



STATE OF THE SYRIA CRISIS RESPONSE

Assessing Humanitarian and
Development Challenges

Second annual report
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Voluntās

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Executive summary

Since the Syrian uprising and armed conflict began in 2011, more than 11 million people have been internally displaced or have fled to neighboring states, namely Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey. This has put an incredible strain on the host societies in these neighbouring countries. In order to assist, the international community has allocated more than USD \$13 billion¹ to Regional Refugee and Resilience Plans, over 300 organizations have implemented projects, and countless of of people have been mobilized to assist both refugees and host communities .

In order to obtain a comprehensive review of the response, Voluntas Advisory surveyed practitioners from international organizations, NGOs, government authorities, private and institutional donors, the private sector and academia, covering the breadth of the refugee and host community response. This reached workers on the ground in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to key decision makers. The survey was conducted from 22 July 2016 – 23 August 2016., a first report was published in November 2016. This is the second annual survey conducted.

Overall, the survey found visible improvements regarding the practical challenges for vulnerable groups, as well as the strategies used by responders. But significant changes to the response are yet to be witnessed and international community efforts to address gaps in the response, most noticeably the Grand Bargain Commitments, have yet to change the realities on the ground.



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For refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and host communities, conditions in neighboring countries is perceived to have improved in most aspects. For most of the key challenges faced by vulnerable groups such as access to food, employment and security, the severity of those challenges is perceived to have declined compared to last year. There is, however, a noticeable exception in Turkey where most challenges have increased in severity, which is likely related to the EU-Turkey deal, as well as the political turmoil in the country following the attempted coup and subsequent crackdown on NGOs including those responding to Syrian refugees.

The improvements in the situation do not appear to be directly related to better performance in the response. Across the board, the perception of the performance of the actors' response has declined. In particular, perceptions of the national NGOs and authorities' performances have deteriorated. The latter may relate to the fact that forced deportations have been witnessed in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. The greatest challenge to the Syria response is the lack of inclusion of affected people in decision-making. The Grand Bargain Commitments seeks to address this particular issue, but the impact on the ground appears to be limited.

¹ All monetary figures reported in USD.

Improvements on this and the Grand Bargain Commitments in general is, however, not likely to significantly change the perceptions of the performance. This is due to the fact that perceptions of the response performance is mainly driven by whether respondents think that aid, in general, is managed well. Furthermore, it is influenced by meaningfulness indicators. As such, the more the respondents feel that the work his/her organization resonates with their own personal values, the more positive the respondent views the response performance.

Despite the efforts to improve responses through the Grand Bargain and also the work to develop the Refugee Compact and Migration Compact, practitioners are not optimistic that the situation on the ground and the response will improve in the future. Indeed 48 % of respondents believe the situation for vulnerable groups will be worse next year. Similarly 46 % and 43 % anticipated that the national and international response will be worse respectively, while only 12 % thought it would improve.

Consequently, the international community needs to ready themselves for a continued increase in displacement including refugees trying to reach their borders, as 89% of practitioners believe that the influx of refugees to third countries will increase. With Europe being increasingly difficult to reach for Syrian refugees, the continued movement of Syrian refugees will put further strains on countries in and around the region.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The Syrian crisis has now entered its seventh year. To date more than five million people have sought asylum in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt and 6.1 million people are internally displaced within Syria. An average of 7,665 households per day were displaced from their homes in 2017.

Vulnerable groups inside and outside of Syria lack access to basic goods such as food, water, shelter, and protection, as well as access to education, healthcare, and security. Major humanitarian organizations have identified a “lost generation” of children as a result of displacement.² Host communities in states neighboring Syria have shown their solidarity with refugees, but they too are running out of resources to support the overwhelming number of people crossing their borders every day. These countries continue to struggle to guarantee services such as power, clean water, education, healthcare, and waste management to their own citizens.

The objective of this study is to shed light on the status of the crisis and the response to it, looking at the main challenges that vulnerable groups and national and international actors are currently facing. The study will mainly focus on the developments since the previous survey conducted in the summer of 2016. It will also look at the progress of implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments.

The data for the study is based on a survey distributed to more than 7,000 professionals from all the primary stakeholders’ groups involved in the crisis, including international organizations, national and international NGOs (INGOs), government agencies in the region, donors and partners, private sector, charitable organizations, media, and academia. The study is geographically focused on the Middle East, paying specific attention to respondents from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq, who are currently or have previously been involved directly or indirectly with the crisis. The data was gathered in the period of 03 July 2017 – 03 August 2017 (see Appendix for Methodology).

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The first section looks at the context and provides a background for the analysis.

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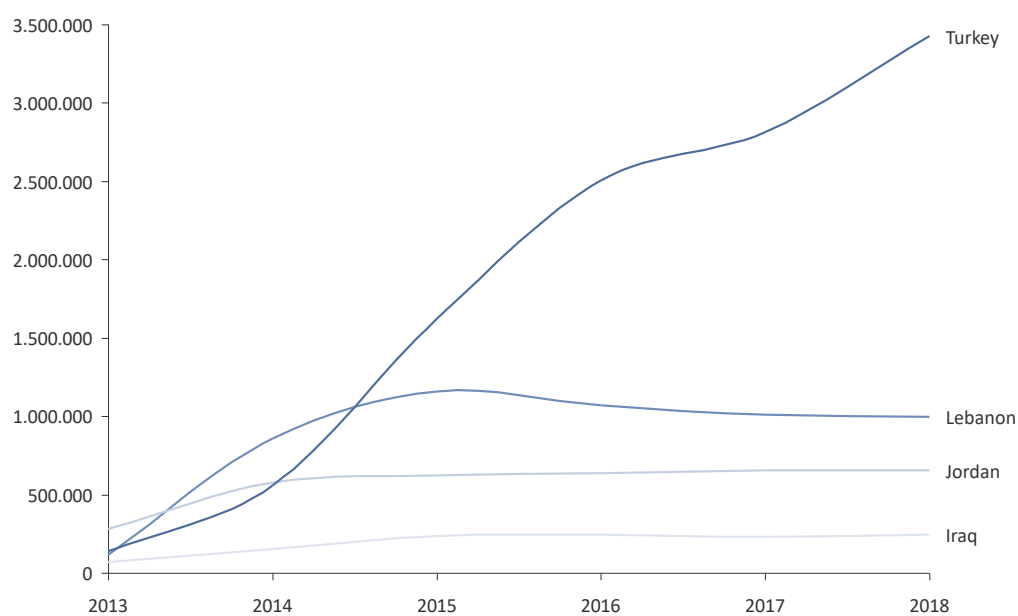
The second section presents the findings, focusing on:

- a) Challenges faced by vulnerable groups;
- b) Perception of response performance and strategies
- c) Challenges to the response and impact of Grand Bargain commitments
- d) Outlook on the future development

² Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, IRC, CARE, World Vision and Oxfam International. 2015. Right to a Future, Oxfam GB. <https://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/Report%20final-%20Syria.pdf>

Policy Context

The year of 2017 was marked as the year where the number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in the Middle East and Turkey passed the 5 million mark. While the numbers in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq have remained relatively stable the numbers in Turkey have significantly increased. Within Syria, internal displacement continues and estimates now indicate that more than 60 % of Syria's pre-war population has been displaced, a historically high share.³



During 2016 and 2017 there was an increase in the number of Syrians starting to voluntarily return home. More than 700,000 Syrian returned to their homes in 2017, but most of these were internally displaced peoples.⁴ The return of displaced Syrians has meant that agencies have had to scale-up their efforts to support these vulnerable groups, many of whom return to damaged homes and lack access to basic services such as water and health.⁵

The global policy environment within which the Syria refugee crisis is unfolding has seen significant developments in the past year. In particular the EU-Turkey agreement, which has led to fewer people departing from Turkey irregularly, while the roll-out of the Grand Bargain commitments has also been initiated to ensure that more resources reach vulnerable groups. And lastly, efforts have made been to strengthen the global policy architecture around displacement and migration with a new Global Compact for Refugees and a Compact for Migration. These are explored in more detail below.

3 Connor, Phillip, and Jens Manuel Krogstad. "About Six-in-Ten Syrians Are Now Displaced from Their Homes." Fact Tank News in the Numbers, Pew Research Center, 13 June 2016. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/13/about-six-in-ten-syrians-are-now-displaced-from-their-homes.

4 Ratcliffe, Rebecca. "Bombs Are Still Falling: Syrian Refugees at Risk of Forced Return Home." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 5 Feb. 2018. www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/feb/05/syrian-refugees-at-risk-of-forced-return-home

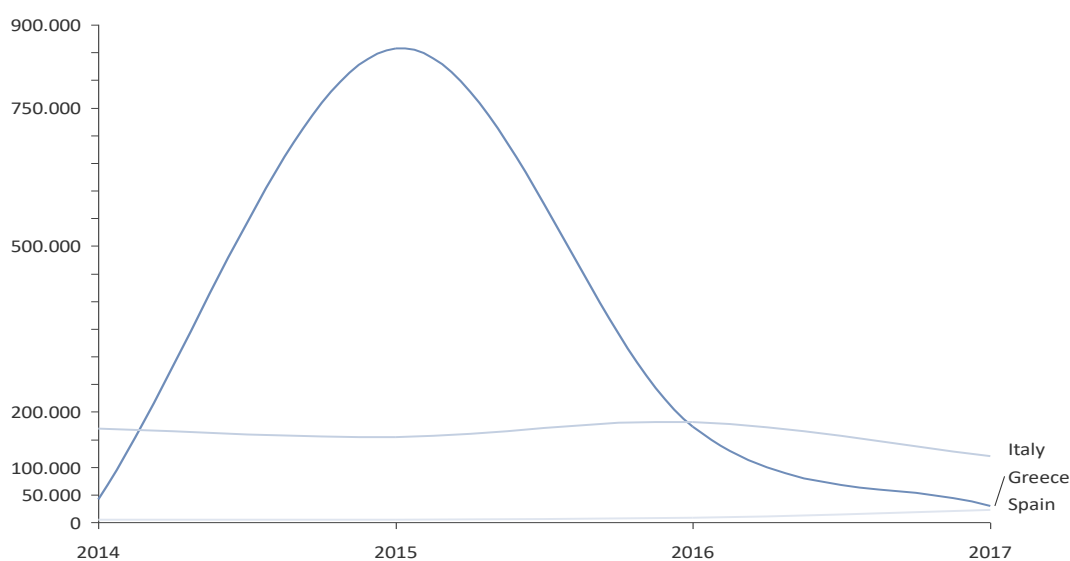
5 Kennedy, Merrit. "U.N.: More Than 600,000 Syrians Have Returned Home In 2017." NPR, NPR, 11 Aug. 2017. www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/08/11/542828513/u-n-more-than-600-000-syrians-have-returned-home-in-2017.

EU-Turkey agreement stems flow to EU

One explanation for the increasing number of refugees in Turkey is the agreement negotiated between Turkey and EU in March 2016 to restrict the number of refugees and migrants using Turkey as a departure point for crossing the Mediterranean and reaching Europe. The deal, in short, entailed that Syrian refugees arriving in Greece via what is known as the Eastern Mediterranean route would be returned to Turkey. With fewer irregular departures and people being returned to Turkey, the population of Syrians inside Turkey has increased by approximately 600,000 in 2017.

The deal has led to congestion on several Greek islands where asylum seekers are now stranded and unable to leave before the applications are processed. The situation for asylum seekers on the islands is dire with poor living conditions, security and safety concerns.⁶

The deal however has made a significant impact on the number of sea crossings in the Mediterranean. From more than 1 million crossing the sea in 2015, the numbers dropped to 362,000 in 2016 and further to 172,000 in 2017. While the numbers landing in Italy along the Central Mediterranean route has been fairly stable, the numbers arriving in Greece has dropped from more than 800,000 in 2015 to less than 30,000 in 2017. As the Greek route is safer than the other main route to Italy, the number of deaths at sea has not been significantly impacted by the deal.



⁶ Myers, Sacha, and Imad Aoun. A Tide of Self-Harm and Depression: The EU-Turkey Deal's Devastating Impact on Child Refugees and Migrants. Save the Children, 2017.

Grand Bargain Commitments

The Grand Bargain Commitments were launched at the World Humanitarian Summit and includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organizations to ensure that more means gets into the hands of people in need. In total it includes 51 commitments divided into 10 different work streams. Each work-stream is managed or convened by both a donor and an agency.

In more than 1 year after the launch of the commitments only some progress has been made. Overall the signatories themselves report having taken action on 40 % of their commitments. The most active work streams are those working to address localization, cash, and simplified and harmonized reporting requirements.⁷

Despite this action, a number of challenges have hampered progress. There has been little cross-fertilization and synergies between the different work streams and a lacking overview of how the work streams feed into each other.⁸

There has also been a lack of leadership, and political momentum has faded. This is critical for making progress on the more politically sensitive elements of the commitments.

With the limited progress to date, there is a growing frustration at the field level. The activities taken under the Grand Bargain have remained primarily at the global level, while limited activities have been implemented at the field level, affecting the visibility of progress to frontline staff.⁹

Global compacts

While the Grand Bargain Commitments seek to ensure a more efficient response to refugees and displacement crises, the Global Compact on Refugees seeks to ensure a more transparent and predictable responsibility and burden-sharing in the face of sudden massive refugee influx or long term displacement situations. The Compact consists of the Comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) which was adopted as part of the New York Declaration and a Programme of action with the purpose of operationalizing the language in the CRRF.

The programme of action provides a number of elements to ensure fairer burden-sharing including establishing national arrangements (such as steering groups) in host countries, arranging solidarity conferences, ensuring additional funding and efficient use of resources, better integration of regional organizations, more inclusive and multi-level stakeholder engagement, and ensuring the necessary data and evidence for response. The programme of action further seeks to support the application of the CRRF, in particular the reception and admission; (2) support for immediate and ongoing needs, and support for host countries and communities; and (3) durable solutions.¹⁰

The zero draft presented has been received with a mixed response from NGOs. While the draft certainly includes important elements, the language remains weak. Most of the suggested modalities and actions is framed as something states/actors *could do* and further speak of *interested states*, which does not help ensure more predictable responsibility and burden-sharing given that states are not asked to provide a firm commitment to uphold the actions. The draft further lacks clear language on some

7 Derszi-Horvath, Andreas, et al. "Independent Grand Bargain Report." Global Public Policy Institute, 8 June 2017.

www.gppi.net/fileadmin/user_upload/media/pub/2017/Horvath_Steets_Ruppert_2017_Independent_Grand_Bargain_Report.PDF

8 Edwards, Sophie. "The 'Grand Bargain' One Year on: Some Progress, a Long Way to Go." Devex, 30 June 2017. www.devex.com/news/the-grand-bargain-one-year-on-some-progress-a-long-way-to-go-90533.

9 Derszi-Horvath, Andreas, et al.

10 "The Global Compact on Refugees Zero-Draft." UNHCR, 31 Jan. 2018. <http://www.unhcr.org/Zero-Draft.pdf>

elements described such as explicating what national arrangements should look like and how the architecture should be designed to ensure a meaningful inclusion of refugees and host communities in decision-making.¹¹ Lastly, while the document focus on multi-stakeholder approach, the role and contribution of NGOs is barely touched upon. As summarized by Jeff Crisp, Refugee Studies Center and Chatham House

” *The bad news is that it [the zero draft] does so in a way that is cautious in tone, constipated in style and curiously oblivious of both current realities and historical experience.*¹²

Although the two Compact processes have been separated work-streams, the zero-draft for the Global Compact Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was released only five days after the refugee compact. The Compact expresses a *collective commitment to improving cooperation on international migration*. Like the Refugee compact it operationalizes and specifies the political declaration made in New York. The Compact includes commitments to fulfil 22 broader objectives for the achievement of safe, orderly and regular migration along the migration cycle. These objectives include, among others, to minimize drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country, address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration and cooperate in facilitating dignified and sustainable return, readmission and reintegration.

Unlike the Refugees compact, the Migration compact includes firm actionable commitments, which are described with a high degree of detail. In sheer word count the Migration compact is more than 50 % longer than the Refugees compact.

While the Migration compact may be rich in words, it may be less ambitious (which might explain the ability to be more concrete on the commitments). As Michael Clements, Co-Director of Migration, Displacement, and Humanitarian Policy and Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Development describes “...*the Zero Draft of the Global Compact is mostly not a bargain. It is mostly a detailed and inspirational list of general ways that countries can coordinate to advance their shared interests [...] many in richer countries want less low-skill migration, but many in poorer countries want less high-skill migration [...] A Compact that simply proposes “more” low-skill or “more” high-skill migration does not address these concerns. On the other hand, a compact that does not explore new lawful channels for migration—of some kind—ignores overwhelming demographic, economic, and geographic realities.*”¹³ Unlike the Refugee Compact, which builds on an extensive legal framework and seeks to address a particular issue of burden-sharing, the Migration Compact is fairing in more uncharted waters where a number of low-hanging fruits are still possible to address. Another criticism of the Migration compact is that it puts too much emphasis on addressing the root-causes of migration, while little focus is placed on creating opportunities in host countries. This implies the notion that migration is a problem rather than a phenomenon natural to humanity.¹⁴

¹¹ “NGO Reaction to the Zero Draft of the Global Compact on Refugees’ Programme Of Action.” NRC, Norwegian Refugee Council, 9 Feb. 2018. www.nrc.no/news/2018/february/ngo-reaction-to-the-zero-draft-of-the-global-compact-on-refugees-programme-of-action/.

¹² Alfred, Charlotte. “Expert Views: How Promising Is the Global Refugee Compact Zero Draft?” Refugees Deeply, News Deeply, 9 Feb. 2018. www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2018/02/09/expert-views-how-promising-is-the-global-refugee-compact-zero-draft

¹³ Clemens, Michael. “Cultivating a New Bargain on Migration: Three Recommendations for the Global Compact” Views from the Center, Center For Global Development, 12 Feb. 2018. www.cgdev.org/blog/cultivating-new-bargain-migration-three-recommendations-global-compact

¹⁴ Mixed Migration Platform. “MMP Note on the Zero Draft of the Global Compact.” Relief Web. www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MMP%20note%20on%20GCM%20Zero.pdf.

The Migration and Refugee Compacts have implications for displaced persons world-wide, while the Grand Bargain is intended to address the needs of Syrian refugees and IDPs specifically. It remains to be seen what impact they will have on changing the conditions and facts on the ground for Syrian refugees and other displaced populations. These changing conditions will also in turn affect the ways in which stakeholders involved in the refugee response carry out their work. The findings of the survey of a wide range of these stakeholders will be discussed next.



Findings

Main challenges faced by refugees and host communities

Challenges faced by refugees

Practitioners were asked about the perceived importance of challenges facing refugees in the neighboring countries in a number of core challenges such as education, health, employment, etc. Generally speaking, the situation seems to have improved for refugees with most issues declining in perceived importance, especially in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. There are however a number of issues that stand out. In Turkey there has been an increased importance of 9 out of 13 core challenges. The situation seems to have deteriorated, specifically, regarding access to protection. There are certain protection gaps in Turkish legislation as they have ratified the Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees with the qualification that it only maintain legal responsibility for refugees coming from Europe.¹⁵ As such Syrian refugees are given *temporary protection* in Turkey which does not ensure them same level of protection.¹⁶ With a State of Emergency declared in place since July 2016 in Turkey, this furthers the Turkish government's ability to limit the protection of basic rights and freedoms for Syrian refugees and Turkish nationals alike. As a respondent from an international organization working on the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region describes:

“ While the vast majority of donors and wealthier countries may be pouring funds into the response, the primary issues are related to the lack of access to international protection and asylum. Response and asylum cannot and should not be outsourced to poorer countries in the region. Humanitarian organizations risk being co-opted into this unsustainable regionalized response.”

When in July 2016 President Erdogan first suggested that Syrian and Iraqi refugees could be granted citizenship and repeated this promise in July 2017, it caused a backlash in the population and the hashtag,

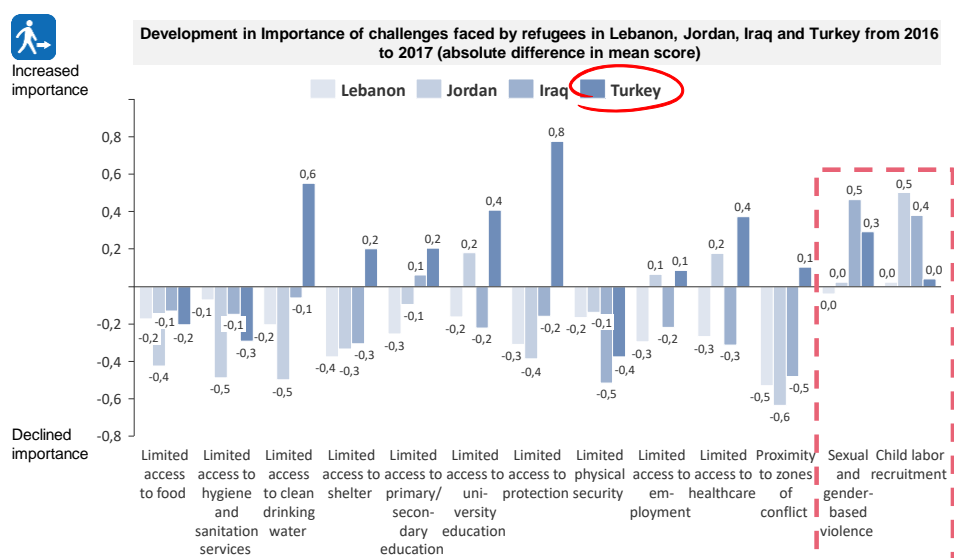
¹⁵ Stravopoulos, Vicky. "Refugee Protection in Turkey: Evaluating Needs and Challenges." Chicago Policy Review, 2 Jan. 2017, chicagopolicyreview.org/2017/01/02/refugee-protection-in-turkey-evaluating-needs-and-challenges/.

¹⁶ Ineli-Ciger, Meltem. "How Well Protected Are Syrians in Turkey?" Mediterranean Journeys in Hope, OpenDemocracy, 17 Jan. 2017, www.opendemocracy.net/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/meltem-ineli-ciger/how-well-protected-are-syrians-in-turkey.

"I don't want Syrians in my country," (#ÜlkemdeSuriyelilistemiyorum) was trending on Turkish social media.¹⁷ This added to existing tensions between refugees and host communities.¹⁸

The last year there has been further crackdowns on NGOs working with Syrian refugees in Turkey. This crackdown is seen as partially related to the failed coup attempt, which has caused a bureaucratic turmoil, as well as growing concerns from the Turkish authorities over the strength of Kurdish held areas in northern Syria that receive cross-border aid from international organizations. The expulsion of NGOs, revoking of licences and detention of aid workers has led to slow-down in both the assistance to refugees in Turkey, as well as the beneficiaries of cross-border assistance in Syria.¹⁹ The expulsion of Syrian aid workers employed by international NGOs could set a dangerous precedent for other Syrian refugees living in Turkey.²⁰

In addition to deterioration in Turkey, challenges related to sexual and gender based violence (Turkey and Iraq) and child labor recruitment (Jordan and Iraq) have grown in importance over the past year. Despite the easing of access to work permits in Jordan, access to legal work for Syrian refugees is still challenging for a number of reasons. Only 69,000 work permits were given to Syrian refugees in the period from January 2016 to October 2017 – only about 1/3 of the 200,000 work permits the Jordanian governments promised at the London Conference.²¹ This means that there is a continued pressure on children to engage in illegal work to support the family.²² A UNICEF study found that as much as 22 % of household income generated through labor comes from children under 16.²³ In Iraq, the nature of child labor is related both to Syrian displacement, but also the conflict and insecurity in the country. As such it was estimated that child labor in Iraq by 2016 has more than doubled compared to 1990 mainly due to the ongoing displacement, which is challenging the livelihoods and income generation of IDP families.²⁴



17 Bengali, Shashank. "As Turkey's Political Divisions Deepen, Syrian Refugees in Istanbul Worry about Being Caught in the Middle." Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Times, 7 Aug. 2017. www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-turkey-syria-refugees-2017-story.html

18 Ground Truth Solutions. Refugee, Asylum-Seeker and Migrant Perceptions. Mixed Migration Platform, 2017.

19 Cupolo, Diego. "Turkey Steps up Crackdown on Humanitarian Aid Groups." IRIN, 27 Apr. 2017. www.irinnews.org/news/2017/04/27/turkey-steps-crackdown-humanitarian-aid-groups.

20 Parker, Ben. "Turkey Expels Syrians Working for Danish NGO." IRIN, 2 June 2017. www.irinnews.org/news/2017/06/02/turkey-expels-syrians-working-danish-ngo.

21 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children, Action Against Hunger, CARE International, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and International Rescue Committee (IRC). Dangerous Ground: Syria's Refugees Face an Uncertain Future. 2017.

22 INTERSOS. "On My Own: Protection Challenges for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Jordan, Lebanon and Greece." Mixed Migration Platform, Aug. 2017. www.mixedmigrationplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UASC_Online_Version.pdf.

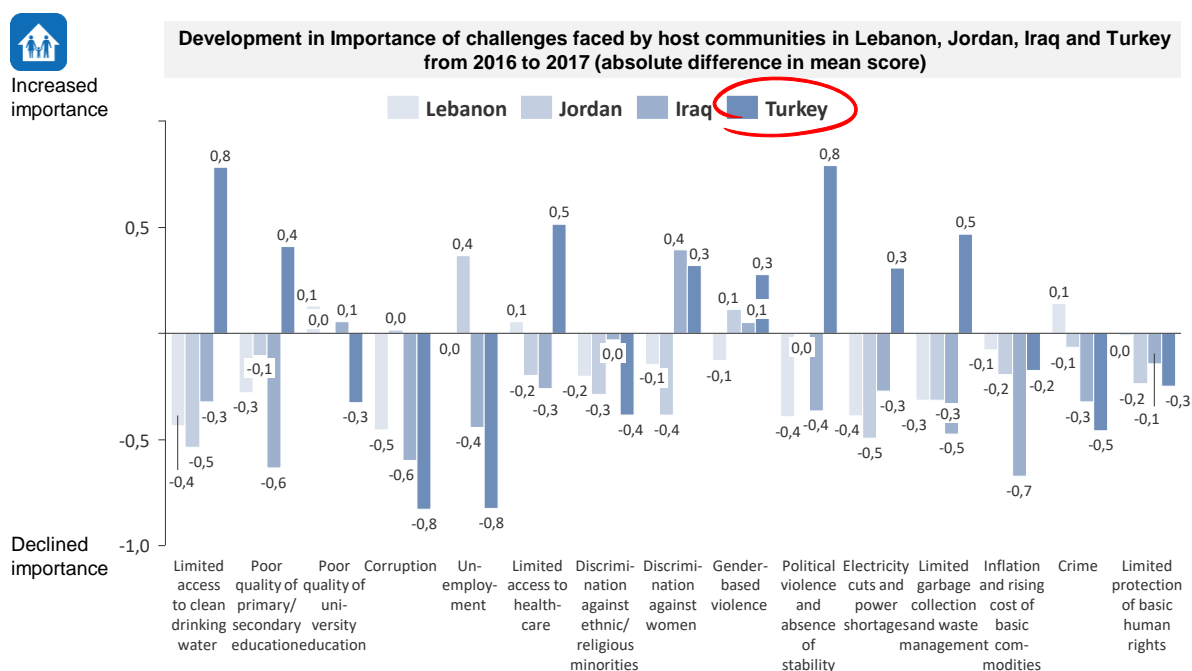
23 Van Rossum, Koen, et al. Running on Empty II: A Longitudinal Welfare Study of Syrian Refugee Children Residing in Jordan's Host Communities. UNICEF, 2017.

24 Nazeh, Maher, and Saif Hameed. "Child Labor Doubles in Iraq as Violence, Displacement Hit Incomes." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 10 July 2016. www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-children/child-labor-doubles-in-iraq-as-violence-displacement-hit-incomes-idUSKCN0ZQoDQ.

Challenges faced by host communities

This second section focuses on the perceived development in the importance of challenges facing host communities in the neighboring countries. As with the situation for refugees, there seems to have been improvements in situation for host communities in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, while the situation in Turkey has deteriorated. The improvements in challenges faced by host communities comes after increased focus by the international community on the issues facing host communities in coping with the impact of Syrian refugees. As these countries are middle-income countries, they have found it difficult to access funding. Initiatives such as the Global Concessional Financing Facility have tried to address this gap and have already provided US\$124 million of concessionality, leveraging almost US\$700 million in concessional financing for projects for Jordan and Lebanon.²⁵

The deterioration in Turkey is linked to the challenges following the attempted coup and the subsequent crackdown on NGOs as was discussed earlier.²⁶ As seen in the results, there has been a sharp increase in the perceived challenge of political violence and absence of stability in Turkey.



25 "Global Concessional Financing Facility." Second Steering Committee Meeting. Second Steering Committee Meeting, 20 Apr. 2017. Washington DC. www.globalcfff.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GCFF-Second-Steering-Committee-Minutes-04-20-2017.pdf.

26 Sterling, Joe, and Samantha Beech. "A Year after Failed Coup in Turkey, Erdogan Says 'Behead Traitors.'" CNN, Cable News Network, 16 July 2017. www.edition.cnn.com/2017/07/15/europe/turkey-coup-attempt-anniversary/index.html

Response performance

The international community has made considerable efforts to respond to the refugee flow to countries neighboring Syria. However, limited results have been achieved for the more than \$13 billion that has been devolved towards Regional Resilience Response Plans since 2013.

Overall performance

While the situation for host communities and refugees seems to have improved, the performance of the main response actors is perceived to be declining. This indicates that the positive changes are mainly a result of the resilience and efforts of these communities themselves, as well as the support from non-traditional actors such as local authorities, religious organizations, the private sector, social entrepreneurs, etc.

It is the performance of national NGOs especially that is perceived to be deteriorating, seeing drops of 9 percentage points in both the refugee and host community response. These findings are pertinent given the localization agenda that channels more humanitarian funding through local and national NGOs. Despite this agenda, local and national NGOs globally received less funding both in absolute and relative terms in 2016 compared to 2015.²⁷ The results further confirm the picture from the last survey, that despite the increased focus on host communities' conditions, the performance of the response is still better when it comes to addressing the challenges faced by refugees.

The actors with the highest performance score in responding to the needs of refugees continue to be INGOs. Seven out of 10 surveyed (69%) reported that INGOs' performance towards this group was either "good" or "very good". By contrast, national authorities had the poorest perceived performance responding to the challenges of refugees with less than 1/3 believing they perform "good" or "very good" representing a decrease of 13 percentage points. For example the Jordanian government increased its use of collective expulsions and individual deportations of Syrian refugees in violation of international law. More than 2,000 Syrian refugees were deported in 2017.²⁸ Deportees are neither provided with substantive explanations of evidence of their wrongdoings, nor given the ability to seek legal assistance from UNHCR prior to their deportation.²⁹ Similar issues have been reported from Lebanon and Turkey.³⁰ While national policies are important for the situation on the ground, recent research has shown that local politics also plays a key role in determining the situation for refugees. Local municipalities and governorates can adopt either stricter or more inclusive measures and the extent to which they choose one or the other is often determined by identity and interests of local actors and powerful individuals, such as mayors and governors.³¹

27 Global Humanitarian Assistance, and Development Initiatives. "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016." 2016, devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Global-Humanitarian-Assistance-Report-2016.pdf. and Global Humanitarian Assistance, and Development Initiatives. "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2017." 2017, <http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GHA-Report-2017-Full-report.pdf>

28 Syrian Refugees in Jordan, A Protection Overview. Jordan INGO Forum, 2018.

29 Frelick, Bill. 'I Have No Idea Why They Sent Us Back' | Jordanian Deportations and Expulsions of Syrian Refugees. Human Rights Watch, 2 Oct. 2017, www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/02/i-have-no-idea-why-they-sent-us-back/jordanian-deportations-and-expulsions-syrian.

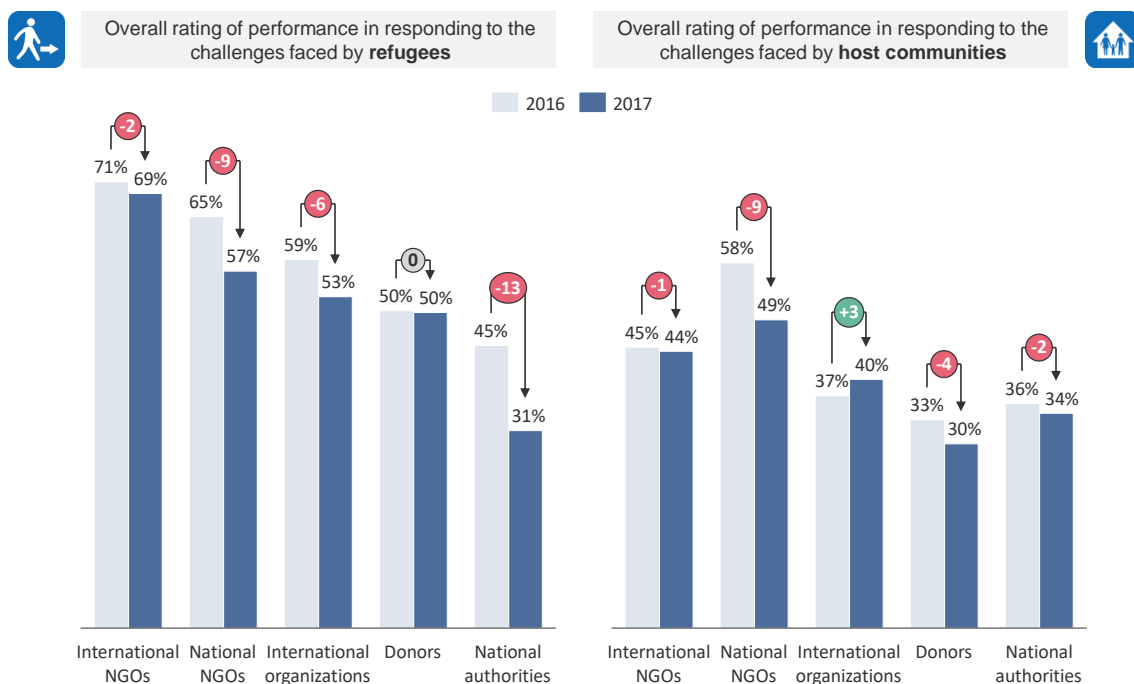
30 Dangerous Ground: Syria's Refugees Face an Uncertain Future

31 Betts, Alexander, et al. Local Politics and the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Exploring Responses in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. University of Oxford Press.

Despite their declining performance, national NGOs continue to be perceived as those with the best performance when it comes to addressing host community challenges, with 49% of respondents reporting a “good” or “very good” performance. As reflected by this comment from a worker in a charitable foundation in Syria

“ Local associations should be involved in development projects in the required manner because they are the most experienced in reality on the ground.

In general, only about one third of respondents believed that donors, national authorities, and international organizations perform well on challenges facing host communities.

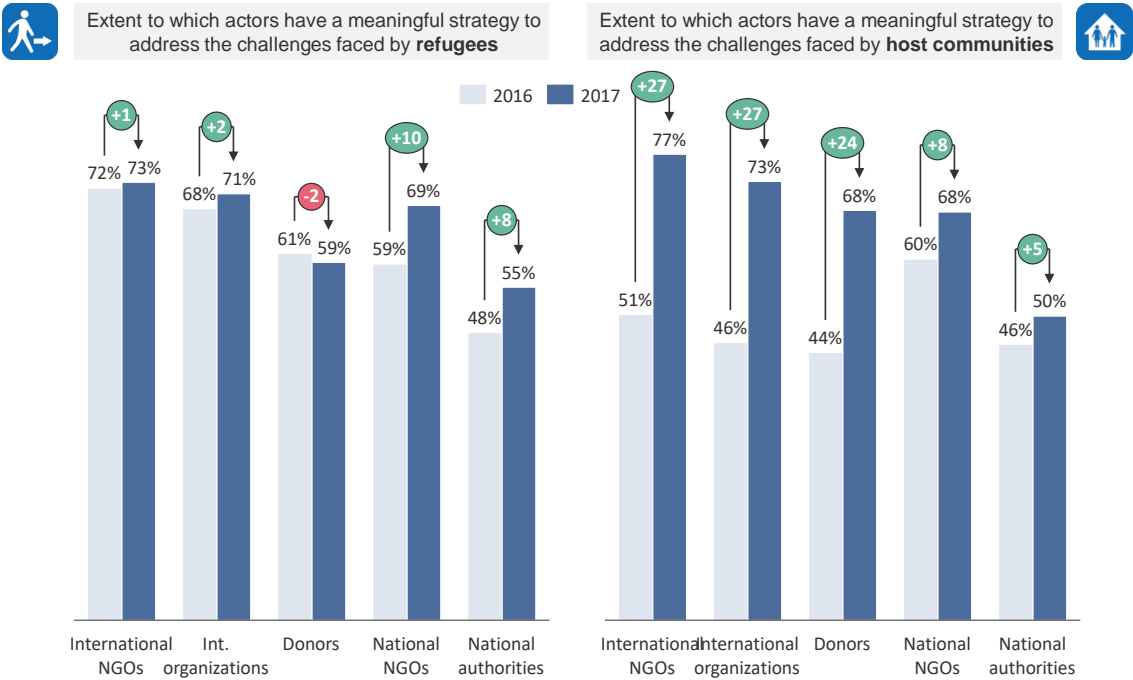


Response strategies

While perceptions of performance has been largely been deteriorating, the strategies of the different actors seem to be improving. This is especially true for strategies addressing the challenges faced by host communities. The increased focus on host communities thus seems to now have turned into more meaningful strategies being designed. However, as is visible from the performance findings, these strategies are yet to transform into a better implementation on the ground.

International NGOs are perceived to have the most meaningful strategies when it comes to addressing the challenges of host communities and refugees, while national authorities appear to have the least meaningful. Donors, international organizations and international NGOs have seen strong improvements in the perceived meaningfulness of their strategies towards host communities, with increases of 23 percentage points.

For strategies addressing the challenges of refugees, the improvements have not been as high as for host communities, but these also had a better starting point. The biggest improvements are seen with national NGOs and national authorities which have increased by 10 and 8 percentage points respectively.



Challenges to effective response

Overall one of the main challenges is the lack of inclusion of refugees in the decision-making on the design and implementation of aid programmes. Inclusion of refugees in decision-making will help ensure that the humanitarian response is both relevant to their needs and effective. However, 69 % disagree that refugees currently have enough say. This perspective is shared by the refugees themselves. Ground Truth Solutions research in Lebanon showed that only 1 % of refugees said aid providers involved them in their decisions and in Iraq only 14 % believe that their views are taken into account in aid decisions.³² For instance the Jordan Compact which was negotiated with limited inclusion of either refugees themselves or local actors that could speak on their behalf. Research have subsequently showed that refugees held negative views of the work permit scheme, which was a cornerstone in the Compact and had limited knowledge of how it worked in practice and as a result has been slow in improving the situation on the ground for refugees.³³

Another challenge is the localization of aid, that is, channeling funding through local and national aid providers. Being part of the community, local organizations have a better understanding of the needs, dynamics and cultures of their constituents and can therefore better target and deliver aid. As reflected by a comment from a member of a national NGO in Jordan, international organizations are not perceived to be effective in their resource management:

” Most of the aid and grants from international organizations are to support their administrative staff and a small part goes to the activities and technical staff aimed at supporting refugees and host communities...

However, 2/3 disagree that there is sufficient funding being provided to national and local NGOs, confirming the global trend that in both relative and absolute terms, less aid is channeled through local aid providers. The issue of technical and absorptive capacity has often been cited as one of the main challenges to increase funding for local aid providers. A driver of this is paradoxically the continued channeling of funds through international organizations and NGOs. This allows these international actors to provide both job opportunities and higher salaries to local staff, thereby minimizing the pool of skilled resources that local NGOs have access to.³⁴ Another impediment to localization is the fact that local organizations are often relatively small, flexible and fluidly structured which enables them to respond quickly to crises and new situations and gain access to vulnerable groups. However, when obtaining funds from international organizations, it is often these exact organizational traits that are changed in

³² Ground Truth Solutions. Refugee Perceptions in Northern Iraq. Vol. 1. Mixed Migration Platform, 2017. And Ground Truth Solutions. Refugee Perceptions in Lebanon. 2nd ed., Mixed Migration Platform, 2017.

³³ Barbelet, Veronique, et al. The Jordan Compact: Lessons Learnt and Implications for Future Refugee Compacts. ODI, 2018.

³⁴ Abdel Samad, Ziad, and Bihter Mocshini. Humanitarian Assistance in Lebanon Overview, Challenges and Recommendations. Lebanon Support, 2016.

order to conform with rules and regulations for obtaining funding and thus weakening their comparative advantage.³⁵

The third key challenge to the response is coordination. More than 50% disagree that there is sufficient coordination with the national governments as well as with the various UN agencies involved in the response, confirming the results from last year's survey. As highlighted by a respondent from a national NGO in Lebanon:

” Cooperation with the ministries is very difficult here. They have made a move to be “more involved” with the refugee response, but it seems only in areas/projects that will benefit Lebanese. They are extremely critical of the projects that are only benefitting Syrians or Palestinians or Palestinian Syrians.

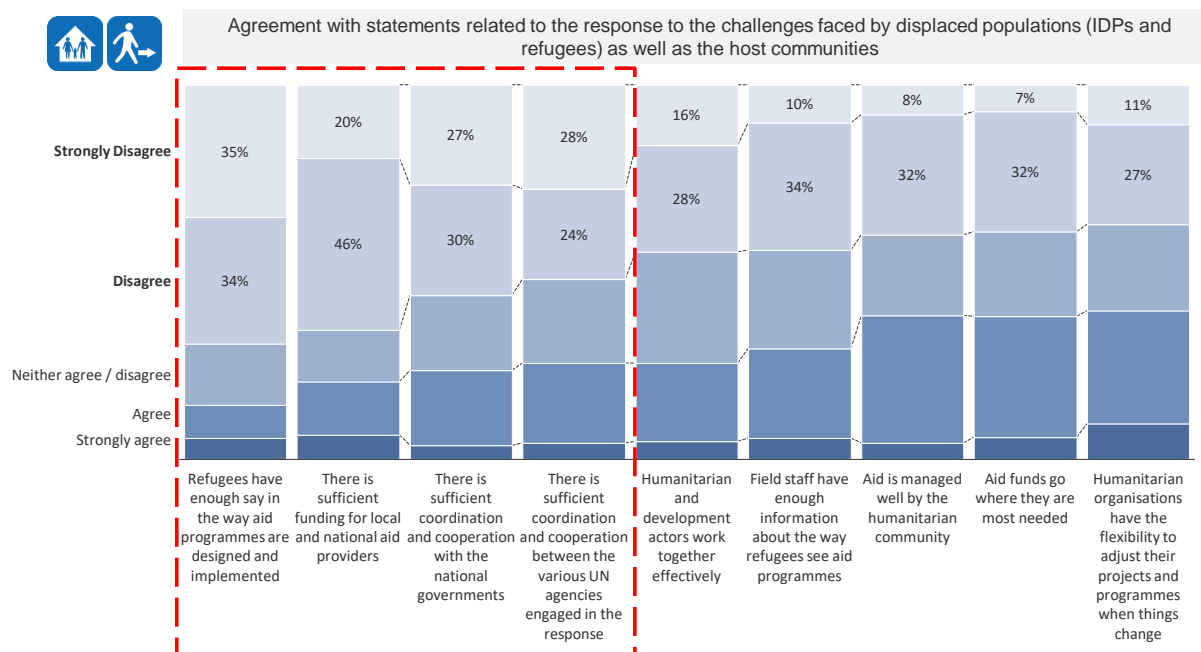
The coordination system in Lebanon has often faced criticism. Coordination in Lebanon is led by the government, together with the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, UNHCR and UNDP. Despite a plethora of coordination fora, there is a lack of effective coordination. This relates to a lack of a common understanding over what should be coordinated and to what extent it should be prioritized. Coordination is furthermore challenged by power struggles between the agencies and actors involved in the response. The transition of the humanitarian response to a more long-term response that includes a development focus has only increased the complexity and number of actors engaged, leading to further struggles and coordination challenges.³⁶ These coordination issues are not isolated to Lebanon but are experienced in the other countries. As highlighted in an evaluation report of ECHO's response to the crisis:

” Strategy-level coordination was hampered by the ambiguity between UNHCR's and OCHA's mandates in a Level 3 crisis [...]. In some instances this led to complicated coordination structures and loss of potentially useful information-share. [...]ultimately, the inter-agency tensions remained, and UNHCR's success in leading coordination efforts has remained uneven across the countries affected.”³⁷

³⁵ Svoboda, Eva, et al. Holding the Keys; Humanitarian Access and Local Organisations. Humanitarian Policy Group, 2018.

³⁶ Mansour, Kholoud. UN Humanitarian Coordination in Lebanon; The Consequences of Excluding Syrian Actors. Chatham House, 2017.

³⁷ Analysis for Economic Decisions, and Urgence Rehabilitation Development. Evaluation of the ECHO Response to the Syrian Crisis 2012-2014. ECHO, 2016.



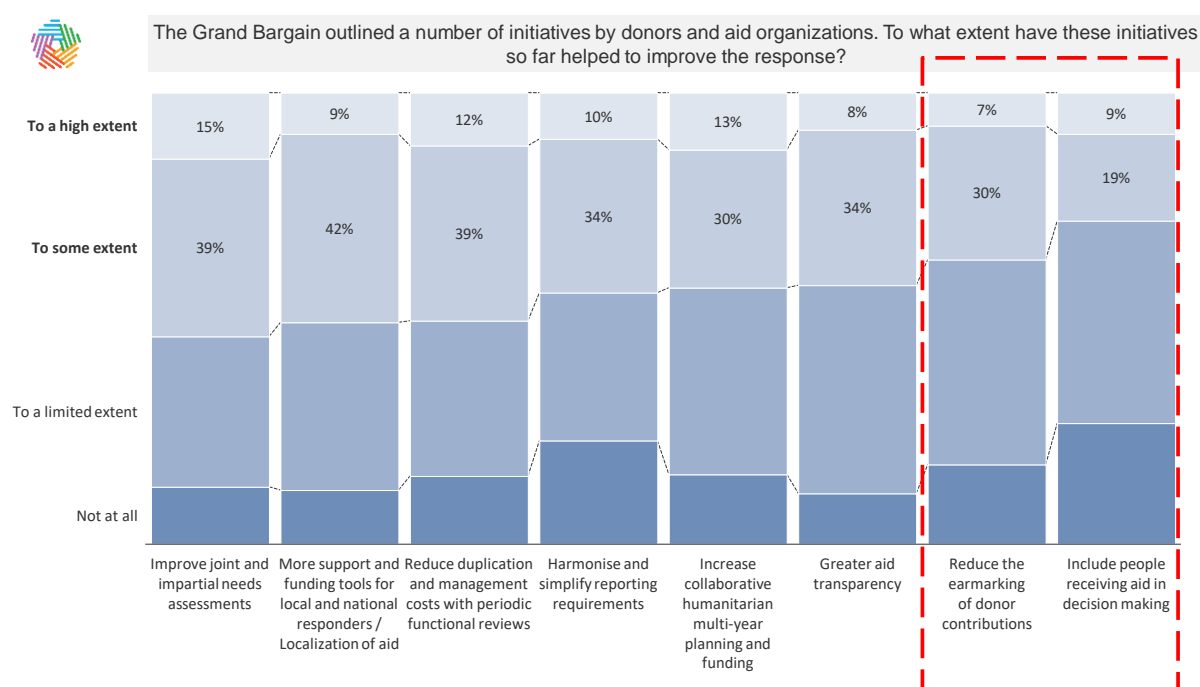
Impact of the Grand Bargain commitments on response

As mentioned in the context section a key development over the past year has been the work to translate and implement the Grand Bargain commitments. Many of the commitments directly address some of the challenges identified in relations to the Syria crisis response.

There is still some way to go before the impact of the commitments is felt directly on the ground by practitioners. Some of the commitments that have been noticed on the ground are improvements in joint and impartial needs assessment, where 54 % believe that this has helped to improve the response to some extent. Also, more support for local organizations and reduced duplication and management cost with periodic functional reviews has led a majority of practitioners to observe at least some impact. Support for local organizations is also one of work streams that has seen better progress compared to others. It is however still highlighted as one of the main challenges to the response which indicates that while some progress has been made, there is still a high demand for improvement. Some respondents however remain critical of the localization agenda in the Syria response. As a respondent from an international NGO in Iraq highlighted:

” The problem with the UN is symptomatic of the problem with state actors, in that solutions need to come from beyond state actors. A pernicious consequence is the focus on “local” or “national” NGOs without defining this concept. Usually this serves as a foil for risk transference or corruption. Instead there could be a productive conversation focused on local capacity building, but in terms of individuals and organisations.





In relation to the Syria crisis, there are also a number of commitments where the practitioners do not see a strong impact on the response so far. This is especially true for a main challenge to the response, the inclusion of refugees in the decision-making, as was highlighted above. Only 28% believe that this has had an impact, to some extent. Furthermore only 37 % believe that reduction of earmarking of donor contributions has had a positive impact at least to some extent. Lastly only 42 % believe that the goal of greater aid transparency has had an impact. While a good measure of transparency around humanitarian funding is ensured by OCHA’s Financial Tracking System there are still great challenges when it comes to aid for longer-term development objectives. The Jordanian government has made efforts to publish funding going towards projects under the Jordan Response Plan. Unlike Jordan, Lebanon have not systematically and comprehensively made funding towards projects under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan publicly available.³⁸



While there is thus still some way for the commitments to changing realities on the ground, it is interesting that the commitments are not a key driver of the perceptions of the response performance. This calls into question whether the implementation of the commitments will change the way that practitioners evaluate the response and thus whether the commitments actually address the underlying challenges to the response.

³⁸ Saieh, Alexandra, et al. *Making Aid to Jordan and Lebanon Work*. Oxfam, 2017.

In our analysis of the drivers of the perception of the national and international response, we have focused on four key categories of drivers:

-  1. Various indicators for how meaningful respondents find their work
-  2. Background of respondent (i.e. country of focus, organization type, field/HQ level)
-  3. Various indicators for perceptions of the management and coordination performance
-  4. Various indicators measuring perceived impact of the Grand Bargain Commitments

The perception of the national and international response to the challenges faced by refugees and host communities are all driven by the extent to which respondents think that humanitarian aid is well managed.





















The perceptions of the international response to the challenges faced by refugees is in addition to aid management also driven by meaningfulness indicators. As such the more the respondents feel that the work their organization does resonates with their personal values, the more positive the respondent views the performance. Similarly, respondents have a more positive perception of the response if they feel they have adequate resources at their disposal to do their job in a meaningful way.

The same drivers impact on the perceptions of the national response to the challenges faced by refugees. This highlights the importance of ensuring that practitioners find their work meaningful and that they in their daily work can see how their tasks and assignments contribute to a higher purpose. Perception of the national response is further impacted by the background of the respondent i.e. if the respondent is working for UN or an INGO they tend to have a more negative perception of the national response. Lastly the national response to the challenges is also driven by one of the Grand Bargain indicators namely that the more the respondents believe humanitarian and development actors work well together, the more positive perceptions they have.

UN and INGO workers tend to have more positive perceptions of the international response to the challenges faced by host communities. Perception of the host community response is further impacted by the management of aid and the perception of coordination between UN agencies. Respondents that feel that there is sufficient funding for local and national aid providers tend to evaluate the international response to host community challenges more positively.

Lastly the national response to the challenges faced by host communities is perceived more positively if the respondents are working on the response in Jordan or have a regional focus. It is further driven by the perceived management of aid.

In sum, only 2 of the 10 focus areas for the Grand Bargain commitments contribute to drive response perceptions and only towards two of the four response areas, as summarized below.

Target group	Responders	Performance Driver
 Refugees	 IOs, INGOs, Donors	 • Agree that organization’s work resonates with personal values • Agree that they have enough resources to do their job well
		 • Agree that aid is managed well
 Refugees	 National auth. & NGOs	 • Is <u>not</u> working for UN or INGOs
		 • Agree that organization’s work resonates with personal values • Agree that they have enough resources to do their job well
		 • Agree that aid is managed well  • Agree that humanitarian & development actors work well together
 Host communities	 IOs, INGOs, Donors	 • Is working for UN or INGOs
		 • Agree that aid is managed well  • Agree that there is sufficient cooperation between UN agencies  • Agree that there is sufficient funding for local aid providers
 Host communities	 National auth. & NGOs	 • Working on Jordan or regional  • Agree that aid is managed well

 Meaningfulness of work
  Aid mgmt and coordination
 Respondent background
  Grand Bargain commitments

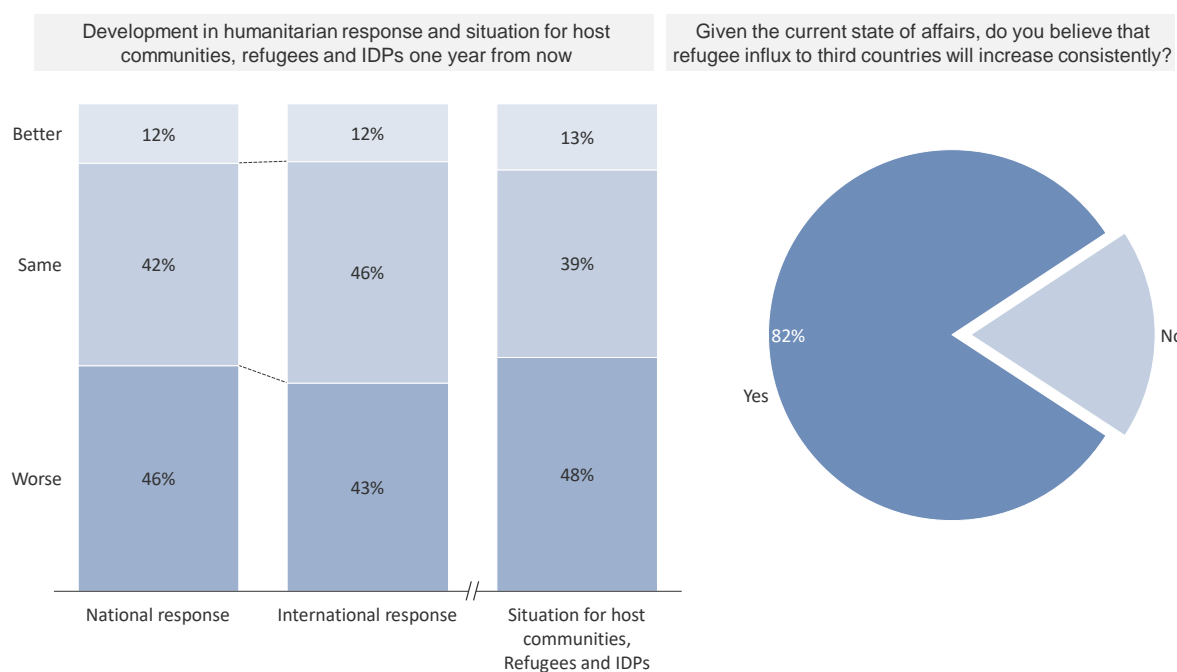


Outlook and Conclusion

As the perceived response performance deteriorates and key international commitments do not seem to address the core and underlying drivers of these perceptions, it is not surprising that the outlook of practitioners remain bleak.

Close to 9 out of 10 respondents do not believe there will be any improvements in the Syria humanitarian response. This is a decrease from last year where it was 8 out of 10. Also, 82% believe that refugee flow to third countries will increase consistently.

This overall pessimistic outlook stresses the immediate demand of solving some of the issues the humanitarian and development sectors are facing in the MENA region. Future responses should be based on ensuring more meaningfulness for the practitioners involved in the response and find ways to ensure engagement with beneficiaries. It should focus on the management of humanitarian and aid and more efficient coordination between UN agencies and host governments.



Without a durable and lasting solution, refugees will continue to face immense challenges in the host communities and thus continue their onwards movement in search of dignity. As a respondent from a national NGO in Lebanon highlights:

” The UN and other international powers have pumped however many billions of dollars into the “crisis” and yet we have no lasting solutions for the millions of refugees and IDPs. They have attempted to help people through relief and development programs yet the beneficiaries have nothing to show for it. They are still barely surviving on their incomes not knowing if each day they will be able to feed their children a proper meal, not knowing if the host community will rise up against them in racism and anger, not knowing if the Lebanese government and General Security will suddenly change their policy (as they have hundreds of times since the start of the influx of refugees) and leave millions of people displaced once again.

In conclusion the report finds that the significant changes in Turkey arising from internal political developments and the agreement with the EU is linked to negative developments on-the-ground for refugees. In general the situation for refugees and host communities appears to be improving. This is further linked to the perceived improvement in the strategies used by the national and international response actors.

A number of challenges to the response however continue and the Grand Bargain Commitments have yet to significantly change the way aid is being delivered on the ground. In particular more focus needs to be on the inclusion of refugees in decision-making, coordination and the localization agenda.

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Appendix

About Voluntas Advisory (www.voluntasadvisory.com)

The purpose of Voluntas Advisory is to improve living standards and life quality through business as a force for good and public participants as catalysts for distribution of opportunities and creation of wealth. By working in the intersection between state and business, the interplay between society and market, and the synergy between citizen and consumer, we ...

- ... deliver intelligence based, informed and innovative policy making
- ... create purposeful business and branding strategies
- ... produce enlightening market research and impactful analysis

Voluntas Advisory has worked for a number of international organizations, NGOs, donors and private companies in the Middle East and North Africa since 2011 and is currently engaged in projects in Jordan, Lebanon, and Libya.

About the Middle East Crisis Survey

The project was designed by Voluntas Advisory based on our experience working in the region. A steering committee was established to provide inputs to the analytical framework and process. This committee consisted of:

- Anita Bay Bundegaard, Director and UN Representative of Save the Children, Geneva
- Dr. Melissa Phillips, Non-Resident Fellow at NYU Center for International Cooperation
- Dr. Nasser Yassin, American University of Beirut
- Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, Research Director, Raoul Wallenberg Institute
- Hart Ford, Country Director Lebanon, ACTED
- Andres Gonzalez Rodriguez, Country Director Iraq, OXFAM

The first survey was conducted in July 2016. The data for this second survey was collected in the period from July 22 to August 23, 2016. The survey was distributed in English and Arabic via email to a database developed by Voluntas Advisory of more than 5,000 practitioners working in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria or regionally on responding to the crisis in the Middle East. The database included staff from international organizations, international and national NGOs, government authorities, donors, the private sector and academia. The response rate for the survey was about 10%, comparable to response rates in regular public opinion surveys. The data has been weighted to make it comparable to the first annual survey in terms of geographic distribution and the type of organization the respondent represents.

Limitations

A number of limitations to the study should be considered:

- *Sample size.* With a sample size of 500 there is a margin of error of +/- 4 %. Breaking down the data by country, the margin of error significantly increases. The results and changes from the first annual survey, should thus mainly be seen as indicative.
- *Respondent bias and representativeness.* As the exact population of humanitarian and development practitioners working in relations to the refugee crisis is unknown it is difficult to assess the representativeness of the obtained sample. The obtained sample includes 42 % working at the field level, 37 % working at the HQ level and the remaining working at the regional level. Given that field level staff spend more time out in the field and in some places have poor internet connectivity the use of an online survey may create a bias leading to underrepresentation of field staff. Similarly in these type of surveys, there is a risk of self-selection bias. This type of bias would typically lead to mainly opinionated persons and people passionate about the topic participating. We should therefore expect more "extreme" views in the results i.e. either very positive or very negative. This is however considered to even out.

To account for these issues, the findings are sought to be corroborated with findings from other reports such as research articles, evaluation reports, etc.