IBC LMPDR SIDE EVENT:
CITIES AS FRONT-LINE ACTORS FOR THE INCLUSION OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE - BUILDING SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURES TO LEAVE NO-ONE BEHIND

SUMMARY REPORT AND KEY TAKE-AWAYS

© UNDP Moldova, City of Cahul in Republic of Moldova, "Sisters for Peace" Mural by Radu Dumbrava

Lead Organizers: Co-chairs of the Regional Issue-Based Coalition on Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience.

Participants: The event was moderated by Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments, and included the participation of Bogdan Kelichavyi, mayor of the city of Kopychyntsi, Ternopil oblast, Ukraine; Nicolae Dandis, mayor of Cahul city, Republic of Moldova; Sylvie Tomic, UCLG, Vice Mayor of Lyon, vice-President of ANVITA in France; and Steven Bunce, Integration Officer, Regional Bureau for Europe, UNHCR. The event brought together 87 participants from the region, representing local and national governments, NGOs, Internationa organisations, academia, Diaspora organisations and think tanks.

Date: 28 March 2023

Background: Human mobility in all its dimensions is essential to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[1] Data and evidence continue to demonstrate the socio-economic opportunities that human mobility brings when well governed. At the same time, mobility patterns are increasingly complex – driven and impacted by major global transformation, such as changing demographics, digitalization, COVID-19 and conflicts. Conflict, violence, and disasters are the main drivers of internal displacement and the number of people living in displacement reached nearly 60 million people in 2022, marking a new historic record.[2]

[1] Please see here for more information: https://migration4development.org/en/learn/migration-sustainable-development
[2] Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022, accessible here: https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/

Stalled and recurrent conflicts have impacted the UN ECE region significantly, reversing progress toward the SDGs. Migrants and forcibly displaced people often choose to live in urban centers in the hope of better economic prospects, more opportunities for self-reliance, and better safety. The importance of recognizing local authorities as policymakers, including for access to services, economic integration, and social cohesion, is also increasingly acknowledged.

These commitments reconfirm that cities continue to be at the forefront of the decision-making in integrating the needs of people on the move and reap the socio-economic benefits which these persons bring. If properly equipped and capacitated, municipalities can become key actors and visionary leaders in addressing displacement issues.

This side event to the 2023 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on "Cities as front-line actors for the inclusion of people on the move - building sustainable structures to leave no-one behind" had the objective of:

- Presenting good practices of cities responding to new emerging migration and forced displacement trends and flows;
- Raising awareness on the role of cities as front-line actors for the inclusion of people on the move, including migrants and forcibly displaced people;
- Supporting cities in learning about and implementing inclusive policies that benefit their communities.
- Exploring and identify new partnerships to ensure a sustainable socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced population; and
- Contributing to the discussion on transition from short-term standalone humanitarian solutions towards the longer-term inclusion and integration of displaced populations in urban development planning.

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Joanne Irvine, Head Migration and Sustainable Development Unit a.i., IOM

- Cities and urban areas are the place of choice for migrants and displaced people, and therefore the extent to which is SDG 11, is key for its successful achievement.
- Over half of the world's population lives in cities, and almost all population growth in the foreseeable future is expected to occur there, largely through migration. In addition, large-scale movements of people are also arising as a result of conflicts.
- Cities and local governments are really at the forefront and deal directly with the needs of migrants and displaced people at the community level.
- The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), rooted in the 2030 Agenda, calls for whole-of-government and whole-of-society action to create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development.
- Human mobility can be a massive force for positive change if managed well. A few good practices include:
  - Integrating migration in different kinds of policies and practices;
  - As outlined in the GCM, collaboration between different actors using a whole-of-society approach is critical. A network of services can help ensure no one is left behind;
  - All action at the local level needs to provide a space for migrants and displaced persons and host community members to have a say and role to play;
  - Local, regional and national authorities should have functioning, funded and strategic vertical coordination mechanisms;
  - Fostering networks and knowledge exchange, mentoring and city-to-city learning are very important to fill knowledge gaps [3] .

Oxana Maciuca, Regional Human Mobility Adviser for Europe and CIS, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub

- The Issue-based Coalition for Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience (IBC LMPDR) is a regional network co-chaired by IOM, UNDP and UNHCR. It also serves as the Regional UN Network on Migration and as a platform to exchange the key advocacy messages related to displacement of refugees and migrants.
- Migration and displacement is mostly felt at the community level. That is why local authorities are often the crucial responders in providing reception, helping to cover the basic needs of new arrivals, and conducting efforts for their effective inclusion into municipal services, such as education, childcare, housing, skills and employment, and social protection and establishing multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms at the local level.
- Local governments are the most indicated to ensure a lasting and successful socio-economic inclusion, in support of national and regional inclusion and development strategies and in line with the 2030 Agenda.
- Socio-economic inclusion is a process that supports people on the move (migrants, refugees, stateless persons, third-country nationals, and other forcibly displaced persons), to integrate into the economies and social fabric of host countries and communities. In this, local authorities often rely on innovation and creativity to mobilize communities around a holistic response to refugee inclusion, based on local assets and possibilities. The process is multi-dimensional and involves every segment of society. In addition to national and local governments, the engagement and support of other stakeholders — including the private sector, civil society organizations, media, academia, UN agencies and development actors, and refugee and diaspora organizations —is crucial to meaningful, sustainable inclusion.

[3] For example, the Mayors Mechanism's, formed by IOM, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Mayor Migration Council (MMC), launched a Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees in partnership with UNHCR. This allows cities to pledge towards achieving priority aspects of the GCM and GCR, join a network of likeminded cities, participate in and advocate for the role of cities in global fora and learn and exchange from others.

Aslak Solumsmoen, Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Officer, Regional Bureau for Europe, UNHCR

- Two thirds of refugees live in urban areas. Refugees and displaced people are drawn to cities for their opportunities. They have skills, talents, aspirations and come to cities seeking opportunities to work, set up businesses, access basic services and establish social networks.
- Effective inclusion allows refugees to seize their potential and contribute to their societies, including social cohesion and local development. They do this as employees, consumers, volunteers and employers. However, when they are not granted basic rights and opportunities, they risk becoming marginalized and joining the local urban poor and sharing the same challenges.
- The Global Compact for Refugees refers to the crucial role of cities and city networks in enabling greater cooperation to create inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities that include comprehensive responses to refugee situations.
- Cities are great incubators of innovation and good practice in support of international protection.
- It is crucial that their role is emphasized and lifted up. We strongly welcome their pledges in the Global Compact and look forward to working together to respond and adapt policies.
- We have seen this in the role in the Ukraine Situation refugee response where cities have been on the frontline, mobilizing volunteers, providing reception and basic needs and welcoming them into their communities.
- UNHCR is supporting these efforts of cities, local actors and national governments to address humanitarian needs and support the inclusion of refugees in national systems and national services.
- The experience we draw from this will change how UNHCR delivers protection and assistance in the future.
- We hear from our city partners that resources are barriers to providing the necessary support to newcomers. We need to better work with cities to prepare and respond to displacement.

Bogdan Kelichavyi, Mayor of the City of Kopychyntsi, Ternopil oblast, Ukraine

- We need to think towards the future and integrating IDPs.
- From day one of Russia's invasion into Ukraine, the City of Kopychyntsi started welcoming IDPs. The City immediately provided shelters, opened publicly available buildings and organized mattresses, beds, food, etc. for displaced people. This story is similar to many municipalities in Ukraine that are not on the frontline of the war.
- The City then started thinking about socio-economic opportunities for the displaced people, and how to socialize people and reduce potential tensions between IDPs and local communities.
- The latter was done through social media channels in which the contributions of IPDs to city were highlighted, and through the organization of cultural events which fostered the social cohesion.
- Since schools and kindergartens were closed, the City opened up child-friendly spaces – daycare where local families and IDP families could bring their children.
- The City is now identifying abandoned buildings and renovating those so IDPs can move in for free for a limited period of time. This approach avoids the 'ghetto effect' where IDPs are concentrated in one place.
- The City is also trying to support the employment of IDPs. For example, the City recently encouraged the relocation of a producing furniture factory, to register in the town. The furniture factory revitalized with the hiring of more people, including IPDs, and is expanding successfully its production.

Nicolae Dandis, Mayor of Cahul Municipality, Republic of Moldova

- Migration and displacement are very complex issues, and their proper management requires close cooperation between several institutions with different competencies. For mayors, it is important to stay in touch with people who left the community, build partnerships and engage them in the development of their native city. A project with UNDP had a significant impact on local communities – over 200 Hometown organizations were created in various Moldovan localities, and Cahul is one of them, bringing migrants' expertise, money, and skills back home.

- When the refugee crisis hit the community, migrants and diaspora communities who left the city were one of the first to support the municipality's efforts to respond to the new refugee emerging crisis.

- Cahul municipality created a Crisis Unit under the region's mayoralty that worked 24/7. Continuous storage and distribution of humanitarian aid and donations were ensured. Temporary placement centers for refugees from Ukraine were established, which accommodated over 400 people. Refugees benefit from the generosity of the diaspora and local inhabitants and were offered shelters in rural areas of the Cahul district.

- To effectively integrate refugees Cahul municipality together with the Cahul Hometown Association launched and joined the campaign "My Community for Peace". As a result, a Crowdfunding campaign was organized by the diaspora via Hometown Association to support refugees located in Cahul. Altogether it allowed to provide much-needed support to refugees and offer a large variety of services: psychological assistance, integrated children in kindergartens and schools, employment assistance, material and sanitation support, and others. Additionally, a job fair was organized, and refugees had access to information about employment opportunities available at the local level (through the UNDP EU/M4EG project).

- The City of Cahul also conducted a local Migration Governance Indicators assessment, in cooperation with IOM. This assessment will support the formulation of concrete programs to facilitate the ways in which diasporas and central and local authorities can engage for a more collaborative and effective humanitarian and development assistance in the context of the war in Ukraine and its impact on Moldova.

- Thousands of refugees from Ukraine have come looking for a safe haven in Moldova, with thanks to UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and IOM's support to meet their basic needs. Cahul City has worked to enroll children from Ukraine in local schools and to provide refugees with adequate health services. Many refugees have decided to stay in Moldova.

© UNDP Moldova, City of Cahul in Republic of Moldova, A job fair was organized and refugees had access to information about employment opportunities available at the local level (EU/M4EG)

Sylvie Tomic, UCLG, Vice Mayor of Lyon, vice-President of ANVITA in France
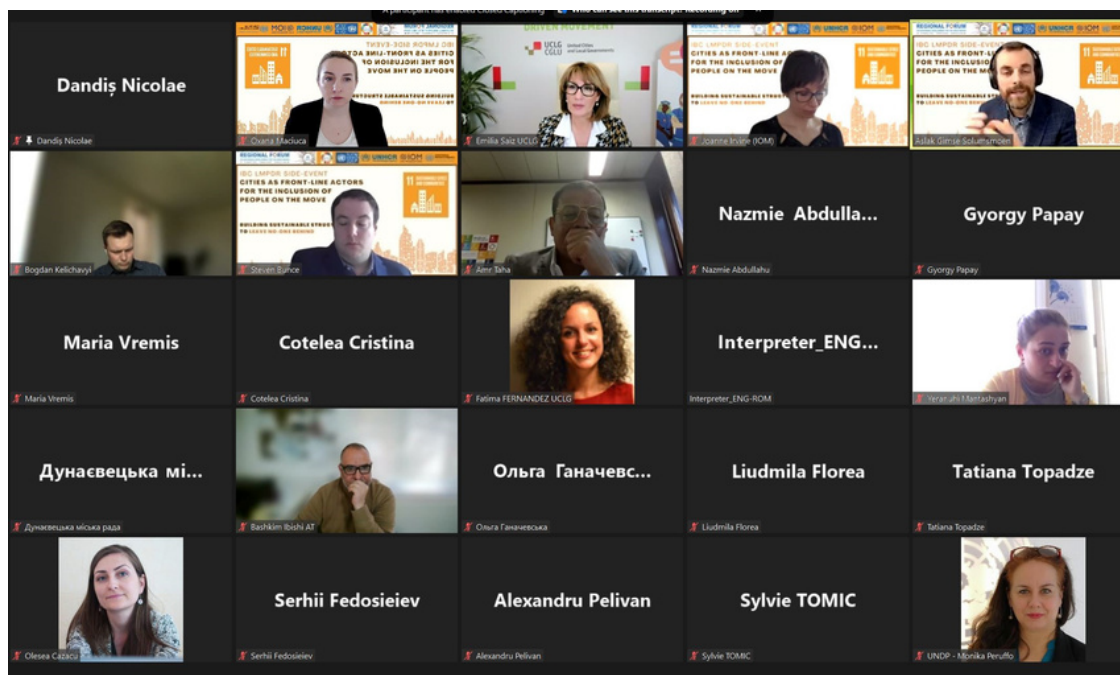
- ANVITA is a French association created in 2018; it brings together local and regional governments to welcome all people with dignity and without any distinction. Today ANVITA has 76 members and continues to grow quickly.
- It has two main missions:
  - to provide a space for exchange and mutual aid between authorities, capitalizing on good practices; and
  - to conduct advocacy vis-à-vis the French State. The aim of the advocacy is to raise awareness on the limitations of the current reception policy and on the need for a dedicated inter-ministerial structure that would deal with all relevant issues (health, education, language learning, employment, etc.), not just security aspects; and to promote joint work and shared governance between the French State, local authorities and civil society for improved integration of migrants.
- Cities are increasingly taking action to welcome migrants, but this role is not sufficiently recognized by the State. ANVITA's advocacy really resonates with Lampedusa Charter, which recognizes the role of local authorities.
- To deal with the Ukrainian crisis, an exceptional system was put in place with genuine cooperation between the State, cities and civil society through regular meetings. The city of Lyon was approached a lot, with both requests and proposals for help. Extensive coordination was done by the city before the prefecture took over: information-sharing, distribution of goods to Ukraine, reception capacities, schooling of Ukrainian refugee children.
- The French State mobilized significant resources for Ukrainian refugees, while refugee communities from other countries have not been as supported. ANVITA focused on this double standard in the reception conditions for refugee populations from different countries.

Steven Bunce, Integration Officer, UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe

- Barriers to inclusion drawing on 3rd intentions report. Most refugees from Ukraine do want to return home one day but for the time being, most plan to stay in their host countries.
- Barriers include overstretched systems and services. The population is highly educated. More refugees are employed compared to the previous round of intentions surveys, but many are working in low-skilled jobs or in the informal sector. The level of inclusion varies depending on the composition of the household. On barriers to employment, refugees most frequently mentioned access to language courses, recognition of work skills and access to childcare.
- Building on the lessons learned from previous mass refugee influxes, many cities throughout Europe have adopted an approach on early integration, linking reception to inclusion, thus enabling refugees to contribute to their host communities.
- Host cities and communities need continued support. UNHCR's work with city administrations: how successfully refugees/IDPs are included depends on the commitment of cities. We have seen extraordinary efforts to include them.
- Recent rapid influx from UKR has highlighted and exacerbated existing chronic structural problems relating to sustainable housing, government service coverage and cost of living and placed unprecedented stress on local services and national protection systems.
- When it comes to inclusion, municipalities are often the main actor to provide services and facilitate the inclusion of refugees at the local level, in many cases they need technical support and financial resources for developing and implementing holistic policies and multi-year inclusion strategies.
- UNHCR in coordination with the Migration Policy Group has developed a toolkit called Effective Inclusion of Refugees: A Participatory Approach for practitioners at the local level, which has been designed to guide local actors to build participatory approaches to planning and implementation in their respective cities and towns. The toolkit was developed jointly with local authorities, service providers, civil society and RLOs in seven pilot countries.

Monami Maulik, Civil Society Liaison Officer, UN Migration Network

- At the request of all Members States of the United Nations, the UN Network on Migration is also available to ensure effective, timely, coordinated UN system-wide support to Member States in addressing migration challenges, while also capitalizing on opportunities.

- There are currently 15 country-level networks and one Regional Network in the region that stand ready to support you and your efforts, with extensive resources accessible on the Network website and Network Migration Hub, from a database of experts; to examples of good practices; and to dialogues and discussion spaces engaging places stakeholders, including local authorities.

- The UN Migration Network would be pleased to organize a GCM talk on the topic of cities as frontline actors and people on the move. This topic also coincides with the Priorities of the Network, as outlined in the UN Network Workplan (e.g. Workstreams 5, 6 and 14)

- In February 2023, the Network launched a series of global and regional consultations and peer-learning exchanges – GCM Talks – to support Member States, the United Nations system, and stakeholders to continue discussions on how best to implement the GCM.

- The UN Network works closely with local authorities as members of workstreams and key contributors to the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in 2022 and all Regional Reviews on the GCM.

- The Network partners with the MM, MMC and UCLG to make sure that the perspectives, examples and lessons learned by local governments in advancing GCM objectives are shared broadly.

- The next Regional Review of the GCM for the ECE region to be held in 2024 will again provide a platform for local authorities among other stakeholders to exchange concrete examples of implementation programs and partnerships. Local authorities are also welcome to submit their own reports with recommendations which will feed into the Regional Review.

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