

WOMEN AS THE
BENEFICIARIES
AND ACTORS OF
HUMANITARIAN
ACTION

9-10 MAY 2015 • ISTANBUL

CONCEPT NOTE



Background

Massive human displacements are taking place in the developing and less developed countries and their pace seem to grow with no stabilization at sight. Unfortunately, similar to other mass human displacements in history, today's displacements, be it within or beyond the borders of the states, continue to cause large-scale human tragedies. These mass displacements and human tragedies they entail are more alarming than ever, as they are intertwined with the ongoing violent conflicts, environmental degradation and natural disasters. The size of the problem today is beyond the capacity of the international community to respond adequately, which creates the need for a careful reassessment of the humanitarian action framework.

The World Humanitarian Summit that is to be held in Istanbul in 2016 is an important step in the rethinking of this humanitarian action framework, which will focus on the themes of 1) Humanitarian effectiveness 2) Reducing vulnerability and managing risk 3) Transformation through innovation, and, 4) Serving the needs of people in conflict.

Being in the midst of a grave human tragedy in the Middle East for the last decade, Turkey has been and should continue to be a significant actor in the international action to address humanitarian crisis. This entails a strong and thorough collaboration between the state and non-state actors, the public and private sectors, and local as well as global agents. Only in this way, can a comprehensive action plan be administered in the face of the growing crisis that affects the lives of everyone as a result of being inhabitants of a globalized world.

Women are at the forefront as victims and actors. They are disproportionately affected by the conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters as they are much more vulnerable, often submissive and under heavy responsibilities for caring for the rest of the family. They are facing long journeys as refugees into exile or living in insecure environments. Women and girls are subject to sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, forced impregnation, forced abortion, trafficking, and sexual slavery. Therefore, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) puts a specific emphasis on the situation of women in its guidelines for working with refugees:

In many societies, women and girls face specific risks and are less likely than men and boys to have access to their rights, due to their gender roles and position in society. In situations of displacement, these risks – particularly discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence – can be exacerbated. Community support structures break down and traditional or formal justice systems may not uphold women's rights. Unaccompanied women and girls, women heads of households and pregnant, disabled or older women may face particular challenges.¹

The UN refugee agency builds upon women's resilience and strength to support their empowerment and strengthen their protection, and promotes their full participation in all decisions affecting their lives. Despite the many challenges, displacement can enable women to take on new roles and instigate positive change. With the appropriate support, refugee women can improve their lives and the lives of their children, families and communities.

¹ 07.11.2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d9.html>



Within this general conceptual framework, the Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) which holds a General Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council, with its Women's Platform, plans to organize the second edition of the Istanbul Summit on the effects of mass displacements with a special focus on women. Believing that 'with the appropriate support, refugee women can improve their lives and the lives of their children, families and communities'², Istanbul Summit 2015 aims to convey a strong message for the full participation of women in all decisions affecting their lives.

As a transnational NGO, JWF, adopts this women focus in examining today's mass displacements firstly because it feels the need to bring displaced women's daily disasters to international agenda and to seek adequate humanitarian response to them. Secondly, the JWF aims to contribute to the promotion of United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), among which 'Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women' exists.

As the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs approaches, relevant UN agencies, member states, civil society organizations and other stakeholders have been busy working on the post-2015 development agenda. Among these endeavors the works of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) are noteworthy. In its Draft Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 UN-Women underlines the following, in line with the objectives of JWF's Summit:

Following successive Security Council resolutions on the global and UN system-wide response to supporting women's role in conflict resolution and prevention, UN-Women has been tasked with a number of key coordination priorities. (...) UN-Women will develop the capacity of concerned actors to assess gender-specific needs and coordinate humanitarian action, including in formulating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies which ensure women's empowerment in the development of the longer term resilience of their communities and in the implementation of sustainable humanitarian action and, in the case of disaster response, meeting immediate gender responsive survival needs.³

Similarly, the UN Action, which is an internal body within the UN system that unites the work of 13 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence in conflict, has set main goals as: to amplify and better coordinate the work of the UN system in addressing sexual violence in conflict; to deepen partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations; to strengthen both the UN's response to survivors and efforts to prevent sexual violence during and after conflict; and to support women's engagement in conflict prevention and enhances their influence over peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery processes.

Figures of mass displacements and their consequences on the ground are appalling. According to the statistics of the UN bodies (UNHCR and OCHA) by mid-2014, 10.8 million of Syria's 22 million population was affected by the conflict and in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million internally displaced, often multiple times - 50 per cent more than in 2013. UN bodies estimate that a total of 4 million Syrians will have left their homes for Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Over half of these displaced Syrians are women and girls.⁴ Besides, according to another report prepared by Amnesty International, with 1.6 million Syrians, Turkey is the country that hosts the highest number

² 07.11.2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d9.html>

³ 20.10.2014, <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2013/annual%20session/developmentresultsframework-2014-2017%20pdf.pdf>

⁴ 20.10.2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486a76.html>



of Syrians among the neighboring countries.⁵ If a comprehensive political solution is not reached, the number affected is expected to grow in 2015.

As for Iraq, although the outflow stabilized around 0.5 million people, the country has nevertheless one of the largest populations of IDPs (internally displaced person) in the world today. Over 1.5 million people are estimated to have been displaced so far in 2014, adding to the over 1.13 million people already displaced in previous years due to sectarian violence and terrorist attacks. Let's recall that in the course of summer 2014 the United Nations has accused ISIL of ethnic cleansing in northern Iraq, detailing a campaign of mass detentions and executions in Christian, Turkmen and Ezidi areas.

Semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan - with a population of just over five million and already a caseload of 220,000 Syrian refugees – is the most affected area following the push of ISIL. The region needs support as it is now hosting what is believed to be more than 700,000 IDPs, many of whom endured exhausting journeys to reach safety. The recent mass displacement in the north of Iraq has also affected the Kurdish region of Syria.

Meanwhile, less than 100,000 Syrians have declared asylum in Europe with a small number offered resettlement by countries such as Germany and Sweden. While EU is certainly a leading contributor of humanitarian aid to the Middle East region, the amount donated by each of its 28 Member States has varied greatly. More importantly, the EU has not only received relatively fewer asylum requests as a result of the Iraq and Syria crisis, in comparison to Iraq's and Syria's neighboring countries, but it has accepted even less for resettlement. As for the UN humanitarian agencies, volatile security situation on the ground has been a major obstacle for the deployment of emergency operations for assistance and care for refugees and IDPs.

Heavy burden has been put on the receiving countries such as Iraq and Syria which are often themselves producing displacements. While receiving countries, which are not directly affected by armed conflict, are hardly managing the emergency situations those in turmoil have extreme difficulties to cope with refugee situations. The chaos resulting from it often serves extremist armed groups like ISIL who are recruiting among refugees. Within this mayhem one can easily imagine the plight of women especially in the Middle East.

⁵ 25.11.2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR44/017/2014/en/be0d18a5-dd22-463c-a6e4-4362e62a5459/eur440172014en.pdf>



Objectives and Expected Outcome

The general aim of this summit is to raise awareness of the international community to the plight of the refugees and displaced persons in the war torn areas, especially in the Middle East, by emphasizing the special condition of woman refugees and displaced persons. It is expected that field accounts by specialized CSOs as well as UN's specialized bodies' theoretical and technical inputs would provide a framework for a renewed awareness this issue.

Program Format

The summit will include **sessions**, aiming to facilitate an in-depth discussion of the specific practices and methods employed by CSOs and experts of diverse backgrounds, sharing experiences and challenges. In these sessions which are organized around Effectiveness of the Humanitarian Action, Women and the Humanitarian Action, Women Refugees and IDPs. Middle East: The Plight of Women, there will be a chance for CSOs to deliver short oral statements. CSOs will be eligible to make statements after registering on the Summit's website www.istanbulsummit.org.

Also, there will be **working groups** for participants to discuss specific issues and resume them in bullet points under the supervision of moderator elected among the group.

A **special session of women parliamentarians** from around the world in a roundtable format will be held. This roundtable will discuss gender sensitive refugee- asylum seeker and IDP policies and potential for collaborative action by lawmakers in international and national fora to support gender sensitive humanitarian action and policies.

The forum will issue three final documents: A Final Declaration prepared by the Final Declaration Preparatory Committee consisting of academics and experts, the Working Groups Outcomes which summarize the discussion of the working groups and a Call for Action of the parliamentary roundtable.

The results will be submitted to the UN's relevant agencies and other stakeholders.



Issues and Topics

The topics of the sessions:

- Effectiveness of the Humanitarian Action
- Women and the Humanitarian Action
- Women Refugees and IDP (Internally Displaced People)
- Middle East: The plight of women

Discussions during sessions will take into account the following cross-cutting themes:

- do no harm;
- psycho-social mental health and trauma;
- gender-based violence;
- food security;
- reproductive health (women's health);
- gender and disability;
- rights-based approaches to humanitarian action;
- culturally sensitive humanitarian action;
- gender sensitive emergency response;
- cost-effectiveness;
- fundraising alternatives;
- need based approach;
- role of intergovernmental and non governmental organizations;
- role of CSOs;
- ad hoc responses;
- empowerment of women refugees and building long term resilience;
- women refugees as leaders of humanitarian action;
- displaced women's daily lives;
- women's role in conflict resolution and prevention;
- assessment of gender-specific needs in coordinating humanitarian action;
- preventing abuse of women refugees and IDPs;
- similar refugee situations;
- responsibilities of state authorities.

Working Groups on:

- gender sensitive emergency response;
- fundraising alternatives;
- role of CSOs;
- empowerment of women refugees and long term resilience;
- preventing abuse of women refugees and IDPs;
- responsibilities of state authorities;
- do no harm.

Parliamentary Roundtable on: (closed session)

Gender-sensitive refugee- asylum seeker policies: This roundtable will discuss gender sensitive refugee-asylum seeker and IDP policies and potential for collaborative action by lawmakers in international and national fora to support gender sensitive humanitarian action and policies.



Organization

Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) was established by a group of distinguished writers, scholars, and journalists in 1994 to contribute to peaceful coexistence and dialogue by bringing together intellectuals from all political spectrums with different cultural, religious, ethnic and ideological backgrounds that belong to the many diverse disciplines in science, religion, philosophy, politics, and art. Its mission is to look for ways of building a common living space based on reconciliation and mutual respect. Currently, there are six different platforms relied upon to organize the work of the Foundation; each platform specializes in different aspects of building dialogue. These include the Abant Platform, Dialogue Eurasia, the Medialog Platform, the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, and the Women's Platform. There is also a Research Centre. To carry its national mission in the international arena, the JWF holds General Consultative Status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, being the first and only institution to achieve this status in Turkey.

JWF Women's Platform was founded in 2009 and aims to promote dialogue and peacebuilding at the local and global scale, by providing democratic arenas for the free and fair discussion of prevailing problems, including the disintegration of the family, gender-based discrimination in various areas, the humanitarian crisis in conflict zones, and highlighting the role of women in peace building, as well as in maintaining and improving peace.

Venue and Date

Venue: Fatih College Congress Center.

Yenibosna Merkez Mah. 1. Asena Sok. No:21 Bahçelievler / Istanbul, +90 (212) 411 78 00

Date: 9-10 May, 2015

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Program

May 9, Saturday - 2015

09.00 - 09.40	Opening Ceremony
09.40 - 11.00	Effectiveness of the Humanitarian Action
11.00 - 11.15	Coffee Break
11.15 - 13.00	Women and the Humanitarian Action
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 15.45	Women Refugees and IDP
15.45 - 16.00	Coffee Break
16.00 - 17.45	Middle East: The Plight of Women

May 10, Sunday -2015

10.00 - 13.00	Working Groups on: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. gender sensitive emergency response;2. fundraising alternatives;3. role of CSOs4. empowerment of women refugees and long term resilience;5. preventing abuse of women refugees and IDPs;6. responsibilities of state authorities;7. do no harm.
	Parliamentary Roundtable on: (closed session) Gender-sensitive refugee- asylum seeker policies
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.30	Parliamentary Session: Gender-sensitive refugee- asylum seeker policies
15.30 - 15.45	Coffee Break
15.45 - 16.30	Announcement of Final Declaration & Closing Ceremony

