

Municipalities Exchange Knowledge on Hosting Refugees

The [Refugees and Host Communities Program](#) of the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) won a grant from the South-South Facility (SSF) to support a programmatic cross-regional knowledge exchange for future work on local economic development in forced displacement contexts.

Local government representatives and members of the CMI-managed [Host Municipalities Learning Network \(HMLN\)](#) meet face-to-face or online periodically. Members from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Turkey exchange their experiences in dealing with a high influx of refugees and learn new methodologies.

As part of the SSF-funded program, a delegation of municipal representatives from Afghanistan joined the HMLN for the first time for a [workshop](#) in March 2018 on Strategic Planning for Local Economic Development (LED). They learned how to develop a sound LED strategy, based on the experiences of their peers from the Middle-East and Turkey, and they also brought their different experiences and perspectives in dealing with forced displacement. Mr. Shoaib Rahim, Deputy Mayor of Kabul, remarked: “If we turned the displacement situation into an opportunity, the money and resources brought by internally displaced people and returnees would boost the local economy and create job opportunities for everyone. If we are not able to provide education and jobs, all these young people will result in crime and extremism”.

Despite differences between and within countries, a cross-border knowledge exchange is extremely useful to enable generating innovative solutions to face the forced displacement crisis. Mr. Rahim pointed out: “Although Afghanistan doesn’t have the same problems of MENA countries and Turkey, the exchange is absolutely useful. Some of these countries have very successful experiences in dealing with displaced population, such as Turkish municipalities, and all of them have a different spectrum of solution that we could apply in Afghanistan. More has been tested there, we can see the results of these programs and, if they work, we can try to implement them back in our local situation”.

By getting together to discuss and exchange new ideas on a regular basis, municipalities hosting forcibly displaced can find solutions to the crisis, while empowering their populations and giving hope to the displaced.

Mr. Yunus Kul, Director of Foreign Relations Department of Sancaktepe Municipality in Turkey, acknowledged that: “the HMLN is the most effective thing for us, as we don’t have many chances to work together, networking among and within countries, and collaborate”. Mr. Maroun Antoun, Mayor of Qrayeh Municipality, Lebanon, seemed to agree: “The HMLN is an opportunity to widen our choices by getting to know new experiences and exchange ideas with our peers. Small ideas can give you big solutions about a problem you are facing”.



Mr. Shoaib Rahim, Deputy Mayor of Kabul - Turkish and Afghan municipal representatives exchanging during a working group of the Training Workshop on Strategic Planning for LED, Amman, Jordan, March 2018