

World House Student Fellows 2016-2017

# Urban Labor Integration of Refugees

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## I. Introduction

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that over 60 per cent of the world's 19.5 million refugees live in urban environments.<sup>1</sup> While refugee camps usually promise protection, shelter, food and healthcare services, they are ultimately temporary structures that face great limitations. As the Syrian War enters its seventh year, the crisis is ongoing and many refugees now seek employment opportunities and autonomy in new cities. It is imperative that refugees have fundamental rights, including the ability to work and earn a living so that they can integrate economically and avoid the exploitative informal economy. By conducting case studies of three diverse cities that have become resettlement hot spots over time, the policy recommendations in this paper may help to identify measures for successfully integrating refugees into foreign workforces. For both humanitarian and security-related reasons, it is critical that the international community find sustainable solutions for effective economic integration. Widespread xenophobia and violence against refugees, especially against Muslims, present themselves as serious barriers to both workforce entry and to basic human dignity. Economic integration provides the opportunity to combat these reactions by stifling perceptions that refugees are a burden.

### **To narrow our research and its applicability, we will be using the following definitions:**

According to Article 1 of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the definition of a **refugee** is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

The concept of "integration" encompasses a range of social and economic elements such as access to education, employment, health, language training, housing, and banks. Full **integration in the labor market**, specifically, is defined as obtaining a stable (usually permanent) full-time job that closely corresponds to an individual's vocational training. It should be noted that full integration of refugees is also contingent upon decreasing the unemployment level in cities where it is quite high.<sup>3 4</sup>

Although there are many other facets to refugee integration beyond the labor market, employment opportunities enable autonomy and self-sufficiency. This in turn provides **livelihoods**, which the UN describes as the "activities that allow people to secure the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, shelter and clothing."<sup>5</sup> In the long run, livelihoods enable

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Urban Refugees." UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/urban-refugees.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Convention and protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Switzerland: UNHCR, 1983. Accessed March 2, 2017. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10>.

<sup>3</sup> Schmitt, Christian. "Labour market integration, occupational uncertainties, and fertility choices in Germany and the UK ." Demographic Research, 12th ser., 26 (April 3, 2012): 253-92. Accessed April 9, 2017. doi:10.4054/DemRes.2012.26.12.

<sup>4</sup> Liebig, Thomas. "The Labour Market Integration of Immigrants in Germany." The Labour Market Integration of Immigrants in Germany, 2007, 1-65. Accessed April 9, 2017. doi:10.1787/238411133860.

<sup>5</sup> "Global Strategy for Livelihoods." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014. Accessed

refugees to become autonomous and provide for their families.

## II. Literature Review

Recent literature on urban labor integration of refugee populations generally focuses on refugees that have fled the 2011 Syrian Civil War. As a result of this disproportionately large refugee crisis, host countries are dealing with a large increase in demand for their resources. Therefore, labor force integration of refugees presents itself as an opportunity to resolve the strain on the government and provide refugees with livelihoods. International institutions such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, and UNHCR regularly monitor the success of current labor integration initiatives in order to produce policy prescriptions for national governments that are resettling refugees. In this literature review, we unpack existing practices across several regions to identify best practices, as well as potential areas for innovation.

Each country has its own unique protocol for resettling refugees for example, Canada offers two paths to resettlement; either one facilitated by private organizations or one sponsored by the government. Whereas refugees in the US are resettled using a mix of Federal, State, and private funds.<sup>6</sup> Since North America has had extensive quantitative research into the impact of refugee resettlement and a lengthy history of refugee resettlement, the United States has been used as a model for refugee policies in other countries.<sup>7</sup> Yet, even the programs in the USA have been subjected to critique and scrutiny for their perceived lack of local and community support<sup>8</sup>. For example, the United States resettlement program emphasizes finding a job as quickly as possible. Thus while this allows refugees to be self-sufficient earlier, it sacrifices opportunities to find the best match for employment<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, cultural factors may make it easier for refugees to resettle in these two countries. For instance, the USA and Canada both have English as one of the main languages, and many refugees were more likely to have studied some English, compared to languages such as German and Swedish.<sup>10</sup>

The USA and Canada would benefit greatly from ensuring that refugees integrate seamlessly into the local economy. Think tank research has found that, especially in the Midwestern United States, refugees have had a positive impact on the economic growth of previously stagnating cities.<sup>11</sup> The Center for American Progress study on Refugee Integration in the United States found a strong positive correlation between a growth in immigrant

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April 12, 2017. <http://www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>Capps, Randy, Kathleen Newland, Susan Fratzke, Susannah Groves, Greg Auclair, Michael Fix, and Margie Mchugh. "Integrating refugees in the United States: The successes and challenges of resettlement in a Global Context." *Statistical Journal of the IAOS* 31, no. 3 (2015): 341-67. Accessed April 14, 2017. doi:10.3233/sji-150918.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Kallick, David Dyssegaard, Silva Mathema "Refugee Integration in the United States" *Center for American Progress*, Accessed April 14, 2017.

<https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/15112912/refugeeintegration.pdf>

population and economic growth in the surrounding area.<sup>12</sup> While there may be other confounding factors contributing to the positive correlation, this could indicate that when refugees are well-integrated and find jobs by receiving monetary support, both the local community and the economy may benefit.<sup>13</sup>

There are several frequently referenced indicators of successful labor integration. As mentioned in the Migration Policy Institute study—*Integrating refugees in the United States: The successes and challenges of resettlement in a Global Context*—economic success of integration correlates with the number of working age family members, existing language abilities, and educational attainment. There are still many challenges facing urban integration efforts. First, finding a balance between long term resettlement of refugees and rapid employment is difficult.<sup>14</sup> Second, the education and language services provided through national resettlement programs are often not enough to raise living standards for refugees. For example, in the United States adult refugees generally did not continue their education, thus were not able to move out of entry level jobs into stable middle class careers.<sup>15</sup> This eventually leads to economic stagnation for refugee groups, since lower paying entry level jobs require multiple family members to work to support the family, younger generations are forced to join the workforce earlier, and thus are less likely to pursue higher education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty.<sup>16</sup>

European policy-making bodies have clearly come to understand the importance of considering urban labor integration of refugees. A 2014 paper co-authored by the European Commission and the OECD goes into a detailed study of how refugees have fared across a number of European political contexts.<sup>17</sup> The report is complemented by a policy paper by the European Parliament suggesting a number of good practices and strategies for countries seeking to integrate refugees into their workforce.<sup>18</sup> More recently, similar bodies have been responding to the even more pressing need to find ways to integrate labor in light of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Although many contemporary studies of refugee labor integration in cities focuses on Western Europe and North America, developing and non-Western countries typically face the greatest challenges to integrating refugees. Many of these countries are located near conflict zones and receive larger numbers of refugees, such as Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon with close to 3 million, 1 million and 656,000 respectively.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, all three of these countries have double-digit unemployment rates and a majority of refugees living in urban or semi-urban areas.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Kallick & Mathema.

<sup>14</sup> Capps, Randy, Kathleen Newland, Susan Fratzke, Susannah Groves, Greg Auclair, Michael Fix, and Margie Mchugh. "Integrating refugees in the United States: The successes and challenges of resettlement in a Global Context." *Statistical Journal of the IAOS* 31, no. 3 (2015): 341-67. Accessed April 14, 2017. doi:10.3233/sji-150918.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> OECD & European Commission "How are refugees faring on the labor market in Europe: A first evaluation based on the 2014 EU labor force survey ad hoc model"

<sup>18</sup> European Parliament Directorate-General for Internal Policies "Labor market integration of refugees: Strategies and Good Practices"

<sup>19</sup> "Syrian Refugee Regional Response: Inter-Agency Information Sharing portal"

Research on Turkey suggests that there has been progress in integrating refugees into the labor market, there is little support for enforcement. For one, Turkey has limitations on the UN's Refugee Convention that were not updated until recently when the process for work permits was finally improved for Syrian refugees in January 2016. Still, applications for work permits are very low, Syrians are mostly employed illegally and seen as cheap labor, and unable to integrate in the labor market because of a lack of Turkish language and matching qualifications.<sup>20</sup>

In a discussion paper from May 2016 the European Commission outlined the Labor Market Implications for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>21</sup> Similar to Turkey, many Syrian refugees face restraints with the respective work permits systems of their host countries. They are costly, difficult to obtain, or restrictive in level of benefit as compared to native workers and as such create a payoff between the bureaucratic hurdles of work permits and informal work favor the latter. Despite all of this, there is evidence of Syrian entrepreneurship creating new jobs in Jordan and Turkey.

### III. Research question

This policy report seeks to answer the question, *'What can be done at the municipal, state, and national levels to ensure that refugees in urban areas can successfully integrate into labor markets?'* Labor integration is one of the cornerstones of refugee policy; when successful, it allows migrants to prosper quickly and dispel sentiments of refugees being burdens to their host countries and being unable to integrate. The effort and sustainability behind the integration of refugees in cities necessitate municipal government cooperation, which is the focus of our policy prescriptions. This local policy can then be coordinated with and supported by higher levels of government.

While much of the literature pertaining labor integration of refugees has been focused on developed countries, this report seeks to use a more far-ranging approach. Thus, in addition to Philadelphia, case studies in Turkey and Kenya, will be addressed to illuminate the ways in which countries with limited resources can effectively integrate refugees. Such considerations are particularly relevant in light of the Syrian refugee crisis which has forced countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt to address large-scale labor integration. These will affect countries of various economic capacities and our research seeks to address a variety of contexts and countries in order to provide policy recommendations relevant to a wide range of actors.

We hope to encompass not only state actors but non-state actors such as non-profits, charities and other civil society groups in the report. These can and should be working in tandem in order to ensure that refugees are most effectively integrated into the urban areas in which they have resettled.

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<sup>20</sup>Kizil, Cihan. "Turkey's Policy on Employment of Syrian Refugees and its Impact on the Turkish Labour Market." In *Turkish Migration 2016 Selected Papers*, 164-70. First ed. London: Transnational Press, 2016.

<sup>21</sup>Griesse, Jörn, and Lorenza Errighi. "The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Labour Market Implications in Jordan and Lebanon." *European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs*, May 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file\\_import/dp029\\_en\\_2.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/dp029_en_2.pdf).

#### IV. Policy Analysis

Since 2011, an exodus of Syrian civilians has transformed from an issue of international concern to one of the most consequential policy issues to confront the world in decades. Many commentators have recently argued that the rise of right-wing governments throughout Europe and in the United States has been driven by the refugee crisis.<sup>22</sup> Since the crisis, right wing, populist, governments have emerged in countries including Denmark, Poland, and the United States. Most of these governments have invoked fear of immigrants as a key part of their strategy to appeal to voters. In France, the Netherlands, and even in Germany, right-wing parties have been emboldened and have continued to cite immigration as threats to the future of their respective nations. Many of these parties have claimed that given cultural differences between the migrants and the nations to which they have fled, they simply cannot be integrated.

Meanwhile refugees continue to require assistance with 4.9 million refugees outside of Syria and many more being internally displaced<sup>23</sup>. The vast majority of these individuals have been housed by Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey which between them have accepted over 4.5 million refugees.<sup>24</sup>

The discourse on refugees in the United States has focused on the Obama administration's call for the acceptance of 10,000 refugees. Hillary Clinton campaigned on a promise to accept more than 10,000 refugees. Conversely, Donald Trump has called for the United States to temporarily suspend the acceptance of refugees from Syria, citing security concerns and the need to impose 'extreme vetting' procedures. Trump has contended that as it stands, U.S. refugee policy is likely to lead to the endangerment of American lives through terrorism. On the other hand, a Brookings Institute report has pointed out that since 9/11 the United States has resettled 860,000 refugees of which just 3 have been charged or convicted on terrorism related counts.<sup>25</sup> With respect to labor integration, the United States has adopted a holistic approach; providing eight months of career support, cultural training, financial and mental support to recent arrivals. However, this has been sharply reduced from 36 months.<sup>26</sup> In general, the United States has had to reconcile the need to integrate refugees with a considerable public suspicion towards refugees.

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<sup>22</sup>Rosenthal, Max J. "Is the refugee crisis fueling Europe's right-wing parties?" Mother Jones. September 18, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2017. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/09/germanys-right-wing-parties-are-quiet-now-heres-how-they-could-grab-spotlight>.

<sup>23</sup>"Syria Regional Refugee Response Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal." UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response. Accessed April 15, 2017. [http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#\\_ga=1.151654013.596590649.1490572423](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php#_ga=1.151654013.596590649.1490572423).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Brandt, Jessica, and Robert L. McKenzie. "Addressing the Syrian refugee crisis | Brookings Institution." Brookings Institution . February 01, 2017. Accessed April 15, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/addressing-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-recommendations-for-the-next-administration/>.

<sup>26</sup>Cicerani, Nikki. "Refugees and labor market integration: making ends meet." The Hill. September 19, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017. <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/296676-refugees-and-labor-market-integration-making-ends-meet>.

Germany's government, on the other hand, has adopted an 'open door policy' opting to accept large numbers of refugees.<sup>27</sup> In 2015 alone, Germany received 442,000 applications for asylum, many of which came from Syrian refugees.<sup>28</sup> Berlin's Tempelhof Airport, central to the American airlift of 1948-1949, has temporarily become a refugee camp.<sup>29</sup>

Germany's open door policy has been supplemented by a range of initiatives to integrate refugees. Many of these were first outlined by a landmark refugee law passed in July 2016.<sup>30</sup> The bill contains a section specifically pertaining to employment. Language training has been a cornerstone of Germany's refugee effort. Such language programs have been designed to have a vocational focus, giving refugees the tools to work effectively on the job market. Yet, the government faces material restrictions, and a recent report by the German government showed a lack of supply of language teachers.<sup>31</sup> A recent initiative, the Mercator Program seeks to alleviate this situation by training university students to teach German as a second language.<sup>32</sup>

The government has recently implemented legal changes and programs to assess incoming refugees' skills. The latter are designed to streamline the employment process, allowing recruiters to have a better understanding of the competencies that refugees often already have upon resettling in Germany.<sup>33</sup> Partnerships with civil society groups and nonprofits have also been integral, the German state has used such cooperation construct initiatives at the municipal level to better integrate incoming refugees.<sup>34</sup>

Such an approach has been echoed throughout the world. A plurality of initiatives dedicated to the labor integration of refugees have been driven by non-profits and have largely functioned on the municipal level. Many of these have created forums which have connected employers, local governing officials and non-governmental organizations to refugees in a behavioral context. Such programs have worked to integrate refugees in labor by providing institutions where leaders and labors can more comprehensively address issues specific to refugee groups in a way that integrates refugees themselves to the local policy making process.

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<sup>27</sup>Horn, Heather. "The Staggering Scale of Germany's Refugee Project." *The Atlantic*. September 12, 2015. Accessed April 15, 2017.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/germany-merkel-refugee-asylum/405058/>.

<sup>28</sup>Connor, Phillip. "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015." Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. August 02, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017.

<http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/>

<sup>29</sup>Smale, Alison. "Tempelhof Airport, Once a Lifeline for Berliners, Reprises Role for Refugees." *The New York Times*, February 10, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017.

[https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/11/world/europe/tempelhof-airport-once-a-lifeline-for-berliners-reprises-role-for-refugees.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/11/world/europe/tempelhof-airport-once-a-lifeline-for-berliners-reprises-role-for-refugees.html?_r=0).

<sup>30</sup> "Germany passes historic law on refugee integration." *The Local*. July 08, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017. <https://www.thelocal.de/20160708/germany-passes-historic-law-on-refugee-integration>.

<sup>31</sup>Von der Mark, Fabian. "German integration report exposes prejudice against immigrants | Germany Guide for Refugees | DW.COM | 10.12.2016." DW. December 10, 2016. Accessed April 15, 2017.

<http://www.dw.com/en/german-integration-report-exposes-prejudice-against-immigrants/a-36719666>.

<sup>32</sup>Humphris, Rachel. "Practising integration in the EU Mapping initiatives and innovations by local institutions and civil society." *IRiS Working Paper Series*, no. 3 (2014). Accessed April 15, 2017.

<sup>33</sup>Rietig, Victoria. "Moving Beyond Crisis: Germany's New Approaches to Integrating Refugees into the Labor Market." Migration Policy Institute. February 02, 2017. Accessed April 15, 2017.

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/moving-beyond-crisis-germany-new-approaches-integrating-refugees-labor-market>.

<sup>34</sup>Von der Mark.

Many of these dialogue initiatives have deliberately not chosen to be limited to encouraging conversation with one group of refugees, so as to avoid contributing to stigmatization.<sup>35</sup>

## V. Case Studies

This report uses three case studies to examine the many ways in which local governments can cooperate with federal authorities, civil society organizations, refugees, and other stakeholders in order to achieve optimal labor integration outcomes. Throughout the report we examine the circumstances facing urban refugees in Philadelphia, Istanbul, and Nairobi. These three case studies were chosen to represent a wide variety of areas, in terms of access to resources and wealth of the host country. Our team thought it was necessary to have a diversity of perspective so that our subsequent policy recommendations could be as comprehensive as possible.

Philadelphia has had a long history of accepting refugees; from Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian refugees in the 1970s, to Bosnian refugees in the 1990s, the city has become a haven for many individuals fleeing persecution. There is a long legacy of successful integration in the city as well. Philadelphia's tradition of welcoming refugees is rife with examples of both the successes and the challenges of integrating refugees. Furthermore, Istanbul has featured prominently in recent discussion pertaining to refugees as over four million Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey, by far the most to arrive in any single state. As the most populous city in the nation, Istanbul has had its own unique history of accepting refugees. Lastly, Nairobi serves as an example of an urban area where refugees, primarily from Somalia have successfully integrated especially within the informal economy. Labor integration in Nairobi has been offered little support by the federal government and has been eased to a great extent by civil society groups. This final case study may offer some insights to countries who may be trying to integrate refugees without the resources of nations such as the United States or even Turkey. Such analysis is especially relevant in light of the Syrian refugee crisis. As a whole, these case studies represent a wide range of contexts from which to draw policy insights with respect to urban labor integration of refugees.

### 1. Nairobi, Kenya

In the wake of the 1991 civil war in Somalia, hundreds of thousands of people sought asylum in Kenya as refugees. The Kenyan government's initial response was one of "abdication and containment," where it deferred leadership to the UNHCR while attempting to limit the Somali population to two main refugee camps.<sup>36</sup> Despite this, massive amounts of refugees migrated to cities, principally Nairobi, in search of livelihoods and following family ties. By the mid-1990s there were an estimated 100,000 Somalis in Nairobi.<sup>37</sup> Concurrently, the Kenyan official policy began to shift. Recognizing their inability to contain the refugees, the Department

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<sup>35</sup>Humphris, *IRiS Working Paper Series*.

<sup>36</sup> Lindley, Anna. "Protracted displacement and remittances: the view from Eastleigh, Nairobi." *UNHCR: New Issues in Refugee Research*, August 2007. Accessed April 7, 2017. [http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7464/1/Lindley\\_-\\_2007\\_-\\_Protracted\\_displacement\\_and\\_remittances.pdf](http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/7464/1/Lindley_-_2007_-_Protracted_displacement_and_remittances.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

of Refugee Affairs (DRA) changed their policy from registering Somalis as restrained to camps, to a new grey area where refugees were no longer forced to return to the camps yet were not entitled to any “assistance” in the form of benefits or services.<sup>38</sup> This resulted in clearing the way for Somalis to participate in the informal economy on a large scale.

As tens of thousands of Somalis established themselves in Nairobi, principally the Eastleigh neighborhood, they no longer received direct support from the Kenyan government or international organizations. Instead, they sought work to support themselves. With an openly informal economy, refugees were generally able to enter the workforce despite the lack of official pathways.<sup>39</sup> In addition to typical entry level jobs, the refugees had a particularly entrepreneurial approach to building livelihoods. Taking advantage of transnational trade networks and social connections along with prior business experience, the Eastleigh section of Nairobi became a hub of economic activity.<sup>40</sup> From small street vendors, which can purchase rights to street stalls, to currency exchange stands, an informal grassroots economy began to rise.<sup>41</sup> <sup>42</sup> Stimulated by remittances from Somalis in the U.S. and Western Europe and capital withdrawn from Somali banks by fleeing refugees, Eastleigh’s informal economy has grown significantly and now makes up a major proportion of Nairobi’s income.<sup>43</sup> Despite no foreign aid, refugees in Eastleigh have generally been able to support their families and achieve self-sufficiency.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the economic competition brought by the influx of Somali small businesses drove down prices in Nairobi and has added value to the larger Nairobi economy.<sup>45</sup> Even without legal recognition, business permits and sales taxes from Somali businesses in Eastleigh have made the second largest revenue stream in the capital, after the Central Business District.<sup>46</sup>

This success has also come with many challenges. The lack of legal work status means the Somalis work unprotected. They face harassment and extortion from police as well as a lack of protection against crime.<sup>47</sup> Economically, their informal status has caused difficulties accessing capital and prevented higher skilled, professionals from entering the workforce.

The Somali self-integration has led to far fewer refugees in the camp; by 2010 there were an equal number in the camps as there were in Nairobi.<sup>48</sup> The integrated refugees are not dependent on humanitarian aid and are not geographically isolated as they would be in camps. The UNHCR has recently sought to build on the Somali success by expanding the international

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<sup>38</sup> Campbell, Elizabeth H. "Increasing Urban Refugee Protection in Nairobi." In *Urban Refugees: Challenges in Protection, Services and Policy*, 105. London: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Lindley, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Neil Carrier & Emma Lochery (2013) Missing states? Somali trade networks and the Eastleigh transformation, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 7:2, 344.

<sup>41</sup> Campbell, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Farah, Ibrahim, Valentine Opanga, and Saadia Abdishakur. "Eastleigh 'Little Mogadishu' and its traditional integration into the East African economy: The secret, challenges and opportunities." Life & Peace Institute. January 11, 2016. Accessed April 8, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Lindley, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Campbell, 109.

<sup>45</sup> Farah, et al.

<sup>46</sup> Carrier & Lochery, 346.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 345.

<sup>48</sup> Campbell, 110.

footprint to Nairobi. Through the Nairobi Initiative, the UNHCR has sought to build partnerships with urban refugees. They aim to promote communication and facilitate better communication on crime, work permits, and refugee law.<sup>49</sup>

The influx of Somalis became an opportunity for economic growth as well as reducing the humanitarian burden. Though legally barred from the workforce, the informal economy functions as a survival mechanism. If legally permitted to enter the workforce, the Somalis would receive protection from extortion and exploitation as well as access to financial capital and better infrastructure.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the original refugee policy which prohibited them from leaving camps meant they could not receive any form of integration support from NGOs.<sup>51</sup> With greater recognition and a more flexible national policy, the existing integration success could be further enhanced. Further research could investigate the effectiveness of nascent NGO activities in Nairobi's Somali community as well as the Kenyan government's ambiguous policy towards refugees within the labor force.

## 2. Philadelphia, USA

In declaring itself a sanctuary city, Philadelphia has leveraged one of its key local policy tools to positively affect the situation of refugees. Sanctuary cities do not allow local law enforcement to assist in the execution of federal immigration policy. Mayor Jim Kenney has maintained that Philadelphia will remain a sanctuary city despite warnings that Philadelphia could lose millions of dollars of federal funding as a result.<sup>52</sup> Opposition to sanctuary cities remains high and maintaining such a policy might be very expensive for Philadelphia, a city struggling to balance its budgets. While, 'sanctuary city' designation most profoundly impacts undocumented migrants, it can also have a large impact on the lives refugees. For example, some evidence suggests that sanctuary city designation vastly improves the quality of lives of refugees, lowers the amount of crime in any given urban area, and lowers unemployment drastically.<sup>53</sup>

Enacting policies supporting refugees is not something novel for the city. In previous years Philadelphia has expended effort to promote local policy aiding refugee integration. For example, in 2008 Mayor Nutter signed an Executive Order to "develop strategies and policy recommendations for improving the integration of immigrants and language and cultural minorities into the social and economic fabric of the city."<sup>54</sup> This acknowledgement of the necessity to effectively integrate people in the community has continued throughout the years with an overt focus on collaborating with nonprofit organizations to smooth the transition.

One of the main centers for immigrant employment is the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians founded in 2003. Its main office is in Center City Philadelphia with a West

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>50</sup> Carrier & Lochery, 346-348.

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, 105.

<sup>52</sup> Aubrey Whelan, Michael Matza and Tricia L. Nadolny. "Kenney says Philadelphia will remain a sanctuary city despite Trump's order to Pull Funds." Philadelphia Inquirer

<sup>53</sup> Tom K. Wong "The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on Crime and the Economy" The Center for American Progress.

<sup>54</sup> City of Philadelphia, Mayor's Office, 2008b

Philadelphia branch opening in 2006, and it aims to serve immigrants in the greater Philadelphia area.<sup>55</sup> As stated in its mission it is “a centralized employment and referral center for the region’s growing immigrant community by promoting immigrant participation in the area’s political, social, and economic life.”<sup>56</sup> Since refugees are immigrants that are legally allowed to work as soon as they arrive to the US, the Welcoming Center can be a valuable resource as it expends copious effort to match employers to qualified immigrants. Furthermore, the Center provides other services such as monthly legal clinics, english literacy programs, general resource referrals, vocational training, and small business support.<sup>57</sup> This focus on supporting immigrants in a variety of areas makes the Welcoming Center a successful local refugee integration resource.

The Philadelphia municipal governments has also acted to collaborate with civil society groups to deliver services that have benefitted refugees. In Spruce Hill, for instance, The African Cultural Alliance of North America and the Philadelphia department of public health collaborated to offer free health screenings to the districts immigrants and refugees, many of whom come from Ethiopia, Nigeria and Liberia.<sup>58</sup> In providing such services Philadelphia has strived to allow its refugees access to health services necessary to find and maintain employment.

Philadelphia has created an office specifically dedicated to immigrant affairs; this office provides services to refugees that would raise their ability to integrate within the city’s job market.<sup>59</sup> The office coordinates with Philadelphia’s groups including HIAS Philadelphia and the Nationalities Service Center to provide programs serving both immigrants and refugees. The office in the municipal government and these groups have both collaborated on ESL classes, some specifically focusing on vocabulary that would assist refugees in the job market, in order to ensure more effective integration

Another organization, the ‘Jobs Readiness and Career Services’ centre has a number of offices in the Philadelphia area. The organization provides a wide range of services specifically pertinent to labor integration including acculturation workshops, english language classes and job placement assistance. The program is open to refugees and immigrants not solely in Philadelphia but also in adjacent Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties.<sup>60</sup> The policy impacts of such groups on employment in the cities hasn’t been studied in great detail, though it seems as though the existence of such services has not only benefitted refugees within the city itself but also surrounding counties.

Philadelphia Futures, an organization specifically dedicated to low income students more broadly, has provided services to refugees. For instance, the organization has created an intensive program geared towards gaining students acceptance into colleges, including

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<sup>55</sup> "Mission." Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians.<http://welcomingcenter.org/about-us/mission>.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> "Summary of Services." Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians.  
<http://welcomingcenter.org/services/summary>.

<sup>58</sup> Acana, Afaho “Spruce Hill: African Immigrants Struggle to Navigate City’s Healthcare System” Philadelphia neighborhoods.

<sup>59</sup> “Philadelphia Office of Immigrant Affairs” <https://beta.phila.gov/departments/office-of-immigrant-affairs/>

<sup>60</sup> JEVS Centre for New Americans

<https://jevshumanservices.org/job-readiness-career-services/center-for-new-americans/?gclid=CMY30t30I9MCFVuBswodWvQGoA>

Philadelphia schools such as Temple, Drexel and the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>61</sup>

Generally Philadelphia has altered the circumstances facing its refugees by leveraging the few local policy options it has and collaborating heavily with civil society groups. Such collaborations allow for the creation of joint programs and initiatives without too much intervention from the city itself. This model offers some feasible policy options to other cities both in the United States and otherwise.

While these programs to assist refugees do exist, refugees only receive official government assistance for short period of time. Even more striking the amount of assistance has decreased drastically from 1980s when refugees received 36 months of cash and medical assistance to only 8 months currently, even though cost of living has increased dramatically from 1980.<sup>62</sup> With the rushed timeline of resettlement and limited financial availability to the agencies who conduct the resettlement, the refugees who come into the United States are forced either to adapt rapidly to the changes or else suffer through living in impoverished conditions.<sup>63</sup> This makes it imperative for cities to continue working with nonprofits to extend the resources available for integration.

### 3. Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul, Turkey's main economic hub, currently hosts an estimated 20 percent of the country's 2.7 million registered Syrian refugee population. The majority of Syrian refugees no longer live in the 25 official government camps around Turkey's border with Syria. Now, only around 9 percent of the refugees (around 300,000) live in camps while 2.4 million have moved to cities in search of opportunities for employment and integration.

When Syrians first began fleeing to Turkey, President Erdoğan declared an open door policy that would treat Syrians as "guests", not refugees. Turkey retains a geographic limitation on the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees which means they only accept people as refugees if fleeing as a consequence of "events occurring in Europe".<sup>64</sup> While they still need to abide by the principle of *non-refoulement*, the Turkish government did not believe Syrians would stay and that the war would continue for so long. They created refugee camps with access to food, shelter and basic health and education services, but no plan for integration.

After seeing low results in work permit applications, possible with Temporary Protection Regulation that emerged from the April 2013 "Law on Foreigners and International Protection" (LFIP), the government finally decided to shift gears. As of January 2016, Turkey adopted the pivotal "Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under "Temporary Protection"", allowing Syrian refugees to apply for work permits through their employer, which would guarantee them the minimum wage and registration in the social security system. As the Syrian War came into

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<sup>61</sup>Philadelphia Futures <http://www.philadelphiafutures.org/overview/college-connection>

<sup>62</sup> Refugee Cash Assistance

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/refugee-cash-assistance>

<sup>63</sup> Brandt, Karin Leah, "Making Immigrant Integration Work: a case study of refugee resettlement in Philadelphia, PA" MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. June 2010. Accessed April 14. <https://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/59716/668447053-MIT.pdf?sequence=2>

<sup>64</sup> "Protecting Refugees." Human Rights Watch. 2000. Accessed April 4, 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/turkey2/Turk009-10.htm>.

its sixth year, the Turkish government finally realized they needed to switch to a policy of permanence that seeks to integrate Syrians. The case of Istanbul highlights that there are nonetheless many shortcomings in the effectiveness of integration in the labor market.

For one, work permits are not given to Syrians for the following occupations: (I) dentist, nurse, midwife, pharmacist, (II) veterinarian, (III) lawyer, public notary, (IV) security at a private or public institution, (V) director of a private hospital, (VI) customs consultant as well as (VII) sea captain, seaman, fisherman, diver and similar jobs within territorial waters.<sup>65</sup> While there are permit exemptions for jobs in seasonal agriculture and husbandry, there are greater restrictions on the health and education sectors which are more predominant in cities than the former two.

In Istanbul, the two main difficulties adjusting to the labor market arise out of unemployment (especially due to employment competition with the over 10% unemployed in Istanbul) and language barriers.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the identity card (*kimlik*) that Syrian refugees need to apply for is only valid in the region in which it was applied for. When refugees moved on to other cities like Istanbul, they had to reapply or work informally if they decided against the long re-registration process (appointments were often 4 months away or impossible to acquire without translators on site).<sup>67</sup> This has led to low amounts of work permits being issued in Istanbul and low chances for integration in stable workplace.

Various other factors also account for why informal employment in Istanbul and Turkey remains the highest platform for employment of Syrians. To prevent the displacement of native workers, the government decided to impose restrictions on refugee employment, such as the 10% quota system of foreigners in any given workplace. Additionally, despite high fines, employers are willing to higher refugees without work permits in order to pay them around half as much as Turkish workers and avoid the hassle of filling out large forms of up to 50 pages.<sup>68</sup> The vast majority work in the textile or service industry.<sup>69</sup> Due to lower household incomes of parents than the already minimized family expenditures of Syrian refugees in Istanbul, child labor has become another main method for survival and means of livelihood.<sup>70</sup> In Istanbul, at least one child in every third household works.<sup>71</sup> This results in a lack of access to education for Syrian children and negative future prospects.

While work permits would allow for formal employment with adequate salaries at or above the minimum wage, payment for social security and the opportunity for children to go to schools, they also pose difficulties. Some refugees in Istanbul are concerned that it will make their employment less advantage as compared to natives if they need to be paid the same

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<sup>65</sup> Mülteci Haklari Merkezi. Are there any restrictions in access to the labor market in Turkey? Mülteci Haklari Merkezi. Accessed April 5, 2017. [http://mhd.org.tr/assets/tp\\_work\\_en.pdf](http://mhd.org.tr/assets/tp_work_en.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Kaya, Ayhan, Prof. Dr., and Aysu Kırış. "Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Istanbul." SSRN Electronic Journal, April 2016. 2016. Accessed April 10, 2017. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2870516. p. 23-24.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 21

<sup>68</sup> Aslan, Melih. "Cheap and illegal, Syrian workers show underside of Turkey's refugee crisis." Reuters. December 04, 2015. Accessed April 13, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-refugees-turkey-idUSKBN0TN1DA20151204>.

<sup>69</sup> Kaya, "Vulnerability Assessment", p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> UNHCR "Integration of Syrian Refugees Under Temporary Protection Into the Turkish Labor Market: Challenges and Opportunities"

<sup>71</sup> Yalcin, Sezen "Syrian Child Workers in Turkey" Turkish Policy Quarterly.

amount.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, although Turkey has accepted the most number of Syrian refugees, the labor market integration of refugees in Istanbul highlights some very important challenges to refugee integration in urban areas that our following recommendations seek to address, additionally to those relating to Nairobi and Philadelphia.

## **VI. Findings and Policy Proposals**

In light of our case studies, we analyze, synthesize, and address the challenges we observed by suggesting the following policies that could positively impact urban labor integration. We propose these five recommendations to governments, both national and local, NGO's, and state agencies:

### **A. For National Government:**

#### **1. Analyse the likelihood of permanence:**

With the arrival of refugees, host cities must analyze the reasons they left their country of origin in order to determine the probability of refugees returning home. In doing so, countries can respond better to the needs of refugees and create a long term plan that quickly integrates refugees in the labor force if return in the near future is unlikely.

In Turkey and Kenya, early hopes that refugees would return to Syria and Somalia, respectively, discouraged integration as they remained confined to camps without any attempts to integrate them into the labor force. Treating the presence of refugees as a short term when the conflict they flee is long term, prevents them from acquiring livelihoods, while draining resources from the hosts to maintain the camps. Turkey and Kenya would have benefitted from having an integration scheme that acknowledges likely permanence, as it would have allowed refugees to become self-sufficient in the labor markets of cities like Istanbul and Nairobi.

#### **2. Allowing refugees to work legally**

The UN's 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates in Article 24 that refugees have the right to work and be treated lawfully—with respect, workers' rights, and protections. Countries, such as the US, that have signed the Convention without reservations to this Article, and allow refugees to work legally immediately upon arrival.

In contrast, Turkey and Kenya began treating Syrians and Somalis, respectively, as “guests” and not refugees. By the time they were seen as refugees and were allowed to apply for work permits, they had already spent several years in camps, the informal economy, or had already left to other countries in search of work. As a result, Turkey has lost many skilfull and highly educated refugees, as they leave to work in Europe and the

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<sup>72</sup>Aslan, Melih “Cheap and Illegal, Syrian Workers Show Underside of Turkey’s Refugee Crisis” Reuters.

US. Due to further restrictions on the sectors in which refugees can work, they remain unintegrated. Countries should give refugees the legal right to work immediately, by giving them refugee status, and they should either recognise their skills acquired abroad or help bring them to the standards they require.

Furthermore, countries should decrease the complexity and cost associated with obtaining work permits. In the case of Istanbul, refugees are required to re-register for identity cards that would allow them to apply for work permits, but face an uphill battle due to the long wait time to receive an appointment or a lack of translators to facilitate communication. Furthermore, work permits need to be applied for jointly with the employer, who is generally less willing to comply as the process requires filling out lengthy forms. Such administrative tasks need to be simplified or changed altogether.

This would ensure the protection of refugees from the exploitative informal market and in turn benefit the host economy through increased tax revenue. Additionally, legal avenues to the labor force allow refugees better access to capital and business permits, which in turn facilitates commercial activity.

## **B. For cities:**

### **3. Create a municipal office for immigrant and refugee affairs:**

These offices can facilitate better collaboration with civil society groups and run initiatives facilitating labor integration in the municipality. In Philadelphia they could encourage local civil society organizations to run collaborative programs, exchange information, and pool resources in order to maximize labor outcomes. In Somalia, this would help link NGOs to local municipal needs and facilitate the UNHCR's Nairobi Initiative. This ensures mission cohesion, coordinating projects to limit redundancy while preventing unnecessary overlap. If needed such offices can also directly run programs for vocational training and language training, though often it is more cost-effective and most useful to dedicate city resources to facilitating non-profit collaboration through a centralized institution.

Furthermore, cities should seek out partnerships with both domestic and international NGOs through these offices, to add additional resources and refugee specific knowledge. While organizations typically partner at the national level, city level collaboration allows for environment specific solutions. The UNHCR's Nairobi Initiative directly improved communication between the municipal government and previously unaccounted for refugees. Similarly, in Philadelphia, the Welcoming Center organization provides resources and knowledge unique to the city. Cities can harness the expertise NGOs bring while responding at a more precise, municipal level.

### **4. Where possible designate the city as a 'sanctuary city' (specific to the U.S.):**

Refugees often feel much safer in sanctuary cities even in spite of their legal status. This translates to refugees being much more willing to take advantage of

municipal government resources, seek out medical help and feel comfortable reporting crime to local policing authorities. In certain contexts, the financial and political costs of doing so might be prohibitive and this should be taken into account.

### **C. For Civil Society Groups and Nonprofit Organizations:**

#### **5. Offer programs specifically oriented at promoting success in the workplace:**

One of the greatest barriers to integration in all three cities is that the refugees were not able to find jobs that matched their skillsets either due to lack of language abilities or workplace accreditation. While several NGOs offer language training to refugees, much fewer offer programs specifically dedicated to giving workers the vocational vocabulary they might need to thrive in the workplace. NGOs should standardize and publish the syllabi they use to train refugees in order to give workplaces an idea of the skills enrolled refugees will attain.

Furthermore, since some governments do not recognise refugees' vocational qualities acquired abroad, NGOs should offer job specific vocational training. In many cases, including Istanbul and Nairobi, refugees with existing skills were not allowed to work at jobs that met their qualifications and level of education, due to differing standards of these in host countries. Since many refugees need to retrain to match local job standards or need training to acquire the necessary skills to join the workforce, NGOs are vital in making refugees competitive amongst locals and ensuring they are not employed in jobs below their skill levels.

## **VII. Conclusions**

By analyzing three distinct cities such as Nairobi, Philadelphia, and Istanbul, we attempted to explore urban labor integration of refugees in a variety of scenarios. Urban labor integration is an important issue to consider due to several factors. Refugees who are able to become self sufficient faster contribute more to the host country economically and ease the fiscal burden on the country. Furthermore, refugees who are well integrated economically are more likely to avoid falling into a trap of poverty and become productive members of the country. In an attempt to address some of the challenges we observed across case studies, we proposed several policy solutions targeted at local governments, national governments, and NGOs. However, the solutions presented are not an extensive or exhaustive list of answers on the issue of urban labor integration. Research still needs to be conducted, exploring the efficacy of the proposed solutions and the feasibility of implementation especially in resource poor countries.

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