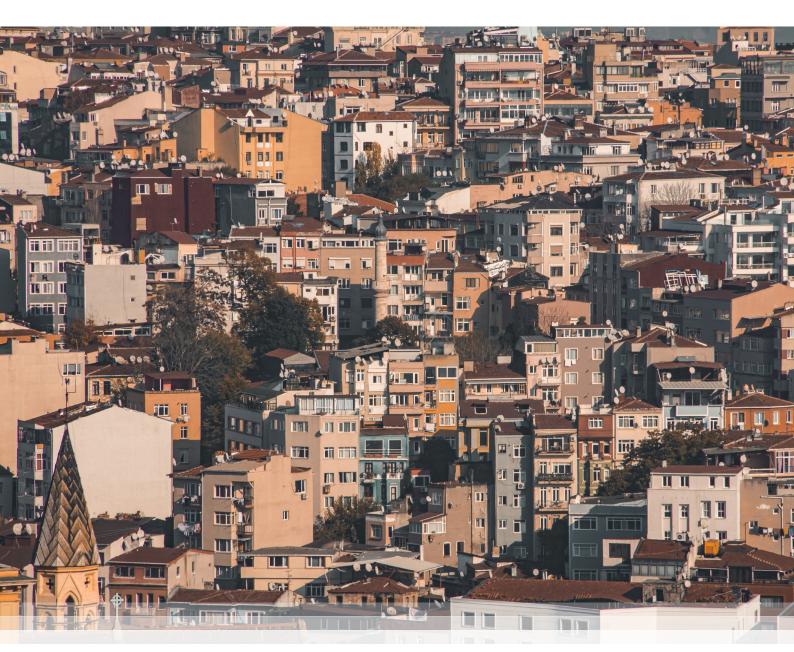# Refugee advocacy in Turkey

From local to global

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Photo: Neighbourhood in Istanbul. Kyle Petzer/Unsplash

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
CCTE	Conditional Cash Transfer for Education
CSO	civil society organisation
DGMM	Directorate General of Migration Management
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
FRIT	Facility for Refugees in Turkey
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LFIP	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
MoFLSS	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Security
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
RLO	refugee-led organisation
TMK	Refugee Council of Turkey
TP	Temporary Protection
TPR	Temporary Protection Regulation
TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Executive summary

Local, national and international actors lack a common vision, agenda and coordinated action on protection advocacy

International, national and local organisations, including refugee-led organisations, do not share a common vision or collective approach when it comes to protection advocacy in Turkey. Neither do their advocacy priorities always align. Refugee-led and local/national organisations tend to prioritise issues that impact the day-to-day rights and well-being of refugee and host communities, such as social cohesion (stronger relations between refugee and host communities and freedom from discrimination) and access to livelihoods and education. Refugee-led organisations were also much more likely to prioritise freedom of movement and social cohesion in their advocacy. In contrast, international actors' advocacy tends to be more influenced by donor funding decisions and reactive to the operational environment in Turkey. This discrepancy makes it difficult to build a joint advocacy agenda that puts at its centre the rights, needs and aspirations of the refugee population.

Existing advocacy partnerships are often tokenistic or extractive of local and national actors

Despite commitments under the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to 'localise' aid, progress in shifting power within the international humanitarian system remains limited. In Turkey, partnerships between local/national and international actors are often confined to subcontracting relationships. Local/national actors also receive limited direct, core, flexible funding, significantly impacting their ability to drive the advocacy agenda. Efforts to acknowledge and invest in these actors' advocacy efforts, particularly the potential for collaboration with international actors, are almost entirely absent, meaning that the commitment to 'localise' advocacy remains unfulfilled.

As a result of the unequal power relations in the humanitarian system, collective advocacy initiatives that are based on the shared priorities of local/national and international actors, are yet to emerge. Protection advocacy carried out by international actors is driven by their own priorities, while issues identified as key by local/national actors often remain unaddressed.

This reality means that the knowledge, experience and expertise of local/national actors are not sufficiently recognised, and there is an absence of meaningful advocacy partnerships between local/ national and international actors. Where such partnerships do exist, they are largely tokenistic or extractive of local and national actors and shaped by a funding system that demands compliance and lacks mutual accountability.

The international sector owns the language of 'protection' and 'protection advocacy' – this is sometimes deemed to be exclusionary

Local and national actors use different terminology compared to international actors, which influences both how advocacy is approached and the potential for meaningful advocacy partnerships. For example, national organisations in Turkey tend to refer to 'refugee rights' or 'refugee needs' as a framework in their advocacy efforts, while international humanitarian actors use the term 'protection advocacy' instead. This conceptualisation means that international actors deem advocacy as the role of the protection cluster within the United Nations cluster coordination system. The sector-based response to humanitarian crisis is unfit for advocacy that addresses the intersection and indivisibility of rights – such as addressing restrictions on freedom of movement as a means to access services.

At times, international actors interpret (and reinforce) differences in terminology as local/national actors' lack of capacity, leading to the adoption of top-down capacity-building approaches. It also leads to missed opportunities for mutual learning, understanding and co-creation of work.

There is a common interest in influencing government actors at various levels but the diversity of all actors is not leveraged sufficiently

The approaches adopted by local/national and refugee-led organisations to engage in advocacy are diverse. For instance, the flexibility of local actors' approach to advocacy means they are able to target a diverse range of influential actors compared to international actors. While at times they have been in tension or conflicted with one another, all actors share some common interests and approaches. For example, both local and international actors recognise that building long-term relationships with government actors and working in partnership with them towards strategic aims has been more effective than 'louder' advocacy approaches such as petitions. Thus, there is still significant space for collaborative action that is mutually accountable.

All actors must recognise the heterogeneity and diversity of advocacy approaches that are relevant for each organisation in advocating for the communities with which they work. They must work together to identify ways to capture, leverage and scale up the multiple approaches and practices being utilised at local and national levels. This is the best way to ensure that advocacy can create broader positive policy changes and positively impact the rights and lives of refugees.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background

'Local' actors, including government institutions, municipalities, national civil society organisations (CSOs), community-based groups and refugee-led organisations (RLOs), have always been at the forefront of responding to disasters and crises. As actors rooted in local communities with deep knowledge of their local contexts, they are often the first responders and critical actors in times of crisis. They are also much more likely to continue working in a crisis-affected context long after international actors have withdrawn. Despite this reality, local and national actors too often remain excluded from the traditional or international humanitarian system, which, despite recent efforts to 'localise aid', still tends to place international actors at centre stage.

The international community have, nonetheless, recognised local actors' indispensable role and have made a variety of commitments to change the current humanitarian system to promote, rather than replace, local and national humanitarian actors. The most recent have been outlined in the Agenda for Humanity (2016), the Grand Bargain (2016) and the Charter for Change (2015), as well as the Global Compact for Refugees (2018) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17. Commitments include shifting resources from international actors to local actors, as well as developing modes of co-working that go beyond subcontracting local actors to work on international programmes (Els et al., 2016).

While there is a growing body of research on the state of localisation of aid across the humanitarian system, especially in conflict settings (Metcalfe-Hough, 2020), there has been less examination of local actors' specific role in advocacy on the protection and rights of refugees and host communities in displacement contexts. 'Protection advocacy', as it is known in the international humanitarian system, is one key part of a comprehensive protection strategy and an important tool for humanitarian actors (Box 1). When combined with other protection activities, such as programming, monitoring and information provision, it has the potential to influence decision-makers and the wider public to improve protection outcomes for refugees as well as the communities that host them. This paper explores the interplay between local and international actors with regard to protection advocacy in displacement settings. Recognising the different conceptualisations and terminologies adopted by both international and local/national actors, we use 'protection advocacy' interchangeably with 'refugee rights' advocacy throughout the paper.

Box 1   Definition of protection advocacy

For the purposes of this report, we define protection advocacy as 'a core area of protection practice for both humanitarian and human rights agencies. It is about convincing decision-makers to change. Persuasion, mobilisation and denunciation are different types of advocacy. Any one of these approaches can operate on a spectrum that uses hard or soft messages, collaborative or confrontational postures, and private or public pressure. Advocacy is a skill that is required at all levels of protection action from the most local encounter to the grandest political arena. It encompasses everything from persuading the village chief to allocate land to displaced families to influencing a senior General on the conduct of his army.'

Source: Slim and Bonwick (2005)

The global displacement context is challenging and is characterised by both a growing number of refugees and a decrease in responsibility sharing on the part of states in the Global North. According to UNHCR, there are now more than 26.3 million refugees across the world (2019). Yet the overwhelming majority of refugees remain in neighbouring countries (Cosgrave et al., 2016: 2) and their displacement is protracted, averaging 20 years according to the European Commission (2020), with 75% living in urban or peri-rural areas, alongside local communities. A staggering 85% of the total global refugee population is hosted by low- and middle-income countries bordering conflict zones (UNHCR, 2019). In stark contrast, the six wealthiest countries in the world, which account for half of the global economy, host less than 9% of the world's refugees (Oxfam, 2016). This study also considers how the increasingly unequal distribution of responsibilities among states when it comes to refugee protection has an impact on advocacy around the rights of refugees conducted by international and local/national actors.

1.1.1   Why Turkey?

Turkey was chosen as the location for this research as it is a context that magnifies all of these issues. The crisis in Syria is now in its tenth year and the largest proportion of Syrian refugees remain in the region. Turkey hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees, plus more than 370,000 non-Syrian refugees. Around 98%[1] live in the country's large urban areas, including cities such as Istanbul, Gaziantep, Adana and Izmir, alongside the local host communities. As with most of the world's refugees, the overwhelming majority have now been displaced for a protracted period. Turkey has a relatively well-developed and effective infrastructure, with strong leadership from national and local government, as well as an active and engaged civil society. This has enabled the country to demonstrate better success at meeting the needs

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1   In Turkey the total is around 98%. This calculation is based on UNHCR's Syria Regional Refugee Response page (5,314,412 / 5,596,636 = 94.6%) https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria

of Syrian refugees than elsewhere in the region (although Turkey has been in a period of economic decline in more recent years and the long-term impact of this on the hosting of so many refugees remains unclear).

Such a context has required the international humanitarian system's response to evolve dramatically. There have been steps towards closer strategic and operational links with development programmes to address the needs of refugees and their host communities in a holistic way, given the displacement's protracted and urban nature. There is little research or analysis on how or whether protection advocacy has adapted to shifting and changing refugee contexts. This includes what protection advocacy priorities should be for refugees in an urban and protracted context such as Turkey, and how protection priorities align between international and national actors. This paper seeks to address this research gap.

To date there has been no research that considers the 'localisation' of protection advocacy in Turkey. In other words, how have humanitarian responses adapted to allow for a locally led advocacy response to the displacement of Syrian refugees in Turkey? Most literature that explores 'protection advocacy' focuses on the role of international humanitarian actors in the context of conflict settings (Metcalfe-Hough, 2020) rather than the interplay between national and international actors in displacement settings. This research addresses that gap by exploring what role local and national actors play in protection advocacy and to what extent there has been collaboration with international actors in this area.

This research has found that the inadequacies of efforts to shift humanitarian response to be 'as local as possible, as international as necessary' have once again come to the fore. Fundamentally, the Syrian refugee influx in Turkey has highlighted the urgency of a better localisation of aid, and of addressing the huge gaps that remain between global policy commitments and the operationalisation of aid on the ground. In addition to examining opportunities and challenges for greater collaboration, this research aims to address a gap in knowledge on the complementarity between international and local actors on protection advocacy.

1.2   Methodology

1.2.1   Research questions

This research is part of a multi-year research and public affairs project that focuses on the practice of protection advocacy. This project, 'Advocacy for humanity? Securing better protection for conflict affected people', is part of the Humanitarian Policy Group's (HPG's) Integrated Programme 2019–2022. It examines how and to what extent international humanitarian actors engage conflict parties or third parties on their responsibilities to protect civilians affected by armed conflict and, crucially, what impact they have in terms of positively influencing their behaviour in that regard.

This case study on refugees in Turkey focuses on the practice of advocacy for refugee protection, and more specifically examines the following research questions:

- What role do local actors play in protection advocacy in relation to Syrian refugees in Turkey? What are their priorities and approaches?
- To what extent is there collaboration on protection advocacy between local/national actors and international humanitarian actors? What are the opportunities for, and challenges to, greater collaboration?
- What effect has the wider geopolitical context around refugee responsibility sharing, in particular the 2015 EU–Turkey Joint Action Plan and 2016 statement, had on advocacy on the protection of refugees in Turkey, and how has that been different for local and international actors?

1.2.2   Research approach

A key feature of the research approach has been HPG's partnership with the Refugee Council of Turkey (TMK).[2] An HPG researcher worked closely with the TMK in designing and establishing the methodology of the research as well as conducting the field work and analysing the findings. The research team comprised seven researchers representing four organisations: five from members of the TMK (namely Oxfam-KEDV and IGAM), one from Turkish Red Crescent and one from HPG.

This study adopts a qualitative approach, based on in-depth interviews with national and local CSOs, including refugee-led organisations, and international organisations who are working or previously worked in Turkey in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. International actors included representatives from UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). The national actors included local NGOs, community associations and representatives from ministries and municipalities. In total, 44 qualitative interviews were conducted with 15 international actors, including UN agencies, INGOs, and inter-governmental organisations that were or had been operational in Turkey during the Syrian refugee response, and 26 with local or national CSOs or NGOs, which included 11 organisations established and/or led by refugees (referred to throughout as 'refugee-led organisations'). An additional five interviews were conducted with government officials at a local and national level, including a local municipality leader, a Deputy Mayor and senior officials from the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). During the preliminary design phase, scoping interviews were also conducted with academics and researchers from Turkey to inform the scope and methodology for the research.

All participating national, local, refugee-led and international organisations were engaged in or seeking to influence policy change on behalf of refugees in Turkey, in addition to engaging in programme delivery. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews and research workshops were held via videoconferencing. A snowball approach was used to map and select interviewees, with interviews conducted between April and November 2020.

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2   The Refugee Council of Turkey (*Türkiye Mülteci Konseyi* or TMK in Turkish) was established by a group of national and refugee-led organisations in 2016. It brings 20 organisations under the same umbrella, and it is the first and only platform to date that includes national and refugee-led organisations.

In addition to the empirical work, a literature review was conducted covering issues such as protection humanitarian advocacy and refugee advocacy in urban contexts, localisation of humanitarian aid, Turkish civil society and the Syrian refugee response in Turkey. The resources reviewed were a mix of policy literature, largely from NGOs and research institutes, as well as scholarly literature, in both English and Turkish.

1.2.3   Research limitations

This research faced a number of limitations, the most notable of which was the Covid-19 pandemic. The research was planned prior to the pandemic and conducted throughout its course, and was therefore limited by global restrictions on travel and movement. These limitations were mitigated by adapting the working methods, including working exclusively with local research partners on the ground and conducting remote interviews using videoconferencing. Solely conducting interviews via videoconferencing may have contributed to challenges in building trust and rapport between the researchers and the organisations interviewed and may have had reduced opportunities to reach out to other local/national actors with less access to technology. Any absence of their perspectives is a limitation to the research.

Moreover, difficulties in getting interviews with certain organisations meant that some views are lacking. There were challenges in obtaining interviews with a small number of international donors and international human rights organisations due to lack of availability or unwillingness to be interviewed, as well as the fact that many INGOs are no longer operational in Turkey. This was also exacerbated by the onset of Covid-19, given that many of the same actors targeted for this research were intensively involved in responding to the pandemic.

2 Background to refugee hosting in Turkey

Turkey has a long history of receiving significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. Between 1920 and the mid-1990s, it received more than 1.5 million refugees from the Balkans (Kirişci, 2014) and over half a million people from Iraq between 1988 and 1991 (Kirişci, 2003). The country has also received asylum seekers from elsewhere in the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa (İçduygu, 2007), ranging between 3,000 and 13,000 applications for international protection per year between 2001 and 2010, mainly originating from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq (İçduygu, 2007).

Turkey now hosts more refugees than any other country in the world, a position it has held since 2014 (UNHCR, 2020a). While exact figures are difficult to establish in any displacement context, according to the DGMM, this includes more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees under Temporary Protection (DGMM Temporary Protection Statistics, 2020)[3] and an estimated 370,000 refugees from other countries of origin, according to UNHCR figures (UNHCR, 2020b). In stark contrast, in 2019 only 10,558 refugees were resettled out of Turkey to countries in Europe and other countries such as the US, of which 78% were Syrian refugees (AIDA, 2020). While the world's major economies increasingly turn away from sharing responsibilities for hosting refugees, Turkey continues to provide an enormous global good in hosting around four million refugees. The Government of Turkey's hospitality towards displaced Syrians over the past decade has received international praise and the country deserves enormous recognition for its role, including provision of access to education, healthcare and employment to many refugees who have been living for almost a decade alongside its own citizens.[4] The sheer scale of the displacement in the country has, however, placed significant strain on national resources and the host community.

2.1 Overview of the Syrian refugee response in Turkey

During the early years of the Syrian refugee crisis (2011–2014), the Turkish government's response was based on hospitality and humanitarianism with the assumption that the displacement of Syrian refugees would be temporary. As was the case for asylum seekers from other countries including Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, there was an 'open-door policy' that enabled many Syrians to escape violence, threats and destruction. As numbers rapidly scaled up and the strain was felt on public services by the sheer scale of the refugee population, some restrictions on entry into Turkey were eventually imposed.

To a large extent, the response has been nationally funded and primarily delivered through national and local institutions. Initially, the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) played a leading role in the humanitarian response, until the DGMM (established in 2013 within the Ministry of

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3   As of 7 October 2020, Turkey hosts 3,627,481 refugees under Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR). DGMM Temporary Protection Statistics available at https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27.

4   This reflects statements made by the UNHCR High Commissioner in regard to Turkey. See for example Dunmore (2018) and Murray (2016).

the Interior) gradually assumed responsibility for coordinating the response, including taking over the task of registering all Syrian refugees in Turkey and coordinating with key line ministries. Municipalities and governorates, especially in areas with substantial refugee populations, have also played a significant role in meeting the protection needs of Syrian refugees from the very beginning of the refugee influx, including directing public services and coordination with national and international civil society actors (Betts et al., 2017; Erdoğan, 2017; IGAM et al., 2020; Kale and Erdoğan, 2019).

2.1.1   The Turkish state's response

While Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the additional 1967 Protocol, it continues to adhere to the Convention's initial geographical limitation that only applies the Convention to refugees from Europe. Nonetheless, building on the foundation of an asylum system that was introduced in 1990 (Aydin and Kirişci, 2013), Turkey adapted its institutional, legal and policy frameworks relatively quickly, allowing it to better respond to the needs of Syrian refugees. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), a comprehensive legal and policy framework for migration management adopted in 2013, grants international protection to refugees, including those from Syria, until they are resettled to a third country.[5] It affirms Turkey's obligations towards people in need of international protection regardless of country of origin, incorporating the principle of 'non-refoulement'.

Following the initial emergency response phase, official government policy has focused on integrating refugees into existing services. The TPR was issued by the Council of Ministers in 2014 and strengthened protection for registered Syrians by setting out the specific rights that applicants are entitled to in the case of mass influx. Under 'temporary protection', Syrian refugees have access to services alongside Turkish nationals, such as health and education, the labour market,[6] social assistance and interpretation services. This 'integration-aimed' policy approach has had considerable success in including Syrian refugees into existing state services. For example, as of the 2020–2021 academic year, over 768,000 Syrian children were enrolled in Turkish public schools (Turkey: 3RP Country Chapter, 2021/2022) and access to primary health care services was high (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2019).

2.1.2   The situation of Syrian refugees

Although the legal framework governing the protection of Syrians in Turkey has been widely praised, and refugees in Turkey have enjoyed better access to services and rights than Syrians hosted elsewhere in the region and beyond, the sheer scale of the displacement and the temporary nature of protection can present protection challenges for many Syrians in Turkey. For example, under the TPR, Syrian refugees' rights to access public services are tied to the province in which they are registered. While

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5   Notably, this asylum system was not developed in response to the influx of Syrian refugees as popularly conceived. The groundwork for this asylum framework had been introduced as early as the 1990s (Aydın and Kirişci, 2013).

6   Turkey has one of the more expansive areas of labour rights for refugees in contrast to Lebanon and Jordan where there is no existing national legal framework that respects the right to work (Asylum Access, 2017: 14).

there has long been a degree of flexibility in the system regarding this requirement, in recent years it has been implemented increasingly strictly. Moreover, recognising the uneven distribution of Syrians across Turkey, since late 2017, certain provinces have ceased accepting new registrations of Syrians under temporary protection.[7] This has had implications for the thousands of refugees who initially registered in a border province but have since migrated to Istanbul or other larger cities in search of work. As the government has tightened its policy implementation, many have been forced to choose between earning an income or being able to access essential public services. This was witnessed most recently in 2019, when the Ministry of the Interior took measures to implement existing regulations more tightly. As of early 2020, the governorate of Istanbul announced that nearly 100,000 unregistered Syrians had left the city (Hürriyet, 2020).

Other policy shifts have also impacted the protection of Syrian refugees. In 2016, for example, partly in response to political pressure following the signing of the EU–Turkey agreement[8] (Box 3) and in a context of rapidly rising numbers of Syrians in the country, Turkey shifted from its open-door policy and took steps to limit the number of refugee arrivals by ending its visa-free policy for Syrians arriving by air and sea from a third country.[9] Over the years, there have also been some reports of deportations and pushbacks at the border (HRW, 2016; Amnesty International, 2019), although these were limited to a small number of cases in comparison with the total size of the refugee population.

Despite the strong foundation provided by the legal and policy framework, refugees face a range of challenges in accessing services and formal employment due to multiple factors such as language barriers, uneven implementation of the existing laws and difficulties navigating the system and bureaucratic procedures. Barriers to formal employment and low wages in the informal market mean that poverty is a real concern for many Syrian refugees (Barbelet and Wake, 2017). According to the 3RP monitoring report, over 64% of urban Syrian refugee households live below the poverty line, with 18.4% living in extreme poverty (3RP Turkey Country Chapter Monitoring Report 2018). This level of economic vulnerability has led to an increase in child labour: according to UNICEF, approximately one in ten Syrian refugee children is working (UNICEF, 2018). Moreover, more than 35% of children remain out of school (Turkey: 3RP Country Chapter 2021/2022). As the crisis became increasingly protracted during a time of economic and political tumult, public opinion began to shift. This came alongside proposals pushing for Syrian refugees to return to northern Syria (Karasapan, 2019). Some Syrian refugees were able to secure Turkish citizenship. However, for many living under temporary protection, there were increased levels of economic insecurity with rising housing and food costs making it challenging to meet basic needs. There have also been increased pressures on social cohesion with their Turkish neighbours.

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7   For example, Hatay stopped accepting new registrations in October 2017 (www.asylumineurope.org/sites/ default/files/report-download/aida_tr_2017update.pdf); Istanbul stopped accepting new registrations in February 2018 (www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-government-stops-relocating-syrians-to-istanbul-127084).

8   www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/20/turkey-open-border-displaced-syrians-shelled-government.

9   www.dw.com/en/turkey-imposes-visa-regime-on-syrians-arriving-from-third-countries/a-18967722 and www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-new-visa-law-for-syrians-enters-into-force-93642.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges faced by Syrian refugees in accessing both essential services and employment. Even before the pandemic, 42% of all registered persons under international and temporary protection in Turkey (of which 85% are Syrians) were living below the poverty line (Turkey: 3RP Country Chapter 2021/2022). Of these, 82% reported difficulties in meeting household needs with their income. Preliminary studies suggest that 69% of working refugees lost their jobs at the immediate outset of the Covid-19 pandemic (IFRC and Türk Kizilay, 2020). A one-time top-up was provided to existing beneficiaries of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme, in line with top-up payments provided to vulnerable Turkish households enrolled in national safety net programmes (Little et al., 2021). However, most refugees who lost their jobs due to the pandemic were ineligible for state support packages given that most are employed in the informal sector, including in agriculture, construction and services, where they and their Turkish counterparts are not granted state support.[10] In addition, given that education has largely been provided remotely since March 2020, this has posed particular challenges for refugee children who have limited access to technology.

2.1.3   The role of international humanitarian organisations

Due to the Turkish government's resources and capacity to manage the refugee emergency as well as the initial focus of international actors on the situation *inside* Syria, international actors initially played a limited role in Turkey.

As was also the case for many Syrian organisations, early on, many of the INGOs came to Turkey for the purpose of cross-border relief operations under the coordination of UNOCHA (Çorabatır, 2016), rather than seeing it as a location for displacement programming.[11] They were permitted to do this without registration on the condition that they limited their work to cross-border activities. Since 2015, as the number of refugees continued to rise rapidly, the authorities established 'a more institutionalised assistance framework with international agencies' that has facilitated registered INGOs and UN agencies[12] to play a much larger role in the Syrian refugee response in Turkey (Memisoglu and Ilgit, 2017). Under the overall leadership of the Turkish government, there has been close partnership and collaboration by both AFAD and DGMM with key UN agencies – such as UNHCR, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) – across areas such as refugee registration, resettlement and access to services such as education, health, cash transfer and social security.

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10   The law that provided support to workers and workplaces did not apply for informal workers (Republic of Turkey Official Gazette, 2020).

11   'The humanitarian system and its actors in Turkey' (2017, Oxfam in Turkey) https://oxfam.app.box.com/s/w7w2n77n78fa4gfziu8sli1x2jawh2oj.

12   There are 143 INGOs registered and permitted to operate in Turkey. 'Foreign CSOs permitted to operate in Turkey' www.siviltoplum.gov.tr/kurumlar/siviltoplum.gov.tr/istatistikler/YabanciSTK/izin_verilen_listesi_ing.pdf.

Box 2   UNHCR in Turkey

UNHCR has worked closely with the Turkish government as far back as the 1990s on developing Turkey's national asylum legislation as well as building the capacity of DGMM (Aydin and Kirişci, 2013). While initially led by UNHCR, registration and refugee status determination has since been fully handed over to DGMM.

UNHCR leads and coordinates the efforts of UN agencies and has joint responsibility with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Turkey for the coordination of the 3RP for Turkey, under the leadership of the Government of Turkey.

The Government of Turkey has played an active role in creating and defining the national chapter of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).[13] Established in 2015, it is a region-wide UN framework and platform for strategic coordination, planning, advocacy, fundraising and programming for delivery of services to refugee groups and vulnerable host communities, bringing government together with development and humanitarian actors.[14] The 3RP has specific country frameworks and provides a 'comprehensive strategic response to support the Government's efforts to address the needs of Syrian refugees, host communities, and relevant institutions in line with Turkey's legal and policy framework'.[15] It is developed in consultation with the Turkish government at the local and national levels, and the government co-leads with UNHCR (Box 2). As such, 3RP partners are to 'work in support of the government to enable the inclusion of Syrians under temporary protection without having a negative impact on the quality of service provision, while continuing to address immediate needs of Syrians under temporary protection'.[16]

13   3RP 2020 Regional Strategic Overview 2021–2022. Available at: www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/RSO2021.pdf.

14   Turkey: 3RP Country Chapter – 2021/2022. Available at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85061.

15   3RP Turkey Consolidated 2020 Appeal Overview. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/77350.pdf.

16   Turkey: 3RP Country Chapter – 2021/2022. Available at: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85061.

Box 3   The EU–Turkey statement

Following the onset of the conflict in Syria, the number of asylum seekers attempting to reach Europe grew quickly, triggered a political crisis on the continent in 2015. A core part of the EU's policy response was the EU–Turkey statement, finalised in 2016. This saw Turkey agree to curtail the onward movement of irregular migrants to Europe and to take back all migrants who irregularly arrived in Greece via Turkey. This was contingent on EU funding. In addition, the EU agreed to resettle one Syrian refugee from Turkey for every one refugee that was readmitted from Greece, as well as liberalising its visa regime for Turkish citizens.

The EU–Turkey statement forms part of the EU's wider 'externalisation' agenda, which aims to restrict access to its territory for asylum, containing refugees in neighbouring countries in return for the provision of financial aid. The agreement has been widely criticised, including by UNHCR and many rights-based NGOs, due to concerns that 'blanket return' arrangements between the EU and Turkey of any individuals may violate international refugee law (HRW, 2016; Amnesty International, 2017).

Since the statement was signed, onward movement from Turkey to the EU has reduced significantly (European Commission, 2016). However, only about 1% of Turkey's Syrian refugee population (26,135 individuals) have been resettled (IOM, 2020).

According to the EU, the funding that has been disbursed has gone to support refugees in Turkey by prioritising integration alongside supporting capacity-building of state systems and local authorities (European Commission, 2016). The funds have had a positive impact on the ground for refugees, in particular in meeting their basic needs. The Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT), a vehicle for disbursing funds allocated to Turkey under the auspices of the EU–Turkey statement, has also supported cooperation between European actors, including European NGOs, local civil society and international organisations (Kirişci, 2021). However, just 63% of the total for both tranches has been disbursed to date (European Commission, 2021). Of the total funds allocated, just 23% has been allocated directly to national actors and only 0.0002% of the disbursed funding was allocated directly to national CSO actors (calculations are authors' own) (EU FRIT, 2021)

2.1.4   The role of international donors

According to figures published by UNHCR and UNDP, who jointly lead interagency coordination in Turkey, 3RP partners and international financial institutions have provided $8.2 billion to public institutions in Turkey since 2017.[17] The EU is one of the largest international donors to the refugee response in Turkey, having committed EUR 6 billion to Turkey's response to the Syrian refugee crisis (EUR 3 billion in 2016/2017 and EUR 3 billion in 2018/2019), with all funds committed and contracted and EUR 4.1 billion disbursed as of March 2021.[18] An extension was granted in 2020 with the European Parliament approving a top-up of EUR 485 million to be directed to the ESSN, which provides 1.7 million refugees with monthly cash assistance as the largest ever EU-funded humanitarian programme. It will also finance an extension of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) programme, which provides cash support to families who send their children to school.[19] While these amounts are significant, they represent a small fraction of the more than $40 billion of its own fiscal resources that the Government of Turkey reports having spent on hosting Syrian refugees.[20]

2.1.5   The role of local actors and the domestic political, social and economic environment

Turkey has a diverse civil society. As of June 2021, it included some 122,000 active associations (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Civil Society Relations General Directorate, 2021) and 5,325 foundations (Republic of Turkey Foundations General Directorate, 2020). It also includes numerous RLOs, all of which have played a critical role in the Syrian refugee response. Research suggests that this experience over the past decade has mobilised a wide cross-section of civil society, including large, well-established organisations specialised in refugee rights, migration management or humanitarian response; women's organisations; human rights organisations; and smaller community-based development organisations, among others.[21]

The Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) were given a particularly strong operational role by the Turkish government, including managing the provision of services (primary health care and education) for Syrian refugees. In partnership with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and with EU funding, they are currently responsible for delivering cash assistance to Syrian refugees through the ESSN programme. Previously the ESSN delivery was led by WFP in partnership with the TRC. Refugees

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17   https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85524.

18   https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf.

19   https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1324.

20   Some believe this figure is a significant underestimation of the true costs, and that it would be much higher if expenditures by municipalities and other institutions were accounted for in full. See, for example, Erdoğan, 2017 (https://mmuraterdogan.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/mmu-urban-refugees-report-2017_en.pdf).

21   'The humanitarian system and its actors in Turkey' (2017, Oxfam in Turkey) https://oxfam.app.box.com/s/w7w2n77n78fa4gfziu8sli1x2jawh2oj.

have received humanitarian support through the ESSN programme and the CCTE, as well as other programmes that feed into TRC's Kızılaykart platform, resulting in a reach of approximately 2.4 million people with basic needs across Turkey (IFRC and Türk Kizilay, 2020).

This local response also includes countless individual acts of kindness from Turkish families and CSOs. According to one survey (HUGO, 2014), some 31% of Turkish respondents has contributed personal finances to help support Syrian refugees.

However, while the Turkish host community was initially welcoming of Syrian refugees, the tone of social and political debate in more recent years has changed, and there is an increasingly negative public perception of Syrians. At the same time as welcoming millions of Syrian refugees over a protracted period, Turkey has faced a tumultuous political and economic period. A slow-motion economic crisis that has accelerated since 2017 has seen the currency devalue, while foreign debts remain high. The official unemployment rate is at 12.2%, with youth unemployment at almost 30% (TURKSTAT, 2021a) and wages low, leaving purchasing power in decline. As a result, many refugees and an increasing number of Turkish nationals are dependent on monetary or in-kind aid from the government, and/or loans, for their livelihoods. There has been an increase in poverty rates, which has only been exacerbated by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there is no sign of easing of these economic challenges. With the displacement crisis protracted, each year that passes reduces the likelihood of refugees returning to Syria, all of which has placed Turkey's well-developed infrastructure and economy under pressure.

This economic crisis has been compounded by significant changes in the political system and frequent elections. There has been a marked shift in political discourse, transforming issues relating to refugees into a political battleground. The large scale of displacement to Turkey in a short period has resulted in increasing concerns among the Turkish population that Turkey's borders and migration processes will become unmanageable and more insecure (Erdoğan, 2020a: 75). These fears have been taken advantage of by parties across the political spectrum, which increasingly target Syrian refugees in order to mobilise their bases as they compete for votes, and in doing so fuel existing stereotypes and prejudices, inciting discrimination and hate speech (Memisoglu and Ilgit, 2017). The sheer number of refugees in Turkey, as well as the protracted nature of their displacement has further enabled the politicisation of the refugee issue in Turkey. As highlighted by one host-community organisation interviewed for this research, 'the number of refugees in Turkey is equal to the population of many other countries'.

3   Approaches to protection advocacy

3.1   Good practice collaboration

In this research, all actors recognised that collaborating with other organisations conducting advocacy – whether local or international – would benefit advocacy efforts, with the potential for greater impact on the lives and rights of refugees and host communities. International and local actors acknowledged that their voices would be more powerful and persuasive if used in concert with others. One RLO reported a successful collaboration with two INGOs on refugees' access to mental health services, where they led engagement with the Ministry of Health, including attending high-level meetings with ministry representatives. The RLO proposed an advocacy initiative that invited the Ministry of Health to ensure better access to mental health services for refugees. The result was the opening of a number of new mental health and physical therapy centres for refugees, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, that are collectively managed by a combination of refugee-led and local/national organisations and INGOs. Another example was given of an advocacy collaboration between a RLO and a UN agency, in which the RLO was invited to write an anti-bullying policy. Still other local organisations reported consciously taking on complementary roles in joint advocacy, such as doing 'on the ground' follow up on cases or issues that international rights-based organisations were seeking to highlight through advocacy, in an effort to elevate public attention to the issue. However, although there was evidence of some collaboration between local and international actors on advocacy work, this was limited overall.

3.2   How protection advocacy is understood

3.2.1   Differing approaches to advocacy

States have primary responsibility for protecting rights, including towards refugees hosted within their territories. However, in a humanitarian context, international, national and local humanitarian and development agencies explicitly focus on ensuring that conditions and an enabling environment is achieved to realise these rights.

Humanitarian agencies, INGOs, UN agencies, as well as national actors and local civil society have different spheres of influence, action and activities (Slim and Bonwick, 2005). This shapes the type of advocacy in which they engage. Within the UN system, UNHCR has a key protection leadership role for the refugee population, while UNICEF has a mandate to 'advocate for the protection of children's rights', including refugee children. International displacement-focused NGOs, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC), may be engaged in refugee advocacy, both at headquarters and at the country level. Other agencies, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, have a multi-sector approach across development and humanitarian criseswhich includes engaging in protection advocacy. International humanitarian agencies traditionally juggle commitments to protection advocacy with their operational role in the country, maintaining access in order to deliver protection programmes to affected populations. International human rights

actors such as Amnesty International, Refugees International and Human Rights Watch do not have an operational role in implementing humanitarian or development programmes, and frequently use public advocacy that targets both host and donor governments. Throughout the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey and elsewhere, they have been actively engaged in advocacy that adopts a public approach.

Among international humanitarian actors, protection advocacy can be conceptualised across three broad areas: persuasion, mobilisation and denunciation (see Box 4).

Box 4   Three areas of advocacy

Advocacy as persuasion

Decision-makers need to be convinced of the need for change and of their own need to act to make that change. Persuasion tends to use the force of argument rather than the argument of force to convince appropriate authorities to protect civilians.

Persuasion can be undertaken through a variety of approaches including face-to-face meetings, targeted reports, letters or formal delegations.

Advocacy as mobilisation

Making an argument together with others usually results in a more forceful case. Mobilisation is the art of building, informing and energising an appropriate network of powerful decision-makers into a particular form of action to protect civilians. Mobilisation can take many forms. In a bottom-up form, it may involve the support and mobilisation of in-country civil society organisations in favour of affected populations. For example, some of the most powerful organisations in protracted warfare in parts of Latin America have been well-organised solidarity movements of civilians for civilians. Internationally, a wide-ranging coalition of people can come together to argue the same point in many countries. In a more top-down manifestation, it may be a matter of catching key people's attention and engaging their commands. For example, sometimes a single telephone call to the right decision-maker at the right moment from the right person can mobilise a powerful network of local, national and international resources. Often, mobilisation requires both approaches working simultaneously.

Advocacy as denunciation

The logic of denunciation is to shame decision-makers into taking particular actions through public exposure, private conscience or obvious interest. Although this can be an effective type of intervention, it can sometimes be highly confrontational and close the door to more constructive relationships in the future. Therefore, it should be used with caution. Because of this, denunciation is usually portrayed as the last resort in humanitarian advocacy.

Source: Slim and Bonwick (2005)

National and local CSOs also play critical roles in protection advocacy, although they do not always conceptualise it in the same way as international humanitarian actors. In the case of Turkey, many local NGOs and community organisations engage in advocacy to improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers and were doing so long before the arrival of Syrian refugees. Others have experience of advocating for the rights of other social groups in Turkey prior to the arrival of refugees, such as for women, ethnic minorities or other low-income groups, and have adapted their work to focus on the rights of refugees since 2011. Approaches vary across local NGOs, and include solidarity movements, taking legal action with the support of campaigning lawyers and building civil society associations. One example of a solidarity movement established in response to Syrian refugees being required to leave certain cities across Turkey in 2019 was the 'We Want to Live Together Initiative', which adopted a public approach of marching in solidarity with refugees and publishing research reports and press releases. Some local NGOs also utilised direct influencing/dialogue with decision-makers, in this case with local authorities, to improve access to services for refugees. One such case is an organisation called Halkların Köprüsü, that speaks with pharmacists in Izmir to persuade them to give medicines to Syrians for free (which they are entitled to under Turkish law, but were not being granted in practice) (MacKreath and Sağnıç, 2017: 28).

3.2.2   Differing understandings of protection

Local and national actors are not limited by the concept of 'protection' when it comes to advocacy. They tend to view advocacy as a tool to be used to achieve any improvement in the lives of refugees, approaching advocacy in a fluid and adaptable manner across a range of interconnected rights depending on the context and the evolving priorities of and challenges facing refugees.

In contrast, the international humanitarian system's sector-based approach means that 'protection activities', including 'protection advocacy', fall within the protection sector and focus on a narrower set of rights. This is in spite of the interconnected nature of rights across a breadth of areas from health to social protection, as well as across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Despite protection being about *all* rights as set out in international law, protection actors tend to advocate less on socio-economic rights, with health and education dealt with in their respective sectors, often with less of a rights-based focus. The sector approach has created a siloed and somewhat narrower understanding of protection among the international humanitarian sector; advocacy focuses more on 'traditional' rights such as violence and exploitation, rather than enabling access to a wider set of rights, such as the right to work, social protection or housing.

Yet advocating for these wider economic and social rights is vital in a protracted displacement context such as Turkey, where issues like social protection and livelihoods are top priorities for refugees' well-being, safety and protection. As one international development actor noted 'social protection is protection in Turkey'.

3.2.3   The term 'protection advocacy' is a barrier to collaboration

Differences in the understanding of protection underline the fact that 'protection advocacy' is one of the many concepts and constructs of the international humanitarian system that does not always translate smoothly across different contexts. It is also perceived to be 'owned' by a small number of international humanitarian actors, and is felt by local, national and development actors to be exclusionary.

Differing perspectives on what constitutes 'protection' and the sector-based approach of the international humanitarian system are a barrier to collaboration. While this conceptual divide was under-recognised by international actors, local actors were acutely aware of it. International actors seemed to make little effort to engage with the ways local actors conceptualise and approach advocacy on the rights of refugees; this suggests that the system has struggled to adapt to the local context, including demonstrating a willingness to listen, understand and learn from local actors. One interviewed INGO, for example, underlined that one of the key barriers to collaboration with local actors is that they are unable to regularly attend sectoral working group meetings due to the language barrier or a lack of resources, illustrating how local actors need to meet the frameworks for enhancing collaborations on advocacy that are familiar to international actors. This barrier helps to explain why our research found very little joined up analysis and agenda setting across international and local actors, as well as between international humanitarian and development actors, when it came to advocacy on refugee rights.

3.3   Advocacy priorities of local and international actors

Our research found that local and international actors prioritised issues facing refugees and host communities differently, and there were distinct ways in which these issues were conceptualised by the two groups of actors. Where there were shared advocacy priorities between international and national/local actors, this tended to be across more mainstream protection issues, for example, in relation to improving access to services for refugees.

Given the relatively strong legal framework in Turkey in terms of allowing refugees access to services, all actors recognised that the *implementation* of rights should be a priority for advocacy. This included addressing discrimination and misunderstanding around the rights of refugees, both at the individual and institutional levels. This impacted their approach as explained by an interviewee from one RLO:

> Refugees do not have the same experiences in accessing their rights across all institutions, and this is often informed by preconceived notions and biases about refugees (at institutional or individual level). Thus, we see resistance to implement certain regulations in certain institutions. This is one of the main reasons why we are involved in advocacy.

As well as focusing on the implementation of legal frameworks to which refugees are entitled under Turkish law, local organisations spoke of prioritising underlying legal issues that had not found resolve. This included issues related to accessing a permanent status in the long term, and the challenges associated with the temporary nature of the Temporary Protection (TP) status. Others underlined the

challenges faced by refugees residing in provinces that are not their province of registration, in terms of accessing services. Other advocacy priorities mentioned in relation to legal status include access to asylum, detention and deportation conditions, border closures and refugee returns, as well as women, children and disabled refugees' access to protection.

RLOs noted freedom of movement both inside and outside Turkey as important. This included challenges around changing their province of registration under the TPR and obtaining and/or renewing passports at the Syrian consulate, to allow them to travel abroad. They also highlighted the challenges faced by certain groups of refugees, including those who have lost their TP status after having temporarily returned to Syria, as another advocacy priority.

3.3.1 Long-term versus short-term priorities

More recently, local, national and refugee-led organisations noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has required them to revert to advocating for more immediate needs, including refugees' access to basic services, rather than longer-term goals, such as social cohesion. The pandemic has led to rises in economic and social inequalities and gender-based violence for both host and refugee populations, as well as exacerbating difficulties around access to online education for refugee children. Local organisations reported how they once again shifted priorities swiftly, informed by their engagement on the ground with affected communities. As one interviewee from a local Turkish NGO noted:

> During Covid-19, we saw changes in our work in that we have seen a significant rise in domestic violence cases, and there are increasing concerns about lack of access to education for refugees through remote learning. Both issues have impacted the advocacy focus of our work.

Overall, however, local and national actors were more likely to identify longer-term advocacy priorities. These actors consistently identified social cohesion[22] as a critical advocacy priority for the protection and promotion of refugees' rights, both to create a more enabling environment at a broader policy level and to ensure that refugees were safe in their localities. With such a large number of refugees having lived alongside their hosts for several years, depending on the same resources, jobs and services, they recognised the need to prioritise rising social anxieties among the Turkish host community. As one local NGO explained: 'Whether your advocacy is relevant to the needs and priorities of refugees – to feel that they are at home here and not threatened – and you build bridges between refugees and host communities – your biggest protection is your community. If you are not feeling safe in your community then you will never feel safe'.

To some extent, longer-term needs were not a priority early on in the response (Özden and Ramadan, 2019), although several local actors noted that they were quick to shift their focus to social cohesion compared with international actors. Although social cohesion has been noted as an issue since the first

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22   In the literature, social cohesion is poorly defined (Guay, 2015: 7). However, put simply, it includes the bonds, level of trust and inter-relationships between refugees and their host society.

3RP for Turkey (2015–2016), it does not seem to have emerged as a priority for international actors until the displacement situation had become more protracted. This change in focus was also influenced by a reduced focus on access to other durable solutions such as resettlement and voluntary repatriation due to the increasingly protracted situation, an overall decline in international responsibility sharing and a growing perception among international actors that prioritising resettlement would be a waste of resources considering the signing of the EU–Turkey statement. As one INGO worker described:

> INGOs started to advocate a lot less for resettlement following the EU–Turkey statement because you will see that there is no appetite from anyone to hear these arguments around resettlement. The focus shifted more on to the integration of refugees into host countries.

Although social cohesion is now a priority in the response, the traditional humanitarian operational approach means that international actors lack experience, are ill-adapted to advocating on longer-term issues such as enhancing social relations and inclusion in protracted displacement settings, and are slow in transitioning to longer-term approaches. This was often criticised by local organisations. As one host community organisation described:

> it is important for INGOs to be role models, but rather than looking at actual long-term impact, they mainly work based on short-term projects. Turkish civil society, on the other hand, do plan around long-term needs. For instance, in response to Covid-19, there was a lot of humanitarian aid and food distributions for refugees, but INGOs did not come together to think about the long-term needs of refugees post-Covid.

Notably, some national actors pointed out that the short-term approaches to advocacy largely adopted by international humanitarian actors signalled a broader issue of replicating and maintaining mainstream humanitarian approaches without recognising the shifting context at hand.

While local organisations felt that their ultimate goals were shared by international actors, their advocacy priorities were not well aligned. Local organisations felt that international humanitarian organisations prioritised delivering humanitarian aid over carrying out advocacy. They also observed that international actors are often out of touch with the communities they support and lack a sound understanding of their priorities and needs. Some suggested that this was driven by the priorities of donor organisations and institutions.

3.4   How local and international actors identify their advocacy priorities

Interviews with local organisations revealed that their advocacy priorities were directly informed by their close contact with refugee and host communities, both at the individual and institutional level. These priorities could rapidly shift, depending on the changing needs on the ground. For example, one local actor explained how his organisation's priorities shifted after witnessing first-hand the problems in the local community they were working with:

> With the increase in the number of refugees over time (in 2013–2014), we started seeing problems in host communities' access to work, overcrowded refugee households, increase in prostitution, refugee children's integration in the school system, etc. …When companies began to hire more refugees more cheaply than workers among the local population, attitudes about refugees were impacted negatively as a result of increasing unemployment in host communities. It was this development, along with other issues growing at the local level, which led us to focus more of our work on refugees' access to their rights and on social cohesion.

Most local organisations were flexible and agile enough to shift their agenda and focus on more sustainable long-term approaches, including around social cohesion. They described how they prioritised advocacy to ensure non-conflict and decrease discrimination against refugees as well as to counter increasing tensions resulting from negative portrayals of refugees. One RLO also noted that they had started targeting their advocacy and programmes on enhancing social cohesion in line with the priorities of their communities far before international humanitarian actors began engaging with the issue.

Local organisations also spoke about adapting their approach and advocacy messages as the crisis became increasingly protracted. As one RLO explained, 'We shifted the focus of our advocacy as it became obvious that Syrians are here to stay, and we observed the change in the political narrative and increased hate speech towards Syrian refugees'. This agility, flexibility and ability to adapt to the situation on the ground was again demonstrated after the onset of Covid-19, when local organisations noted how they shifted their advocacy priorities again to basic needs, access to remote education and gender-based violence. One national actor described conducting a needs assessment in the field to determine access to information on health precautions and mental health services among refugees to influence UNHCR's approaches.

RLOs often prioritised issues that impacted them personally. Engagement tended to be frequent and personal, including taking calls from refugees with specific requests. RLOs criticised international actors for not being in touch with the priorities of affected communities and for not being agile enough in shifting their priorities to keep in line with the rapidly changing needs of the crisis. Many felt that international actors did not thoroughly consult with affected communities. One RLO felt that INGOs brought a preconceived and static conception of a refugee to their advocacy, which was not adapted to the specific plight of Syrians and other refugees in Turkey.

While international humanitarian actors also described identifying their advocacy priorities by engagement with refugees, the manner of this engagement differed from that of many local and national actors. International organisations mainly described engaging with refugees through specific and siloed programmes, and thus through the lens and specialism of different 'sectors' of the response, rather than from a more holistic, refugee rights approach. As one INGO interviewee explained: 'When we look at what is stopping us from delivering good protection programming – then that is where we focus – that gives us our messages and targets'.

International actors described the process of negotiating and designing the 3RP annually as key to informing their advocacy priorities. However, this framework of working in partnership with the Turkish

government sits in tension with the role of refugee advocacy, which is inherently about refugee rights. As such, depending on the 3RP process as a guide for advocacy priorities may cause INGOs to miss priorities on the ground.

In contrast, local organisations did not identify the 3RP process as key in determining their advocacy priorities. They instead identified advocacy priorities systematically through needs assessments, surveys and discussion groups. This may be due to the fact that, while local organisations do participate in the development of the 3RP, their involvement appears to be more limited and even at times symbolic compared with that of international organisations (while consultation does take place with local actors, local organisations complain it is not meaningful or impactful). At the same time, this may also be due to how relevant the process is perceived to be to their work, as well as to the lack of measures taken to facilitate the participation of organisations that do not use English as a working language.

The advocacy priorities of organisations with a thematic focus tended to be shaped around their organisational focus (e.g. women's rights or disability rights), as well as by secondary evidence such as published reports, academic research and needs assessments. Local organisations also reported consulting with other local organisations to determine priorities, both through regular interactions with peers, as well as through a range of platforms, networks and forums.

From our interviews, we identified only one example of a collaborative partnership between an INGO and local organisations for the purpose of identifying advocacy priorities and informing a shared advocacy strategy. A Country Director of one INGO described their 'start point' as relationship building with local actors in order to form alliances and understand their priorities and the priorities of wider refugee populations. She described how they conducted perception surveys in partnership with local Turkish and refugee-led organisations, facilitating spaces for them to set their own advocacy priorities as well as determine their advocacy approaches and targets.

3.5   Who and what did international and local organisations target in their advocacy?

Advocacy by local actors was targeted at a number of levels. Those who had access targeted decision-makers at local and national levels of government, with most targeting government institutions at a national and sub-national level, including the DGMM,[23] Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Security (MoFLSS)[24] and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE).[25] Some local organisations also engaged

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23   Including Provincial Migration Management Directorates.

24   The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Security has been split into two separate ministries since the writing of this report: the Ministry of Family and Socialy Security, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security based on a decision announced on 21 April 2021 (Republic of Turkey Official Gazette, 2021).

25   Ministry of Heath, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General of International Labour Force, AFAD, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Trade, Supreme Court of Justice, Police Departments, Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres, and political parties are some of the other targeted institutions.

directly with high-level policy-makers, including ministers, Parliament and the Presidency, on priority issues such as access to services for refugees. One RLO interviewee shared how his organisation advocated with the national government and reached high-level decision-makers in the central government.

International actors also had significant access to national government, although much of this was through the 3RP process, which provided access to various levels of government including the Vice President. While some local organisations interviewed felt that international actors may have more presence at certain negotiating tables, there was a sense that this was primarily due to their greater access to resources and consequent ability to employ dedicated advocacy staff, rather than superior ability or more extensive networks. Several local actors lamented the fact that the strict donor requirements did not allow them to hire such specialist staff.

Some local actors also adopted an individual case-based approach to advocacy, reaching out beyond government to families and community members, media and other international humanitarian agencies. In one example, a large national NGO used awareness-raising activities and training in an effort to facilitate better social cohesion between refugee and host communities and create a local community where refugees would be able to exercise their rights safely. In another example of advocacy beyond government, a local NGO described targeting the media in an effort to educate them around refugee rights and encourage them to adopt more positive portrayals of refugees on national media. These methods can be effective; in the words of one national organisation: 'We see that institutions can change their rules or practices after our advocacy efforts in some cases. This shows that individual advocacy efforts can work too, and both methods – individual advocacy approaches and advocacy on policy processes – should be mutually complementary processes'.

We also found evidence of local organisations targeting other humanitarian actors. One RLO described their advocacy efforts in relation to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on refugees: 'We began an open letter and a petition related to the risk of hunger for the refugees in four languages, which targeted UNHCR, the Presidency and Turkish Red Crescent and other charities'. In contrast to local actors, international humanitarian actors did not speak about prioritising actors beyond government and policy-makers for advocacy.

Urban actors were a key advocacy target for local actors as well as some international actors, reflecting the highly urbanised context of Turkey and the influence of municipal leaders. One interviewee from a large national organisation spoke about his engagement with mayors and municipality leaders as being essential to achieve positive change for refugees. Regular informal conversations with such actors were effective in solving everyday challenges facing refugees, including disagreements with landlords and problems accessing schools, demonstrating how mayors and municipal leaders can be agents of change in an urban context.

Both local and international actors were visible at the international level. Several local actors spoke of targeting international actors, in particular UN agencies and UN member states. This included

attending national and international conferences in, for example, Geneva, Brussels and New York, to carry out advocacy at regional or international levels. While international actors were also visible at the international level, advocacy there tended to be conducted by headquarters staff in policy capitals.

3.6   Advocacy tactics of international and local actors

Both local and international organisations described using a sophisticated range of strategies, tactics, methods and tools to pursue their various advocacy objectives.

Building relations with advocacy targets and communicating with them directly was the most common approach by local and international actors for influencing local-level decision-makers. This included organising face-to-face meetings with officials; establishing trust-based relations with institutions through regular visits and staying in close contact; and networking. Interviews indicate that advocacy with government institutions was carefully gauged based on these direct/indirect relationships and trusted intermediaries, rather than through adopting generic approaches. RLOs found influencing through building relationships based on mutual understanding and trust particularly useful for being heard and having a say on decisions that impact their lives. As one interviewee noted: 'hundreds of them [Syrian led organisations] are able to find a space for themselves at the local level to assist refugees or extend their sphere of influence'.

For international actors, influencing tended to be more formal, static and pre-determined. The 3RP was a key means of approaching advocacy and building relationships with those they sought to influence. For example, one international agency acquired a direct role supporting the Government of Turkey at relatively high levels in respect of the 3RP and the Protection Working Group. The same agency had previously supported the Government of Turkey in the drafting of legislation on asylum and migration. This organisation was using its existing network and unique positioning (using existing positions of influence as a channel for protection advocacy messages) to carry out advocacy. In contrast, the 3RP was not mentioned by local organisations, indicating that it may not be considered relevant for advancing their advocacy strategies.

This relationship-based advocacy reflects a consensus across local and international organisations that public advocacy is less effective than quiet diplomacy. One exception is the use of public advocacy to influence public opinions – such as engaging with the media – rather than to change government policies and actions towards refugees. Indeed, public methods of advocacy that directly address the government such as letter writing, campaigns and protests were rarely used. Local actors' reluctance to engage in public advocacy was primarily based on their assessment that this method is less effective at influencing government policies and actions, especially if and when advocacy is perceived as being confrontational. For many, it seemed relatively more effective to manage perceptions of confrontation and influence policies through tactics such as quiet diplomacy, which is based on trust, relation building, dialogue and collaboration with decision-makers. As one host-community organisation interviewee explained, 'It is not effective to do advocacy by making statements against the governments. In general,

it is more impactful to build collaboration and work closely with them'. Public advocacy was also seen as risky by RLOs as they did not want to be perceived negatively. For that reason, they found direct communication with government institutions more effective and constructive.

Local actors also noted the importance of sharing and publishing reliable, fact-based evidence with relevant institutions as an effective advocacy approach. As one host organisation explained: 'we realised that showing the direct outcomes and results of the programmes being carried out have been most effective in influencing governments'.

International humanitarian agencies also preferred methods such as quiet diplomacy or behind-the-scenes negotiations rather than public-facing advocacy. The main reason for this appears to be concerns around their ability to remain operational within Turkey, especially given the challenges around registration in the early days of the response. The need to carefully weigh up and balance risks around being seen to be confrontational or losing operational access for programmes against publicly raising protection concerns was a common thread across all international agencies that were interviewed. All pointed to a common perceived tension between being vocal on protection and maintaining access for programmes. Many of the INGOs were weary of the challenges they had experienced in registering in Turkey, and the fact that some had already lost their registration to operate in recent years.

One INGO explained how they collaborated with RLOs to identify the most appropriate advocacy approach – whether public or quiet – as well as jointly identifying the target. The interviewee explained that:

> sometimes they have wanted to do advocacy more like quiet diplomacy, arranging meetings to meet the Director of Migration in Turkey or with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Municipalities … Sometimes it is about going together to a UN meeting, or NGO consultations or visiting donors and talking to donors and to the UN to open up space for direct representation for refugee organisations and national organisations, and sometimes it was through media – using media channels for interviews, etc.

International actors were particularly conscious of who was delivering the advocacy message, as much as its content or delivery. Many international humanitarian staff worked collaboratively with senior Turkish staff at their organisations to jointly develop the best tactics and approaches for engaging with their advocacy targets, especially the Turkish government. There was a sense from some that Turkish staff may be better placed to engage, in particular where there were language barriers. As a result, they often relied on senior Turkish staff members to engage with local and governorate levels. At the same time, it is unclear what the implications are for those national staff who were encouraged to engage with advocacy targets, and there was no evidence that this risk was assessed by international agencies.

3.7   Coordination between local and international actors for protection advocacy in the response

This research revealed that, while there was evidence of some collaboration between local and international actors on advocacy work, overall, this collaboration was limited. Critically, there is a lack of joined-up priority setting between local and international actors, resulting in a lack of collective leadership or a joint agenda for advocacy. Despite the examples of collaboration mentioned, there appear to have been only limited efforts to turn these ad hoc efforts into a joint advocacy agenda or joined-up priorities between local and international actors.

There appear to be a variety of factors behind this. As noted above, local and international actors conceptualise the issues affecting refugees and host communities differently, and their terminology varies. This reflects the different approaches of local and international actors, with the former switching fluidly across development and humanitarian pillars, as well as individual and collective concerns, and the latter tending to be more rigidly focused when it comes to advocacy.

As a result, local actors spoke of feeling excluded from the strategic decision-making spaces controlled and shaped by the international humanitarian system, and the efforts of this system to set the direction of protection advocacy. All this fuels an environment where INGOs lack accountability towards local actors. Too often there is a lack of adequate engagement with local actors in terms of a feedback loop on influencing programmes, including in setting priorities and advocacy approaches. This leaves local actors excluded most of the time from the processes of identifying a strategic direction for advocacy.

Local actors felt partnerships with internationals were too often transactional, with internationals benefitting from the relationships, knowledge and information of local actors to inform and strengthen their own advocacy. Through paternalistic, top-down and extractive approaches, international actors did not collaborate with local actors as equal partners in the design and delivery of their advocacy. As one RLO described, despite INGO promises to support the localisation of aid agenda, 'INGOs … use national NGOs to navigate the system without empowering them'. This created enormous frustration on the part of local actors.

Instead, and mirroring their sub-contracting programmatic approaches, international actors' approach tends to be centred around building the capacity of national actors, even when these same actors do not believe this is required. This was evidenced in an interview with one INGO staff member who described what their 'partnership model of advocacy' entails: 'I am going to do an advocacy workshop for a Turkish refugee focused organisation to help them develop their advocacy strategy for their work'. There are assumptions here in terms of who sets the agenda, with capacity presented as something 'owned' by international actors and bestowed upon national actors in a top-down manner (Barbelet, 2018). As one local organisation interviewee stated: 'there is a refusal to look to the know-how of local organisations among INGOs; thus, they end up recreating imperialistic dynamics, with a go-to approach to "build the capacity" of local NGOs assuming that there is a lack of existing capacity'. There was also a failure to build on local actors' existing advocacy work, which created parallel efforts, including creating

new coordination structures that are foreign to local/national actors, and from which they are to varying degrees excluded. Measures were not taken sufficiently to adequately facilitate the participation of organisations that do not use English as a working language, exacerbating their exclusion.

When partnering with INGOs, local actors were left with little, if any, influence on the project's overall strategic design, identification of goals or methods – this included advocacy priorities and approaches. As one host-community organisation explained:

> as INGOs see us more as an implementing partner, this may be why they have never approached us for conducting joint advocacy. INGOs do not recognise us as organisations which can define [our] own strategies. This is most apparent when INGOs approach us to implement projects that have already been designed, meaning there is no space for us to engage on the design of their projects.

Another noted that,

> they [INGOs and UN agencies] are not very collaborative even though they say that they work in partnership. They tend to push local organisations into becoming more passive on rights and become *taşeron* [subcontractor].

This also raised questions around sustainability concerning local actors' reliance on international actors for funding and challenges in accessing direct funding from traditional humanitarian donors. As one local actor explained 'forcing national organisations to become reliant on their funds, makes them [national NGOs] unsustainable'.

In terms of collaboration at international decision-making forums, some local and national organisations did participate in national, regional and international platforms or networks that do advocacy work. However, they often lacked resources within their own (often project-based with restricted funding) budgets to fund their participation, and so were dependent upon the support of international actors to cover their travel and expenses, leading to frustrations that they were not attending on an equal footing. When they did attend, local actors described how this allowed them to highlight the work of their organisation and their priorities, share good practices and experience, deliver key messages, become informed on international debates, speed up advocacy processes and/or initiate these processes. One international actor described how the Covid-19 pandemic had actually improved the inclusion of local actors in such forums, given how forums and events shifted from in-person attendance to remote access.

Overall, however, local actors were enormously critical of international actors' efforts to collaborate on advocacy. As one local actor described, 'when it comes to advocacy, rather than providing support to national and local NGOs, INGOs act more like shackles. They are not supportive in advocacy efforts'.

3.8   How effective do local actors consider international actors in advocating for the protection of refugees in Turkey?

Although interviews revealed instances of effective advocacy by a range of actors, more can and must be done to ensure that refugees' rights are prioritised in Turkey, especially given the even greater challenges faced due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic pressures facing Turkey. Our research found that local actors considered international actors to be ineffective in their advocacy primarily because they prioritised access and operational activities over advocacy. This included international donors. As one local organisation noted: 'their [INGOs' and UN agencies'] meetings with government are operationally focused on their ability to operate in Turkey for implementing their projects'. Another respondent from a RLO mentioned his own experience of having a donor who wanted to support their work with small grants but was concerned about how it might implicate their presence in the country. Many local actors held the perception that the advocacy of international actors neither created broader positive policy changes nor positively impacted refugees' daily lives.

Local actors also felt that international actors lacked humility in terms of their engagement with the Turkish authorities. One interviewee recalled a Turkish government official explaining that an INGO staff member came to meet with a government actor dressed in shorts and sandals. While this may not reflect the overwhelming majority of INGO staff, even one such experience can create an impression that INGOs do not respect the working culture of both government and civil society in Turkey. Others felt that negative and harmful dynamics included a sense of dominance or 'hegemony' perpetuated by international actors in relation to their role in the area of refugee rights advocacy, and a narrowing of the civic space for national and local actors.

Local actors also felt that international organisations lacked the humility to learn from civil society, by ignoring national actors who had extensive experience in advocating for the rights of refugees locally and nationally long before the arrival of Syrian refugees, such as ASAM, STL, IKGV and Mülteci-Der. Other local organisations explained that the actions and approaches of INGOs had negatively impacted refugees by raising xenophobia and discrimination against them. Indeed, three local actors that we interviewed specifically shared that the involvement of INGOs had either harmed refugees or negatively impacted the advocacy efforts of national actors in protecting the rights of refugees as a result of failing to take vulnerable host-community groups into account in their advocacy, fuelling negative public perceptions around refugees, and in doing so breaking away from the 'do no harm' principle. One organisation summarised this view, stating:

> It is much better if they do not do any lobbying ... They tend to turn the dialogue into a monologue when they get involved in national advocacy. When INGOs carry out advocacy in Turkey, not only do they end up harming refugees' access to rights, but they also harm themselves as well as the positioning of national organisations. We are in a position that we need to defend ourselves when we work with INGOs.

4 What constrains protection advocacy and what are the consequences?

4.1 Geopolitical constraints

This study found that the increasingly restrictive refugee policies of states in the Global North and the decline in international responsibility sharing and support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees impacts the protection advocacy work of international humanitarian agencies in Turkey. Between 2011 and 2021, only 88,449 refugees of a total of four million (across all nationalities) were resettled from Turkey globally.[26] Commitments have been wholly inadequate in response to the scale of displacement in the region; for example, the UK pledged to resettle only 20,000 Syrian refugees from camps across the region by 2020. Such low global numbers of resettlement have been compounded by the EU's failure to accept its share of the responsibility for refugees following the Syrian conflict.

While some international actors noted that Turkish officials were able to distinguish between the policies of many donor states, most of those we interviewed felt the geopolitical reality (both the EU–Turkey statement and the wider failure of states in the Global North to adequately share responsibility for the hosting of Syrian refugees) had undermined their ability to advocate for improved protections of refugees in Turkey. These organisations felt they were in a difficult position, given the disparity of numbers of Syrian refugees hosted by Turkey compared with other wealthier states in the Global North. As a result, they felt their moral authority to conduct advocacy towards government policy-makers in Turkey was undermined.

The decrease in responsibility sharing by states in the Global North and the EU–Turkey deal appeared to impact the approaches international actors took to advocacy, including who they chose to target and what advocacy priorities were pursued. Some INGOs noted how advocacy strategies that they had historically relied upon were no longer effective or even feasible. For example, previously advocating or lobbying to donor governments about the situation for refugees in a host country and relying on that government to place pressure bilaterally on host countries to improve the situation was considered by some to no longer be a viable tactic given the undermined position of traditional donor states vis-à-vis responsibility sharing. As described by one former INGO staff member:

> [C]ertainly there are two major things – after the attempted coup d'etat – INGOs made their own risk assessment – then came the EU–Turkey deal which led to greater tolerance and compromise by international organisations – for example, if you are an advocacy officer is it still relevant to use the EU as a mechanism to influence Turkey after the EU–Turkey statement? It was a game changer to do advocacy in Turkey.

26 www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html – custom data query – country of asylum: Turkey 2011–2021.

There was consensus among interviewees from INGOs that states who were doing less than Turkey to support Syrian refugees could no longer be asked to put diplomatic pressure on Turkey to improve refugees' protection in Turkey. As one international official explained, this would create double standards:

> When it comes to advocacy, Western governments … feel that their hands are tied – [because it will be] politically intolerable for Europe to take in more refugees … but [in refusing to take in more refugees] they are exercising their sovereignty. Turkey too has the right to exercise its own sovereignty. So, there is an unbalance here, between how we speak to the Turkish government who are exercising their sovereignty compared to if a Western government is exercising their sovereignty.

Yet, strikingly, this did not necessarily translate into INGOs intensifying their advocacy efforts with higher-income countries to share responsibility equitably. Rather, some international actors interviewed felt there had been a shift away from a focus on resettlement in protection advocacy because it was deemed to be pointless or at best not a good use of time and resources due to its unlikelihood of yielding success, with few signs of increased resettlement places and responsibility sharing. This was seen by interviewees as being connected to the EU–Turkey deal.

Reduced advocacy around resettlement was felt by some international actors to have further emboldened the Turkish government to 'make demands in a more empowered way', perhaps reflecting how Syrian refugees had at times been used as a political bargaining chip in EU–Turkey negotiations. This process also undermined the EU's 'normative power', which opened the way for Turkey to pressure the EU for domestic political purposes. Nevertheless, some interviewees felt that regardless of the likelihood of success, international humanitarian actors had an ongoing moral obligation to advocate to global states to increase resettlement places. Some INGOs noted that their colleagues in headquarters in Europe were simultaneously trying to influence the EU position on resettlement, but it is unclear to what extent this was aligned with advocacy at a country level in Turkey.

In contrast to the impact on INGOs, national and local organisations did not feel that the EU–Turkey agreement had impacted their advocacy, although they did recognise the wider geopolitical context. The agreement did, however, impact their work with refugees. Although one interviewee stated that 'refugees are now able to access all services in Turkey' given the funding available under the FRIT, most of those who mentioned the agreement focused on its negative consequences. For some, it has restricted the ability of national CSOs that receive funding through the agreement to carry out advocacy with government, causing tension. Others described the agreement as a target of their advocacy, with some having advocated against its adoption in 2015. Others emphasised the ongoing negative consequences of the agreement for refugees, including limiting their ability to move on from Turkey.

The Government of Turkey's frustrations with the implementation of the agreement have also periodically prompted it to either threaten to or actually open its European borders to allow refugees' onward movement to the EU. One example is from early 2020, when Turkey opened its border

crossing to Greece, causing a movement of refugees and asylum seekers to Edirne. Some interviewed organisations noted that they have engaged in advocacy around the issues caused by the changes in border policies.

4.2   Domestic political, social and economic constraints and their impact on public opinion

The sheer number of refugees, increasing economic challenges (including high levels of unemployment) and an increased frequency of local and national elections in which the refugee issue has been utilised as campaigning material, have all contributed to the further politicisation of the refugee crisis in Turkey. As Özden and Ramadan (2019) note:

> refugee rights have largely been absent from mainstream public debate in Turkey, which has had a significant impact on the everyday lived reality of Syrians in the country and strongly influenced the character of civil society's repose to the refugee crisis. It is also one of the underlying causes of increased racism against Syrians in Turkey.

These domestic political and economic trends, and the impact on public narratives around refugees, have created upheaval for civil society and narrowed the space for advocacy at all levels, which had a disproportionate impact on rights-based organisations, including those working with refugees, which further limited their ability to operate freely (Özden and Ramadan, 2019). This politicisation of the refugee crisis also impacted media coverage, with incidents involving refugees reported on in a way that increased the levels of hate speech and intensified already existing stereotypes and discrimination (for more on Turkish public perceptions towards Syrian refugees, see 'Syrians Barometer', Erdogan, 2020b). Local organisations described how this created a challenging environment within which to conduct public advocacy seeking to enhance the protection of refugees. As noted by one RLO interviewee 'every news item that portrays Syrian refugees negatively has a direct impact on the work'.

Both international and local humanitarian actors described the challenges of conducting advocacy in a protracted context where host populations were experiencing 'hosting fatigue'. Half of the local organisations we interviewed said the increasing politicisation of the refugee crisis was impacting their advocacy agendas, forcing them to adapt their advocacy priorities. For example, many cited targeting their advocacy on enhancing social cohesion between refugee and host communities in response to negative public perceptions around refugees and reduced social cohesion at a broader level.

Following the attempted coup d'etat in 2016, the Turkish government increased regulations and restrictions on Turkish civil society in general (Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development, 2017). NGOs that had previously operated in more loosely regulated contexts faced an increase in monitoring and bureaucratic requirements, such as the enforcement of work permit requirements for all non-Turkish national employees (Özden and Ramadan, 2019: 6). This

significantly complicated the day-to-day operations of several local NGOs, leading some to adopt a lower profile in their advocacy work and many adopting 'quieter' advocacy approaches that prioritise working in close coordination with government actors.

Interviewees identified other domestic political developments that had impacted their advocacy activities. First among these are the changes in the system of government over the past decade, including the move from a parliamentary to a presidential system. This has driven a variety of changes in national actors' advocacy, including their approach and which institutions they target, as explored in the previous section. Some interviewees noted that it has become more difficult to influence legislation relating to forced migration through advocacy due to the decreasing role of legislators and growing role of bureaucratic actors as agenda setters; some stated explicitly that the shift to a more centralised system of government has narrowed the space for civil society to engage on refugee protection. In response, national actors have employed a range of strategies and have:

- diversified the targets of their advocacy, increasingly engaging with both municipalities and the private sector
- shifted from primarily advocating with municipalities to increasing their advocacy with central government ministries, with some establishing new offices in Ankara especially for this purpose
- changed their advocacy activities to target the general public, focusing on social cohesion activities.

Strikingly, these domestic economic, social and political developments were far less commented upon by the international organisations interviewed. This represents a key challenge in the existing nature of collaboration between international and local organisations within the international humanitarian ecosystem. Interviews demonstrated that the everyday realities that shape and impact the advocacy priorities and approaches of local organisations may not fundamentally inform the advocacy approaches and priorities of international organisations. Critically, there appeared to be a lack of dialogue and coordination between local and international organisations in resetting a shared advocacy agenda that accounts for the diverse external constraints they experience. Such lack of communication signals a greater need for international humanitarian actors to commit to localising aid and recognising local actors as equals in engaging in protection advocacy.

5   Conclusion and recommendations

While evidence on local protection response exists (Metcalfe-Hough, 2019), this report focuses on an issue that has been much less considered in the literature – the interface between the localisation of aid agenda and protection advocacy. It touches on numerous fundamental issues that are impossible to separate out from the issue of protection advocacy in a context such as Turkey. For example, the non-camp and protracted nature of refugee displacement demands a fundamental rethink of how international humanitarian actors engage in advocacy on the rights of refugees. Turkey's geopolitical position, strong state and high operational capacities, as well as strong civil society are also critical factors. These operational realities raise important questions as to what role international humanitarian actors should take when it comes to advocacy on the rights of refugees, and this research has sought to answer some of these questions. However, many of the issues raised are not new and reflect shortcomings in the implementation of the localisation of aid agenda. This section sets out what the findings of this report mean for protection advocacy in a refugee context.

5.1   Local leadership for a locally led advocacy strategy

Advocacy on the rights of refugees and/or protection advocacy needs a unified strategy in order to be effective, consistent and mutually reinforcing. The refugee crisis context and culture, alongside the host state structures, all impact the advocacy approach, targets and priorities of all actors. The nuanced understanding that local/national actors bring means they are overwhelmingly better placed to set agendas for protection advocacy that respond to the needs of refugees and their hosts. As such, leadership should be local and collaboration with international humanitarian actors should happen as and when there is a need, based on a thorough, mutual understanding of the complementary capabilities and added value of both groups of actors. International actors must be prepared to 'adopt an advisory, backstopping or secondary role' (Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream, 2020).

Our findings indicate that the humanitarian sector lacks a locally led advocacy strategy or a shared understanding of where the international community can add value. Creating such a strategy at local and global levels critically requires international actors to collaborate closely with local actors in co-creation processes, and to be guided by them in how best to engage in advocacy in their context. Failure to do so has the potential to result in international actors causing harm.

International actors should demonstrate willingness to un-learn underlying assumptions that guide their actions and re-learn from local and national actors about their diverse and multiple realities, knowledge systems, expertise and experiences. They must be ready to be led, and to share decision-making on advocacy priorities, approaches and targets where the interface of the local and international experience can be mutually leveraged for a better outcome for refugees. For this to be actualised, there must be a fundamental rethink of how the concepts and language of the international humanitarian system are constructed and socialised. As noted across the report, **the language of 'protection' and protection advocacy are 'owned' by the international sector, and in some cases deemed to**

be exclusionary. The ability, or lack thereof, of the system to understand and adapt to the prevalent concepts and language of individual contexts also requires further scrutiny. The language used by UN agencies and INGOs needs to resonate with local actors if they are to work in partnership and should be tailored for each context. As noted by Wanjiku Kihato and Landau, the language of 'rights, inclusivity, justice, efficiency, obligations will bring about different results amongst governments and policy makers in one context as opposed to another context depending on the different traditions, priorities and incentives they share' (Wanjiku Kihato and Landau, 2017: 415). As they put it, 'the language must resonate locally'.

5.2   Meaningful and equal advocacy partnerships

This research found **little evidence of advocacy partnerships between local and international actors that were not tokenistic or extractive of local and national actors**. This power imbalance is exacerbated by an ecosystem that constrains local organisations from directly accessing international funding. As such, donors should take concrete, impactful steps to realise the localisation of aid, including by living up to commitments made in the 2015 Charter for Change, 2016 Agenda for Humanity, 2016 Grand Bargain and 2018 Global Compact on Refugees to directly fund local actors, as well as Sustainable Development Goal 17, with its aim to revitalise global partnership for sustainable development.

Donors should prioritise funding for activities and actors that demonstrate a commitment to collaborative advocacy and stop solely funding capacity-strengthening initiatives. This should include support to existing nationally or locally owned networks already engaging in advocacy. At the same time, this requires a shift away from conceptualising the localisation of aid solely as a funding commitment. Instead it should be envisioned as a framework that recognises the experiences and know-how of local actors. In line with this, international actors must recognise the advocacy experiences and knowledge of local actors in navigating refugees' access to rights and make concerted efforts to complement these approaches rather than imposing their own advocacy priorities. This includes the European Commission's own Framework Partnership Agreement, which could be eased for the benefit of more local and national organisations to qualify.

Investing in equal partnerships with local organisations, including RLOs, that are based on reciprocity, mutual accountability, trust and respect, should be prioritised. This is critical to moving beyond extractive and transactional relations that are highly dismissive of local actors and their experiences.

5.3   Long-term sustainable approaches to advocacy

In a context such as Turkey, advocacy around the rights of refugees and host communities should embrace a long-term and whole-of-society approach. This means moving away from the short-termism of traditional humanitarian response towards long-term investment in building sustainable relationships with governance structures and civil society. This is crucial to addressing the needs of refugees and host communities holistically and putting the rights agenda at the centre of all interventions.

By building evidence that demonstrates the benefits for host communities as well as adopting an inclusive approach, advocacy may be less likely to become politicised and more orientated towards outcomes for all. As Wanjiku Kihato and Landau (2017) describe, humanitarians need to find 'back routes to rights' in order to prevent political errors and remain effective advocates for the displaced.

The international system needs to recognise the high levels of capacity at the local level in Turkey (and elsewhere), and invest in thinking around how it engages in contexts where there is a legal and policy framework that includes refugees in state systems and services, such as education and health. While more reflection is needed, this would initially require looking for opportunities to build local solidarity rather than local capacity. This requires appealing to interests that go beyond immediate humanitarian needs and focusing on issues prioritised by local civil society to meet locally driven advocacy priorities, as defined by local actors (Wanjiku Kihato and Landau, 2017: 419). This approach 'can help appeal to local political incentives in ways that do not draw lines or make references to discourses which are seen as foreign, threatening or unwelcome' (Wanjiku Kihato and Landau, 2017).

As noted by the Global Compact on Refugees, the whole-of-society approach requires engaging with non-traditional protection actors, including those working in development, the private sector, cities and local authorities. Partnerships between humanitarian and development actors are central for a more effective and strategic advocacy approach, and demand international development actors to become more 'committed and conversant' on protection issues and further integrate them within their programmes (Lilly, 2020). The international humanitarian sector needs to become less siloed, both across humanitarian and development pillars and also across the cluster system. Our research found that local actors were much less likely to adopt a siloed approach to advocacy, working fluidly across the nexus to enhance refugees' access to their rights by tackling issues such as social cohesion and social protection. Improving collaboration between local and international actors and creating a locally led displacement response requires working across sectors and bringing in relevant expertise from all actors. Advocacy targets such as media and host communities are also important, as are local authorities including mayors and other municipality leaders. The shift from camp-based or rural contexts requires 'explicit engagement' with municipal authorities and cities' populations, which demands changes in both approach and language and 'a way of overcoming the competing norms currently shaping humanitarian practice' (Wanjiku Kihato and Landau, 2017). Our research indicates that local/national actors have developed expertise in bringing together refugees and host communities with local authorities, which international actors should recognise and learn from.

How to conduct protection advocacy in a specific displacement context should be defined not just through local consultation with a wide and diverse group of stakeholders, but through intentional investments in advocacy collaborations that are locally led and built on the priorities and needs of refugees and host communities. This must include their active participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of advocacy initiatives.

To achieve the above, power needs to shift. International actors must better recognise and constructively challenge perceived and hidden power dynamics in the humanitarian system, including at

the partnership level. This could be through international actors using their power to give space to local actors. Humanitarian coordination structures could also be used as a way to shift power, and support more strategic and equal partnerships between local and international actors. Greater accountability to refugees and the communities that host them must be shown by all actors. There is an urgent need for a strategic framework for advocacy on the rights of refugees that is contextually relevant and covers the whole response, rather than a series of ad-hoc reactions to individual protection issues or violations during the displacement crisis. Such a country-level strategy would enable a unified position on the most suitable advocacy approaches to confront the myriad protection issues as they arise. At a global level, it demands recognising that the international system needs to engage in co-creation and creating platforms where national and international actors can jointly explore and carve out best ways forward to address issues, including relating to protection, that affect the rights of refugees.

This research has clearly highlighted the need for the international humanitarian system to be more open to mutual learning, and to more easily and systematically recognise and build upon the knowledge systems, experiences and expertise of local and national institutions and actors. International actors must be more willing to redefine concepts according to different contexts and release control of resources and power, if they are truly and successfully to implement commitments to localisation in the space of advocacy for the rights of those affected by displacement.

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