

JOB



MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!



A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

JOBS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE NATIONAL & REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS: Expanding Economic Opportunities for Refugees and Host Communities

DEAD SEA, JORDAN 28-29 JANUARY / ISTANBUL, TURKEY 5-6 MARCH 2018

CONSULTATION REPORT





*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In partnership with Microsoft, UNDP convened National and Regional Stakeholder Consultations in January and March 2018, to identify and respond to existing challenges to the implementation of the recommendations made in the report *Jobs Make the Difference: Expanding Economic Opportunities for Refugees and Host Communities*. The stakeholders set out to ask: “How can governments, UN agencies, NGOs and CSOs and the private sector work together to better respond to a protracted crisis?”
2. The Jordan National Consultation, which took place at the Dead Sea, was attended by about 100 participants representing the Government of Jordan; the Chambers of Commerce and Industry; over 30 private sector firms; and almost 60 NGO, INGO, UN and bilateral partners. The Regional Consultation in Istanbul, was attended by 75 participants from Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt; representing Government; Chambers of Commerce and Chambers of Industry; regional private sector firms; and NGOs.
3. The two consultations featured a full day of presentations and panel discussions with a range of experts and stakeholders addressing challenges and opportunities across the following thematic areas:
 - Expanding national and regional trade opportunities, investment flows, and conducive regulatory environments;
 - Developing improved coordination and data sharing to expand economic opportunities;
 - Improving the employability of youth and women across the region;
 - Utilising new research to produce evidence-based policy options for governments and the international community;
 - Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as long-term opportunities for the private sector.
4. Bringing together insights from consultation discussions and the extensive experience of both plenaries, the second half of both consultations in Jordan Turkey comprised the development of action agenda workshops. Stakeholders were guided through the collaborative processes of brainstorming, idea prototyping and formalisation using a human-centred design approach. Participants developed national and regional action plans for trade, skills and data management, as well as MSME development.

PART 1:

Jordan National Stakeholder Consultation
DEAD SEA, JORDAN

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL:

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION - DEAD SEA, JORDAN

SPEAKERS

Anders Pedersen, *UN Resident Coordinator, Jordan*

Nadine Fayad, *Refugees Regional Response Manager, Microsoft Philanthropies*

HE Mohannad Attar, *General Director, Amman Chamber of Commerce*

Yusuf Siddiqui, *Chairman, Shell Companies in Jordan*

HE Andrea Matteo Fontana, *EU Ambassador to Jordan*

Hani Khleifat, *Deputy Minister of Labour representing HE Ali Algezawi, Minister of Labour, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*

MODERATOR

Samuel Rizk, *Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility*



The workshop opened with a high-level panel addressing almost 100 participants, made up of representatives from the Government of Jordan; the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, over 30 firms from the Jordanian private sector; and almost 60 NGO, INGO, UN and bilateral partners.

The UN Resident Coordinator opened by applauding the Jordanian government's response to the Syrian Crisis and its role in leading the global paradigm shift from an emergency assistance response to a resilience-based approach that supports economic growth while also responding to humanitarian needs. The new EU-Jordan trade deal that relaxes the Rules of Origin in support of the Jordan Compact was a crucial step and an innovative breakthrough. However, despite these achievements, significant challenges remain that need to be addressed in order to create a more efficient response plan, across the following themes:

1. Access to work permits must be coupled with other initiatives to expand economic opportunities.
2. Communication is crucial to dispel notions that employment will disqualify refugees from receiving cash assistance.
3. There is a need to intensify efforts to promote women's economic empowerment since their labour force participation rates remain particularly low.

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4. Job creation in host states requires sustained economic growth of at least 6% annually.
5. The private sector is central to the resilience narrative and should be incorporated into response plans.

The Ministry of Labour reinforced Jordan's commitment to support those seeking refuge in Jordan, despite financial resource limitations, and to integrate the resilience framework as outlined in the Jordan Compact. However, as highlighted by the General Director of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, progress so far toward expanding economic opportunities has been slow, with a notable increase in unemployment rates. It was highlighted that while it is businesses that create jobs, the government is committed to supporting and facilitating improved labour market conditions through reform.

Opening statements from representatives of Microsoft and Shell highlighted the wealth of potential and talent in Jordan's human capital and the potential for inclusive, sustainable growth through empowering both Jordanian and Syrian entrepreneurs. In the coming ten years, 1.5 million jobs will be created that require computer skills, however hundreds of thousands will be unable to access these opportunities due to lack of access to appropriate training. Microsoft emphasised its commitment to helping individuals and organizations realise their potential through increasing access to opportunities, especially for those who are at risk of being "left behind." Similarly, Shell spoke of its commitment to helping shape perceptions of Jordan's investment potential through business support and SME development.



"The role of the private sector cannot be overstated. The private sector involvement in crisis response is at the heart of the resilience building narrative. We need the support, the investment, and the partnership of the private sector."

ANDERS PEDERSEN,
 UN Resident Coordinator, Jordan



"The private sector is a catalysing power for our initiatives, a driver of new ideas for integration."

HE ANDREA MATTEO FONTANA,
 EU Ambassador to Jordan

The EU Ambassador to Jordan outlined the concept of "expanding" economic opportunities for Syrian Refugees and host communities, and the need to encourage an inclusive labour market that does not compete with Jordanians' job opportunities. Five key factors were identified to realise this: 1) ensuring an regulatory environment that facilitates private sector growth; 2) increasing trade opportunities; 3) increasing access to finance for SMEs; 4) ensuring education and relevant skill-development; and 5) improving the regulatory environment for work permits.

SESSION 1: **EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES**

SPEAKERS

Susan Razzaz, *Lead Author of Jobs Make the Difference*

Nathalie Milbach-Bouché, *Team Leader Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development, UNDP*

MODERATOR

HE Andrea Matteo Fontana, *EU Ambassador to Jordan*



The first plenary session set the scene for following discussions through introduction of the “Jobs Make the Difference” report.

Lead author of the report Susan Razzaz emphasised that the report is pitched at the regional level and sought to present a wide range of practical approaches to supporting job creation from which the international community, host governments and private sector partners could learn. The report is built on the premise that we can and should learn from other countries facing similar challenges in identifying ways to facilitate refugee contribution to the host economy without detrimentally impacting host communities.

Panellists highlighted key areas of the report on which to focus in order to centre the discussion on how to move from a crisis management approach to a development response:

1. Firstly, panellists noted the importance of expanding access to new international markets, given the loss of export markets as a result of the crisis. The Rule of Origin trade agreement is one key innovative response to emerge from the Jordan Compact. While it has not been taken up as quickly as hoped, it remains an important and encouraging opportunity which should be complemented through further support to Jordan-based businesses as they adapt to the demands and standards of the European market. More broadly, there is a need to identify the sources of hesitation which are preventing more firms from taking up this opportunity and also to connect potential international investors to the Jordanian private sector.

2. Secondly, the report highlights the need to attract and facilitate Syrian business growth. While new regulations have facilitated registering and operating home-based micro businesses, challenges remain for Syrian entrepreneurs, in particular due to legislation around which sectors they may work in. Promising examples from Turkey and Egypt, where Syrians have been given the space to start businesses and demonstrate a real contribution to their host nation's economies, are sources of encouragement. Relatedly, panellists emphasised the importance of work permits and employment opportunities. The role of the government is not to create jobs, but to foster a labour regulatory framework through which the private sector can create jobs. While the government has come a long way in introducing flexibilities into the work permit system, opportunities for greater innovation remain. The Turkish quota system was mentioned as an example of a pragmatic and transparent mechanism that, while prioritising Turkish national employment opportunities, also responds to the demands of the overall labour market and skills available. Furthermore, Jordan's heavy reliance on short-term migrant labour presents a unique labour entry point for Syrian refugees who can complement, rather than compete with, the Jordanian labour force.
3. There also remains a wide informational gap between Jordanian businesses and the set of competencies and skills available in the labour force. The importance of ensuring vocational training is responsive to the needs of the labour market, and for the international community to be cognitive of the potential pitfalls around such programmes, is great. Initiatives such as certification could prove more productive and result in tangible employment outcomes. In crafting these programmes, there is a critical need to consider gender barriers and identify the necessary services and institutions to enhance economic opportunities for women.

Other key points raised during the discussion included:

- The potential trade-offs inherent to the Rule of Origin trade agreement, which encourages growth of the manufacturing sector, when Jordan's economic strength traditionally lies in the service sector.
- The importance of attracting skills and experience from the formerly vibrant manufacturing sector in Syria to Jordan and of mitigating investor's misconceptions of what Jordan can offer.
- The need to balance the education and skills training offered to Syrian refugees with the current system of closed sectors.

SESSION 2:
ACTIONS TAKEN TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LONDON COMMITMENTS:
A STOCKTAKING EXERCISE

SPEAKERS

Maha Kattaa, ILO

Francisco Santos-Padron, UNDP

Ghada Salem, Oxfam Jordan

Laura Buffoni, UNHCR Jordan

Jacqueline Degroot, Food Security, WFP

Eman Issa, Livelihood and Labor Market Lead, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

MODERATOR

Samuel Rizk, Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility



The second plenary session sought to take stock of progress made so far in support of the Government of Jordan's implementation of policy commitments emerging from the London Conference. The Jordan Compact signalled a clear departure from traditional emergency responses; anchored around not only the humanitarian need, but also the country's social and fiscal requirements. Still, Jordan faces the dilemma of how to stimulate new economic opportunities for both Jordanians and Syrian refugees, while the subsequent increase of informality in the labour market has accentuated inequalities across gender, age and nationality, thereby impacting social cohesion and stability.

Panellists agreed that positive steps had been made to improve the regulatory and policy environment to facilitate innovative initiatives coming from INGOs to build better systems for refugees accessing both direct employment and self-employment. UN agencies work closely with government counterparts as implementation partners as well as advocates for further improvement in labour market governance and compliance with universal work standards.

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Work permits were raised as a key issue for further innovation. Work permits offer protection and key safety mechanisms for vulnerable Syrian refugees entering the labour market, and while gains have been made in terms of flexibility and removing some financial barriers to accessing documentation, more can be done to increase the mobility of the Syrian work force. Furthermore while 86,000 work permits have so far been issued, women account for just 4% of those.

The importance of collaboration was also emphasised, particularly the need for INGOs and the international community to engage further with the private sector. IKEA's local sourcing strategy from the female refugee population in Jordan is one such success story. Other initiatives that are proving effective in the Jordanian context include the Better Work Jordan programme, which is now expanding beyond the garment sector; WFP's Food for Work and school meals programme, which similar provides local employment opportunities; UN commercial supplier partnerships; employment centres and job matching schemes.

Emphasis was also placed on social cohesion and the need for better communication of what is being achieved with the Jordanian public. Toward this end, more equitable monitoring and publicising of achievements in job creation for Jordanians, as well as Syrians, was suggested.

When addressing how the international community can support and contribute to the resilience agenda in Jordan, there is also a responsibility to look ahead at the skills and jobs which will be required in the coming years and to encourage economic diversification to better mitigate future shocks. It is important to consider these questions within the context of the environmental challenges Jordan faces.

Other interesting points and questions raised were:

Other interesting points and questions raised were:

- Sustainable employment strategies in Jordan must consider natural resource management. The importance of investing in the green economy should be emphasized.
- Monitoring systems for the sustainability and protection of refugee employment both in formal and informal sectors are vital.
- Overall, there is a need to work more coherently and collaboratively as an international community, especially with regards to communicating benefits for the Jordanian community.



MAHA KATTAA,
ILO Jordan

SESSION 3: **EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN**

SPEAKERS

Farida Khan, *Skills, Employment and Gender Specialist, UN Women*

Laila Baker, *UNFPA Representative Jordan*

Hugh Bosely, *Founder and CEO, RBK*

MODERATOR

HE Peter MacDougall, *Ambassador of Canada to Jordan*



The third plenary session brought together UN and NGO perspectives on the unique logistical and cultural challenges of integrating women into the labour market, and examples of how these issues are being confronted.

Creating economic opportunities for women is not only a question of social justice but also of smart economics—if Jordan is to realise its economic growth agenda and if Syrian refugees are to fruitfully contribute to its economy, then women cannot be excluded. Furthermore, while much has been accomplished at the national level to improve the regulatory framework for employment, the fragility of such achievements has been challenged by the influx of refugees, which present new challenges for female entry into the workforce.

Despite high levels of female education, with women outperforming men in educational achievement, female labour force participation in Jordan remains dismally low. Various barriers exist that prevent women transitioning to formal employment, including cultural attitudes which prize educational attainment over actual employment. This situation is exacerbated by poor support structures, such as childcare, transport and lack of redress for institutionalised workplace harassment. As a result, women are less engaged in the dialogue surrounding opportunities for public-private development which reinforces a male-bias into employment structures. It is therefore important to ensure that private sector growth does not marginalise women and that social services provide the necessary support to incentivise women's participation in the labour market.

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Various global initiatives have proved to be successful models for women's integration into the labour force. For example, apprenticeships have facilitated women's inclusion in non-traditional sectors. Other programmes include bystander training on workplace harassment; school-based businesses; and online market place schemes. Programmes that develop the necessary ecosystem for business, such as formalising traditional access to finance and mentorship, have also had positive results in fostering female entrepreneurship.



Finally, panellists highlighted the importance of 'champions' of women's employment as a critical tool in overcoming social norm constraints, particularly for youth, where the impact of a role model can be limited among certain communities. For example, organisations such as ReBootKamp target not only the growing demand for tech-based skills and services, but also the fact that the technology industry is much less likely to discriminate along gender lines.

SESSION 4:
FROM CRISIS TO THE SDGS, A PATHWAY FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

SPEAKERS

Sahba Sobhani, *Global Programme Advisor Private Sector, UNDP*

Dr. Na'el Hussami, *Director General, Chamber of Industry*

Yaron Schwartz, *Private Sector Partnerships Advisor, Tent Foundation*

Mohammad Zawahreh, *Head of Local Development Unit, Zarqa Municipality*



The final panel discussion highlighted innovative ways in which the private sector has engaged with the crisis response and identified areas within the resilience agenda to deepen complementarities among the humanitarian, development and private sectors.

Engagement with the private sector is critical to delivering the SDGs. The private sector is well-positioned to support new, inclusive and sustainable financing solutions to achieve the SDGs, which in turn present private entities with significant opportunities to access new markets. Many of the SDGs present investment opportunities, with an estimated 12 trillion USD in potential market opportunities to be unlocked. The four sectors identified as presenting the greatest opportunity for private sector involvement are 1) food and agriculture; 2) cities and mobility systems; 3) energy; 4) and health. Jordan is no exception, and presenters emphasised needs the private sector could fill, including the establishment or expansion of solar power plants, female-only leisure facilities, waste water treatment, and carpooling and ride-hailing app technology.

The work of the Tent Foundation demonstrates how private companies can integrate helping refugees into their core business model while retaining a focus on sustainability. A Centre for Global Development report highlighted three main areas where sustainable social entrepreneurship is possible: in 1) hiring and supply chains; 2) impact investing; and 3) direct services. The Tent Foundation acts as a motivator, convenor and consultancy to help private companies realise their role in these three areas. The organization seeks to encourage a paradigm shift in which refugees are not viewed solely as recipients of assistance but also as potential clients.

Yet despite this work, challenges remain in fostering the investment ecosystem in Jordan. For example, mechanisms and incentives to encourage foreign direct investment (FDI) remain weak. A key challenge

identified is the historical lack of international demand for Jordanian exports.

Furthermore, the industrial sector has trouble recruiting qualified workers from either the Jordanian or Syrian labour force. Weaknesses in the vocational training systems, inflexibilities in changing sectors among workers, and the lack of relevant skills in the existing labour force pose barriers to employing refugees in the manufacturing industry.

Other key points raised included:

- The issue of social cohesion as a key priority for governance at the municipality level;
- Challenges surrounding the facilitation of Syrian refugees' entry into the industrial sector given the duration and cost of worker transport and insurance;
- Difficulty in linking Jordanian producers and exporters with European buyers and investors.

WORKSHOP SESSION: **TOWARDS A JOBS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE ACTION AGENDA FOR JORDAN**

MODERATOR

Amany Eid and Paula Isturiz, *Design Thinking Facilitators, UNDP*

The second part of the stakeholder consultation utilized the insights of the panel discussions to develop a joint Action Agenda consisting of innovative ideas to foster job creation and robust economic growth in Jordan. The conference participants were guided through a collaborative brainstorming and prototyping process, during which they applied a human-centred design approach.

To address the main action areas and themes of the first day's analysis, the participants split into groups, each focusing on a specific lever to strengthen job creation for refugees and host communities.



The groups engaged in collaborative brainstorming and discussion sessions, distilling the most viable ideas, refining them, and then formalising them into an implementation plan. They were then presented in the plenary to a panel of expert representatives made up of the private sector, the Government of Jordan and the UNDP.

The main outcomes were as follows:

WOMEN:

- Addressing gender-specific needs for inclusive job creation, the group focusing on women's issues developed the idea of an accessible and affordable carpool service for female workers. Aimed particularly at women from rural and remote areas, this idea seeks to empower marginalised groups by giving them access to labour markets and skill building opportunities. Acknowledging gender barriers for employment, such as cultural norms and a lack of practical support structures for parents in the workforce, a carpool service targets the practical obstacle of reaching the workplace and therefore potentially opens up new opportunities for female job seekers. The group proposed implementing the service in cooperation with the National Women's Council, in the form of a public-private partnership with an existing provider of transportation services.

DATA:

- Aiming to improve collaboration and information-sharing among stakeholders, the group addressing data issues proposed the establishment of a joint data sharing platform as a means to strengthening partnerships among governments, municipalities, NGOs and international organisations. This platform would expand a base of common information and evidence, reduce costs associated with current duplications and discoordination in primary data collection, and open new opportunities for evidence-based policy analysis. To implement this idea, the group suggested forming a committee of relevant stakeholders to agree to common data standards. The data-sharing facility should then be established as a digital distribution platform, complemented by physical data distribution and collection centres.



REGULATION:

- To promote a conducive regulatory environment for job creation and economic growth, the 'Regulation' group suggested the introduction of a labour market information system. Acknowledging the extensive efforts the Government of Jordan has already undertaken to provide opportunities for refugees, the group emphasized that regulatory barriers for job seekers still exist and the issuance of work permits is only the first step in inclusive job creation. They proposed a mapping of best practices in consultations with stakeholders and an evaluation of alternatives for existing labour market policies. Following the results of these investigations, a labour market information system could be created to function as a platform comprising all relevant informational resources for both job seekers and the private sector. This system would ensure stability and transparency in labour market regulations and offer novel regulatory opportunities.

SKILLS:

- In identifying a lack of transparency in the labour market, the 'Skills' working group suggested the establishment of an online job matching and training platform. Addressing the lack of information regarding skills requirements, regulations and opportunities, this platform should provide all necessary information for job seekers and serve as a link between private sector and the refugee and host community work force. Further addressing the skills mismatch between market demands and educational outcomes of vocational and academic trainings, the platform could provide targeted online learning courses. The group suggested the formation of a steering committee to advance this idea and to undertake a market and needs assessment. After an initially subsidised pilot phase, the platform should develop a sustainable business model.



SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES:

- Acknowledging the central role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving job growth and expanding economic opportunities, the 'SME' working group proposed the setup of a 'one stop shop' as a central point of contact for the private sector. Targeting barriers for business expansion and start-ups, such as the lack of transparency regarding private sector regulation and trade opportunities, the 'one stop shop' would foster enterprise growth by providing information and advisory services for SMEs.

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Furthermore, the platform is suggested to act as central access point for potential investors to enter the Jordanian market and to facilitate communication with the local private sector. Attracting investment by providing stability and transparency in the regulatory environment, the 'one stop shop' would support growth and strengthen financing opportunities for SMEs.



NGO:

- Emphasising the need for greater coordination and communication between NGOs, the wider international community, the government and the private sector, the group focusing on NGO issues proposed the creation of a core NGO sub-group within the Jordan Livelihoods Working Group. This group should act as central entity to harmonise refugee support and standardise subsidy practices to reduce competition among organisations and to address duplication and discoordination in NGO activities. To agree to standards and coordinate efforts, the sub-group would convene consultations with stakeholders and donors.

EDUCATION:

- Identifying weaknesses in the educational system as a barrier to job creation, the 'Education' group suggested the formation of a national alliance for improving education. The alliance would engage national and local stakeholders in government, private sector, schools and universities to target qualitative gaps in educational outcomes. The group proposes to start the implementation by mapping and analysing international trends and success stories to assist in developing a set of localised pilot projects. Closely monitoring the success of these pilots, they could represent the basis for discussions concerning large-scale reforms for schools, universities and vocational trainings.

PART 2:

**Regional Stakeholder Consultation
ISTANBUL, TURKEY**

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL:
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

SPEAKERS

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to the Republic of Turkey

Marcos Neto, Director, UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development

Ghada Khalifa, Director, Microsoft Philanthropies, Middle East and Africa

Claudio Tomasi, Country Director, UNDP Turkey

MODERATOR

Samuel Rizk, Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility



The regional consultation commenced with opening remarks from Dr. Samuel Rizk, who welcomed the 75 participants, made up representatives from the Governments of Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan; the private sector; UN agencies and NGOs/INGOs working across the region.

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano's echoed this welcome, emphasising the importance of effectively engaging with the private sector as a key driver of employment in the protracted crisis response phase. Outlining the Government of Turkey's response to its unprecedented refugee influx, she noted the importance of providing access to employment, education, and healthcare to the most vulnerable.

Marcos Neto shared Irena's encouragement of private sector engagement, providing an overview of the UNDP's recent progress and long-term vision for partnerships within the region and nationally. These insights were complemented by Ghada Khalifa's overview of how Microsoft is investing resources and technology to expand economic opportunities in the region.

PRESENTATION ON THE STATE OF JOBS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES - UNDP-SRF

SPEAKER

Samuel Rizk, *Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility*

Dr. Rizk provided a briefing on the outcomes of January's national workshop in Jordan, before an overview of the regional consultation's themes and expected outcomes.

SESSION 1: TRADE, INVESTMENT AND REGULATIONS: A TECHNICAL DISCUSSION ON EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

SPEAKERS

H.E Ziad Homsy, *Senator, Chairman, Amman Chamber of Commerce*

Hussam Tatari, *Founder and CEO, Tatari & Partners*

Quang Le, *Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP Regional Bureau of Arab States*

MODERATOR

Samuel Rizk, *Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility*



Through panellist interventions and audience discussion, stakeholders established the following:

1. Regional economic integration (among host countries, the EU, and post-agreement Syria) offers a major opportunity for the expansion of markets and economic growth.
2. Semi-skilled and skilled labour can be utilized to address demand within host country labour markets, in both agricultural and industrial sectors. (Panellists shared examples from Turkey, where industrialists have acquired machinery which cannot be operated without Syrian labour.) Syrian capital can also be strategically invested in host countries to expand economic growth in key sectors.
3. In the run-up to the Brussels Conference, it is important that the private sector has a greater voice in trade facilitation processes.

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4. Technical expertise is required in host countries to develop private sector capacities and increase production standards to facilitate exports to the EU and elsewhere.
5. Governments and the private sector in the region need to keep working together to improve the business environment and conditions for local and foreign investment to boost the economic growth needed for job creation:
 - Stakeholders within governments and the private sector need to improve connectivity and communication with international markets.
 - Governments need to innovate to streamline trade procedures, such as by digitizing transactions to increase cost efficiency.

SESSION 2:
SKILLS AND DATA: ASSESSMENT, MATCHING AND DATA SHARING

SPEAKERS

Damla Taskin, Senior Livelihoods Officer, UNHCR Turkey

Ghada Khalifa, Director, Microsoft Philanthropies, Middle East and Africa

Tero Salonen, CEO, Funzi

Mehmet Üvez, Inclusion Specialist – Policy Advisor, European Bank for Reconstruction & Development

MODERATOR

Gokhan Dikmener, Technical Specialist, Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development



Session 2's key outcomes were as follows:

1. DATA:

For the purpose of sustainability, data is owned and maintained by government. Development and humanitarian actors tap into this data rather than building parallel databases. However, data is nationally managed and regional information exchange/cross-country comparisons would require additional coordination and resources.

1. UN actors articulated a need for a regional platform for comparable data;
2. Participants recognised the importance of data protection mechanisms;
3. Speakers also highlighted the need to capitalize on the technological and ICT sector's technical expertise to design mechanisms for information management.

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2. SKILLS:

1. Stakeholders can promote innovation as a mechanism to generate economic opportunities. Specifically, speakers emphasised support for entrepreneurs through initiatives such as innovative capacity development/training. Examples of specific programmes include encouragement of a freelancing culture across the region and provision of advisory services for entrepreneurs.
2. Vocational training programmes should align with labour market demand and build on skills and capacities of refugees (informed by labour market needs assessments) to increase immediate employment prospects.
3. Livelihoods interventions can invest in certification and verification of skills to boost employers' confidence and willingness to hire refugees.



GHADA KHALIFA,
Microsoft Philanthropies, Middle
East and Africa

SESSION 3:
EMPLOYABILITY: INCLUSION OF YOUTH AND WOMEN & MSMES

SPEAKERS

Grace Harb, *Program Director, Lebanese League for Women in Business*

Richard Trenchard, *Whole of Syria Coordinator, FAO*

Annabella Skof, *Lebanon Context Expert, UNDP-RDPP Policy Options Initiative*

Nayef Stetieh, *President & CEO, Business Development Centre (BDC)*

MODERATOR

Leontine Specker, *Senior Resilience Advisor, UNDP*



1. Stakeholders need to harness innovation to create new business solutions and promote economic growth; with notable examples outlined in the international food tech sector; the region can tap into global trends in food systems innovation). Panellists emphasised how crises can lead to innovation and economic empowerment and that human-centred design can play a major role in this process.
2. Stakeholders need a systemic approach to livelihoods programming/TVET. There is often a disconnect between livelihoods programming and the private sector; therefore, private sector consultations, labour market analysis and value chain analysis is needed to produce job placements.
3. There is a fundamental information gap for individuals from refugee and vulnerable communities. It is therefore of high importance that stakeholders develop knowledge and an understanding of the returns on vocational training, particularly in sectors that are traditionally unpopular.

SESSION 4:
[KEYNOTE] FROM CRISIS TO SDGS: A PATHWAY FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

SPEAKER

Marcos Neto, Director, Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development



Day 2 commenced with Marcos Neto emphasising that the Syria crisis has taught stakeholders that ‘we can’t spend seven years just talking about humanitarian action’. Rather, regional and international actors need to talk about economic growth, inclusive development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rather than a social, charitable agenda, the SDGs should be understood as a fantastic business opportunity, or a ‘money-making agenda’, with the potential for \$12 trillion a year in business value worldwide if the goals are successfully reached. Investment in the SDGs could potentially create 280 million jobs.

SESSION 5:

IDENTIFICATION & PRIORITIZATION OF THE COMMON CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY THE IMPACTED COMMUNITIES: DISCUSSION ON POLICY OPTIONS

SPEAKERS

Mukhallad Omari, Annabella Skof, and Lawen Hawezy, *Country Experts, UNDP SRF*



Three experts from the UNDP-RDPP Policy Options Initiative provided overviews of their respective research, highlighting progress, challenges, and policy solutions at a national level. The Jordan overview focused on political successes, technical challenges, and prospective solutions for implementing the Jordan Compact, with the ultimate goal of Syrians' gaining the right to work in specific sectors. The Iraqi context faces fewer legal labour market restraints. However, both longstanding and recent economic challenges have diluted growth and opportunities for job creation. Particular attention was given to the challenges of livelihoods programming in Lebanon, which is extensive in scope, but limited in sustainable impact, owing to the short-term nature of funding and limited value-chain integration.

The panel also identified four key regional themes:

1. Despite progress, there is still a significant need to shift the refugee response from a humanitarian approach to a livelihoods approach.
2. A review of aid frameworks and compacts would be highly beneficial, and further support is required in the design and implementation of national development strategies.
3. While legal frameworks are diverse across the region, the correct implementation of respective laws is crucial for refugees' livelihoods.
4. There exists a major opportunity to integrate refugee labour into reconstruction processes in Iraq and post-agreement Syria.

WORKSHOP SESSION: **TOWARDS A JOBS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE ACTION AGENDA FOR THE REGION**

MODERATORS

Amany Eid and Paula Isturiz, *Design Thinking Facilitators, UNDP*



The second part of the stakeholder consultation was focused on utilizing the insights of the panel discussions to develop a joint Action Agenda consisting of innovative ideas to foster job creation and robust economic growth in the region. The conference participants were guided through a collaborative brainstorming and prototyping process with the goal of applying a human-centred design approach.

To address the main areas of action and themes of the first day's analysis, the participants were split into four groups, each focusing on a different lever to strengthen job creation for refugees and host communities. Beginning with defining a common goal, the representatives of government, private sector, NGOs and international organizations applied the different steps of a human-centred design approach.

After defining their common goal, the groups engaged in collaborative brainstorming and discussion sessions, distilling the most viable ideas within their specific area of action. The ideas were then further refined through discussions within the groups and formalised into an implementation plan.

SKILLS AND DATA:

- Aiming to improve collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders, the 'Data' group proposed the establishment of a joint data aggregation platform. As a means to strengthen partnerships with governments (central and local), business (particularly tech firms), chambers of commerce and industry, and UN agencies, this platform would exist to fill information gaps; expanding opportunities for periodic, high-level trend analysis to better grasp supply and demand realities across regional labour markets; inform specific programming, and ultimately increase employment in both refugee and host communities.
- To implement this idea, the group suggested conducting a regional analysis of employment opportunities before building the data aggregation platform, which then feeds a matchmaking process, where beneficiaries are linked to skills providers according to real market need. The group noted the importance of this process's not being owned by one sole stakeholder group. Rather, it should be cultivated by multiple groups, which should gradually step back to allow the platform to become more organically driven.

TRADE:

- In examining the importance of regional commerce, the 'Trade' working group focused on increasing MSME access to markets through a) an on-line market information platform; and b) a regional steering committee, chaired by the private sector, that will seek to negotiate favourable terms with EU, US, and other international markets; and that will function as a lobbying body in the region.
- The group proposed that the platform be driven by market demand analysis, skills mapping, and the development of a networking and information system over the course of 12 months, through international organizations and data managers operating out of chambers of commerce and industry.



MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES:

- Acknowledging the central role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in driving job growth and expanding economic opportunities, the 'MSME' working group defined its goal as the creation of pathways for women and youth to generate sustainable income via 1) employment; and 2) establishing small businesses. The group then focused more specifically on helping women and youth connect with national, regional, and international incubators; with a particular focus on more evidence-based interventions that take into account markets into which incubators tap.
- A three-year programme would entail conducting regional market analysis and skills assessments, identifying key regional role models and mentors, expanding access to finance, and identifying feasible value chain upgrading within target sectors. The programme would build on partnerships between chambers of commerce, training centres, venture funds, and large companies (for procurement purposes).

CLOSING REMARKS

SPEAKERS

Rastislav Vrbensky, Deputy Director, UNDP Europe and CIS

Samuel Rizk, Manager, UNDP Sub-Regional Response Facility

Rastislav concluded by asserting that the consultation was an excellent example of how SDGs should be implemented. With a new, more integrated SDG agenda, and with the knowledge that more resources are required, it is crucial to mobilise the private sector and develop innovative public-private partnerships.



Rizk reflected on the key themes of the consultation. He noted the significance of participants' stressing that addressing the need for expanding economic opportunities suggests the business potential of response plans. While previously acknowledged themes such as the need for richer labour market analysis and more targeted vocational training was addressed, the consultation had successfully identified opportunities deriving from regionally aggregated data management systems and more organic engagement with the private sector. These outcomes should feed into discussion at the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in Brussels in April, which will function as a key milestone in continued advocacy for effective crisis responses.



Rizk thanked Marcos Neto for emphasising the need to look toward 2030 and to continue thinking about how crisis response fits into mid- to long-term development planning.

PART 3:

Conclusion & Next Steps

As highlighted at the national and regional stakeholder consultations, job creation relies fundamentally on the ability of countries in the region to promote and maintain sustained real economic growth. As a result of the 2008 financial crisis, the economies of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – which currently host the majority of Syrian refugees - observed a significant fall in their real GDP growth rates.

This sudden economic shock has been followed by massive influxes of refugees from Syria since 2011. To date, real GDP growth rates in the referred countries have failed to recover to pre-crisis levels, hindering the economies' respective abilities to expand job opportunities for refugees and members of host communities.

The national and regional stakeholder consultations for expanding economic opportunities for refugee and host economies and identified key themes and concrete forward-looking steps to expand economic opportunities in the region.

First, the Jordan and regional consultations outlined a clear need for greater analysis, aggregation, and access to data/information regarding traditional/emerging sectors for investments, labour market dynamics and regulation, trade operations, and private investment, as well as clear mapping of the services provided by actors promoting job creation.

In this regard, participants at the Jordan national consultation identified the need to create a joint data sharing platform to harmonize primary data collection and facilitate evidence-based policy development. They also agreed on the need to establish a labour market information system providing both key regulatory information and data on demand and supply of skills within national labour markets. Finally, stakeholders suggested the creation of a dedicated information platform for SME investments in the country.

Likewise, regional consultations stakeholders highlighted the need to conduct detailed analysis that will feed regional platforms with comparable data on, inter alia, labor demand and supply, as well as major opportunities and constraints to trade activities.

Secondly, stakeholders in the Jordan and regional consultations emphasized the need for active and innovative policies aiming to offer training opportunities and technical expertise-building for employment and private entrepreneurship. This will serve to increase in-country/cross-country connectivity and communication among foreign and local investors (as well as other service providers i.e. NGOs), to facilitate stakeholder lobbying initiatives on key regulations, and to enhance access to credit for private investments.

In this respect, stakeholders in the Jordan consultations suggested to create online training platforms for skills development which would be complementary to the labor market information systems. Moreover, to increase connectivity economy-wide and promote gender sensitive employment policies, stakeholders proposed the establishment of innovative services, such as carpooling, to facilitate women access to job opportunities.

At the regional level, stakeholders suggested to undertake concerted and coordinated lobbying activities based on the regionally aggregated data and able to influence the regulatory frameworks related to investments, labor, and trade. In addition, stakeholders agreed on the need to develop plans aiming to increase the connectivity among investors and to fund the incubation of new MSME in the region.

While acknowledging significant uncertainty regarding political developments in the region, participants at both consultations highlighted the need for adequate economic policies and innovative means for the growth of both short-term emergency job creation, and the longer-term expansion of private investment, real economic and growth, and sustainable expansion of economic opportunities.