



## FINAL DECLARATION: “LOOK, LISTEN, LINK”

### CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING REFERRAL MECHANISMS AMONG GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

NOVEMBER 8, 2019, ANKARA

‘Look, Listen, Link - Conference on Strengthening Referral Mechanisms Among Governmental Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations took place at the Grand Ankara Hotel on **November 8, 2019**. Supported by the **European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations** <sup>i</sup>(ECHO), the Conference was organized in collaboration with **The Research Center on Asylum and Migration** (IGAM) and **International Blue Crescent Foundation** (IBC).

The mass movement of people seeking “survival and safe living”, which began with the entry of 250 persons into Turkey from Syria in April 2011, has now reached 4 million refugees<sup>1</sup>. Recorded as the world’s largest mass asylum movement in history, this event prompted Turkey to establish legal regulations, organizations and organizational relations that can swiftly respond to the humanitarian needs. In addition to governmental institutions, national and international non-governmental organizations also responded to the request for humanitarian assistance. Aid work is conducted in an organic collaboration with governmental institutions to enable the access of refugees to rights and services as defined with laws and regulations.

The conference theme - “Look, Listen, Link” – was aimed at addressing issues faced by governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations on the frontline of the response. These agencies see the difficulties encountered by vulnerable individuals who were displaced by force and who are now seeking access to services – they are focused on listening to and extending good practices and effectively referring vulnerable individuals to services.

The conference brought together 65 attendants from 35 institutions and organizations to discuss the difficulties and good practices observed in referrals, which is the most important part of the collaboration between governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. Participants also looks at solutions to ongoing challenges.

The conference was opened with speeches from Mr. Metin Çorabatır, President of The Research Center on Asylum and Migration; Mr. Emrullah Okur from Directorate General of Migration Management, Department of Compliance and Communication; Mr. Mehmet Selim Canbal, Head of Department of Programs and Education Materials of the Ministry of National Education; Mr. Reza Kasrai, Technical Assistant in the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the term ‘Refugee’ is used according to international law to include the term ‘asylum seekers’: According to Geneva Convention of 1951, a refugee is anyone who is outside of the country which he/she is a citizen of because he/she is afraid with right cause that he/she will be subject to persecution owing to his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a certain social group or political opinions and who cannot benefit from the protection of that country or doesn't want to do so owing to such fear, or if he/she has no nationality and is outside of the country of residence where he/she used to live as a result of such events, cannot return there or doesn't want to do so owing to such fear.



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Turkey Office; and Ms. Duygu Fendal, Program Director of International Blue Crescent Foundation. Speakers presented a picture of the current status of refugees in Turkey and globally, and highlighted the importance of interventions that offer sustainable, holistic and coordinated solutions that are based on rights and an accurate identification of the needs.

After that, cross-organisational round table meetings were held to discuss ways to strengthen referral mechanisms among governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. Representatives from national and international non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions discussed good practices and the difficulties encountered in the field when working with refugees, and suggestions for solutions.

After the roundtable discussions, the delegates came together in plenary to look at all themes discussed in the roundtables and focus on recommendations and priority issues.

In the last part of the conference, it was decided to create a steering committee comprising the representatives of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations for the creation of a National Referral Mechanism guide.

Below is a summary of the key findings and recommendations from the fruitful discussions at the event. Full documentation from the conference will be available on the official website of The Research Center on Asylum and Migration [www.igamder.org](http://www.igamder.org) in English and Turkish.

## FINAL DECLARATION

### Difficulties encountered in the field while conducting work with refugees

1. Poor coordination between organizations and hierarchical procedures in the internal bureaucracy of each organization prevents quick action, even during planned situations that require a quick response.
2. Insufficient coordination between organizations results in a duplication of support being delivered by different organizations to the same refugees.
3. Processes for obtaining emergency support from governmental institutions for LGBTI individuals who are marginalized by the community due to their sexual orientation and gender identity to be directed to safe areas in emergencies need to be accelerated. Internal bureaucracies of governmental institutions and different practices make it more difficult for marginalized individuals to have access to rights and services. According to observations of organizations working in the field, marginalized groups prefer to contact and request protection from non-governmental organization rather than governmental institutions in emergencies. Lack of a certain standard in the field regarding access to rights and services causes marginalized refugees to be passed back and forth between different governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations.
4. The fact that school management and teachers lack a standard, structured approach and practice towards refugee students and the exposure of refugee students to language barriers and peer bullying have a negative impact on schooling and lead to child labor.



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5. Projects in Turkey are still being developed based on emergency response and humanitarian frameworks, which slows down processes and progress relating to refugees' social participation and integration.
6. The fact that relations between non-governmental organizations with governmental institutions often exist primarily on a personal level – rather than institutional level - prevents building permanent collaboration and an effective joint referral mechanism.
7. Moreover, the fact that refugees lack sufficient knowledge regarding services offered by governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations indicates that the referral mechanism is still inadequate.
8. There is no refugee representation in the events such as forums, conferences and workshops organized with regard to refugee problems, which renders them unable to express their problems firsthand.

### **Good practices observed in the field while conducting work with refugees**

1. Protocols signed by non-governmental organizations with Ministries to perform activities in the field allow for coordination and collaboration with respective local directorates. Signing a protocol with respective ministries in the areas where refugees need support is useful for bringing the referral mechanisms down to the local level from the central level. Work conducted with local stakeholders (provincial directorates, municipalities, local and national non-governmental organizations, opinion leaders, heads of neighborhoods and imams) to support refugees on a provincial basis contributes positively to eliminating issues and taking prompt action.
2. Organization of seminars, conferences and training requested by governmental institutions from non-governmental organizations on matters such as refugee rights and misinformation helps eliminate the negative perception regarding refugees and realization of social integration. Capacity-building training organized by UNHCR for opinion leaders in different provinces have been one of the significant steps taken with regard to reaching the community.
3. Involving local authorities, refugees and host communities in an ongoing dialogue as part of the design and implementation of projects offers a sustainable model for protection, subsistence and other interventions.
4. Governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations gather on a monthly basis with the initiative of Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, under leadership of the Provincial Directorate of Family, Labor and Social Services. Working with the Istanbul Protection Work Group, this regular coordination meeting supports successful and systematic implementation. At the same time, capacity building training is offered for professional personnel who carrying out protection activities in non-governmental organizations by the Provincial Directorate of Family, Labor and Social Services.

### **Suggestions for solutions to strengthen referral mechanisms among governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations**



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1. Extension of the governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations coordination meeting held in Istanbul to other provinces.
2. Ensuring the referral collaboration between non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions that offer services to refugees is designed on an organizational level and made sustainable through protocols.
3. Improving the contents of the UNHCR Service Advisor online platform (<https://turkey.servicesadvisor.org/tr>), to ensure it provides detailed information about the services offered and encourage more frequent use of this platform by non-governmental organizations.
4. Providing psychosocial support to prevent secondary trauma for the employees of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations conducting activities on protection.
5. Creating a campaign in the media to counter 'false facts', to reduce the negative perception regarding refugees
6. Organizing coordination meetings under leadership of respective provincial directorates to ensure the flow of information between organizations and to communicate it to refugees
7. Creating a radio program / channel under leadership of governmental institutions and UN to inform refugees about local and national changes.

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<sup>i</sup> Disclaimer: This publication addresses the humanitarian aid activities conducted with the financial support of the European Union. The contents of this document shall not be construed as reflecting the official opinions of the European Union in any way and the European Commission is not responsible for how this information is used.