

HAMI's Input on High-Level Meeting on the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) July 2020

The Current Context:

Islamic Republic of Iran is presently dealing with serious economic challenges that unfortunately exhibit an upward trend. In addition, while the country is under a Unilateral Coercive Measure (UCM) imposed by the US, access to international assistance has also be alarmingly limited. Despite the said challenges, the Islamic Republic of Iran has extended primary healthcare to all Afghans (currently covering 93% of all foreign nationals residing in Iran regardless of their documentation status), provided secondary healthcare services to vulnerable Afghan refugees, facilitated access to formal education for half a million out-of-school Afghan children (irrespective of their legal status), and offered free-of-charge COVID-19 treatment to all Afghans. All the said services have been provided with minor contributions by the international organization including the UN.

However, the prospect of continuing with the provision of the said services is very unclear especially now that spread of COVID-19 which has further complicated the practical solutions the Government could devise and implement to help ease the pressure on vulnerable social groups which have been hit hardest. Should the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran become unable to extend the abovementioned services to the large displaced Afghan population, their access to health and welfare service would be severely limited leaving them in the vicious cycle of poverty, negative coping strategies and criminality which in turn would cement systematic restriction in addition to a social resistance on behalf of the local community members as to Afghan's integration in the society.

Furthermore, a very significant portion of the budget allocated to Afghan Refugees in Iran is spent on basic services that have routinely been provided for at least three decades now- most of them without much modification throughout the years. The second and third generation Afghans living in host countries such as Iran require psychosocial support in order to be able to have a better grasp of their conditions

and potentials, how they can empower themselves and what durable practical options exist for them to build their future. Therefore, more emphasis should be placed on helping them develop their capacity through sustainable, context-based, result-oriented interventions that are currently not reflected in SSAR.

Suggestions to Make SSAR More Relevant and Functional:

In order to stop the aforementioned cycle of violence and exclusion and to tap into the SSAR's potentials, HAMI believes that the following suggestions could help contribute to finding sustainable strategic solutions for Afghan refugees:

- 1- Firstly, SSAR's achievements (from 2012 to date) should become transparent to all stakeholders. Progress and analytical reports should denote outcomes, allocated budget, beneficiaries, impact, challenges and lessons learned.
- 2- Considering the fundamental changes in the context of Afghanistan, its neighboring countries and the region, it appears that strategic solutions should be revisited within the framework of what is objectively considered practical with regards to the new socio-political and economic paradigms.
- 3- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan should assume a more active and accountable role vis-à-vis paving the way to sustainable peace in addition to an integrated support of voluntary repatriation programs.
- 4- Inclusion of result-oriented psychosocial support interventions in the menu of strategic solution in order to empower the displaced community.
- 5- Call for funding to be allocated to the result-oriented psychosocial empowerment intervention in Iran.
- 6- NGOs should be more meaningfully and consistently involved in policy-making, planning, implementation and depoliticization of various programs designed to enhance the living conditions of refugees at national, regional and international levels.
- 7- Regional and international collaboration among NGOs in host countries and Afghanistan should be fortified in order to establish a functional platform to exchange information and experience aiming to boost the quality and practicality of strategic solutions devised for Afghan refugees.

Regards