Next steps will require two actions:

Dissemination of these findings to relevant policymakers and actors in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan—and beyond. Policymaking is an iterative process, and we look forward to an ongoing discussion of our findings.

Readers are encouraged to share these findings with any institutions involved in the Syrian refugee crisis.

Policymakers and practitioners are encouraged to contact BCARS to collaborate on further refining these recommendations for their unique sets of challenges and areas of responsibility.

An expansion of this policy research, both vertically within Turkey (from the na-tional strategic level to the local op-erational level) and horizontally across borders, examining similar challenges in other Syrian refugee-hosting states, par-ticularly Jordan, Lebanon, the Balkans, western Europe, and the United States. BCARS is actively developing work-shops to complement these findings, and advocates additional policy-focused research from concerned academics, policy advisors, and think tanks to meet the enormous scale of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Institutions involved in parallel research are encouraged to contact BCARS to facilitate exchange of ideas and collaboration.

Further Reading

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This document is the result of a collaborative fact-finding and discussion process convened under a modified form of "Chatham House Rule"; in other words, although participants are free to use the information from the workshop, neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant, is specified in relation to a particular statement or set of views.

Every effort has been made to provide a clear and accurate overview of participants' views and comments. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of BCARS, its funders, or its partners.

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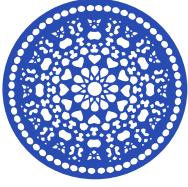
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MiReKoc, the Migration Research Center at Koc University, is an established research institution with the objective of connecting the migration debate in Turkey to ongoing debates and research in different contexts and settings. MiReKoç endeavors to develop collaboration among scholars, civil society organizations, and policymakers to stimulate dialogue on existing and new research..

http://mirekoc.ku.edu.tr/

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