



Food Business Entrepreneurship in Refugees Response

Workshop Report

19 September 2019

Inogar Building – İstanbul



Introduction:

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with Food Security and Agriculture (FSA) sector, organized a workshop entitled: “Food business Entrepreneurship in Refugees Response”. The workshop intended to enhance the capacity of FSA sector partners in implementing the food business interventions in the context of the response to the current Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey. In addition, the workshop also aimed to provide the opportunity for participants to discuss and exchange information on the food entrepreneurship programmes, and how these programmes can foster the food value chains resilience, generate and stabilise farm income, and reinforce existing initiatives for both refugees and host communities. The workshop was held at the Inogar Building where the L.I.F.E project from CIPE Organization was implemented in İstanbul for the whole day on 19 Sept. 2019.

Scope and objectives

The objective of the workshop was to support FSA sector partners in implementing and managing food related livelihood interventions that have potentials for growth in Turkey.

Specific objectives of the training were for participants to:

- obtain capacity in planning and designing the food business interventions;
- be equipped with the best practices and lessons learned from the past and current livelihood interventions on food industry;
- identify the gaps and challenges in planning and designing the food entrepreneurship activities in the current context; and
- better understand related laws and rules for efficient collaboration and coordination with the local authorities.
- sensitizing and imparting knowledge and skills to all FSA sector actors, including private sector collaborators to support the profitable entrepreneurship initiative.

Participants:

The workshop gathered about 25 participants from national, international entities, who are interested in the food entrepreneurship programmes in Turkey. The expert from Refugees (Mülteciler) Association in Sultanbeyli Municipality one of the districts of İstanbul and members of executive committee of Syrian International Business Association (SIBA) attended the meeting as well.

Workshop sessions:

The workshop was facilitated by the Coordinator and Information Management Associate (IMA) of Food Security and Agriculture sector. The workshop alternated between presentations, plenary and group work sessions. Emphasis was given on maximizing the sharing of experiences between participants and practically experimenting a methodology for joint planning.

Session 1: Opening

In this session, the FSA sector Coordinator introduced the objectives of the workshop, major contents and timetable as well as the expected results and outputs followed by the introduction of the participants. It was highlighted that *entrepreneurship* is at the core of the FSA sector strategy, as it can make an important contribution to the livelihoods of refugees and host communities by driving economic growth, promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty, helping to improve social conditions and contributing to addressing livelihood challenges, as well as engendering inclusive outcomes for disadvantaged groups, including the poor, women and youth. It was mentioned that this workshop has been designed to explore how the role of entrepreneurship in productive capacity-building in refugee situations. In particular, the workshop expected to discuss good practices and lessons learned in developing and implementing entrepreneurship policies in Turkey, highlighting the importance of a holistic and coherent approach to ensure impactful results.

The key role of entrepreneurship is due to the contribution that enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, make to economic growth. They are important drivers of job creation, providing a significant portion of formal jobs in Turkey and specifically in the food sector.

Governments play an important role in creating an enabling environment for enterprise, promoting entrepreneurship and the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, building productive capacity and encouraging inclusive growth. In this regard, the efforts of Turkish government have been acknowledged, and the engagement and leadership role of the government entities (especially municipalities) was emphasized in such of events.

Session 2: Case Studies and scenarios on Food Entrepreneurship interventions.

In this session, three successful case studies /project for CIPE, IDEMA, 4C@rma organizations were presented by relevant staff in each organization.

L.I.F.E Project by CIPE Organization

Livelihoods Innovation through Food Entrepreneurship (L.I.F. E) programme was introduced to the FSA Sector partners by the Country Director of CIPE, Turkey. The main objective of the LIFE project is to support and encourage entrepreneurship, job creation and cross-cultural engagement between refugees and locals in the food sector.

It was mentioned that LIFE project brings together refugees, host communities and other stakeholders through gastro diplomacy programming to promote social cohesion. Participants bring their own unique cultures and cuisines to their communities, while also The LIFE project is a consortium of partners who bring a depth and breadth of expertise to the table: The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), IDEMA, Union Kitchen, the Stimson Center, and the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan.

A 'Cook book' is under preparation to be published and LIFE Project becomes a part of society.

IDEMA Organization

International Development Management (IDEMA) Organization is committed to provide meaningful impact through developing and implementing **socio-economic development projects**, realizing innovative solutions towards development obstacles and serving as a hub for development practitioners to form global partnerships. IDEMA is implementing novel projects to remove the challenges beyond the development of Turkey and expand the economic benefits for both refugees and host communities. In the last 3 years, IDEMA has channeled its main competitive abilities to provide relief to the contemporary, hyperdimensional problems of today including migration and migration integration. In this context, in order to increase effectiveness, efficiency, quality and human-orientation of humanitarian services offered to refugees and asylum-seekers from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan that have settled in Turkey, IDEMA has been running Needsmap project which is a non-profit map-based interactive humanitarian platform where people in need and people who need help meet through a system of non-monetary contributions.

IDEMA has specialized in developing improving employability and career development of disadvantaged groups, primarily the refugees from Syria. In this context, IDEMA has developed projects to enhance career development and employability of the women, children, young, disabled and working age refugees that appear to be settled in Turkey. Within this scope IDEMA is implementing the Production Facility for Women (KÜME) project supported by Worldbank. The project aims to support women through establishing food entrepreneurs cooperative in Mersin. The project targets Syrian refugee women as well as host community members.

IDEMA is the implementing agency of “Disaster Resiliency Program for SMEs of Turkey” or “Sağlam Kobi” in Turkish. The program implemented in partnership with UPS, US Chamber of Commerce, World Economic Forum and CSR Turkey Association. The goal is to engage the private and public sector and civil society organizations to work together and identify best practices to enhance the resilience of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Turkey.

IDEMA, serves as the implementing lead of the LIFE Project in Turkey, from designing and managing the Food Enterprise Center (FEC), to delivering entrepreneurship support, workshops, and events.

EKIP Project

Effective Women Business Platform (EKİP) is a new healthy food business project created in Istanbul with funding from the European Union, administered by the World Bank under the EU facility for Refugees in Turkey.

The 2-year project started in January 2019 with the aim of providing innovative, healthy and affordable food products and meals, produced sustainably, while practicing **social cooperative** economics with and for women. The project targets 50 Syrian refugee and Turkish women to promote “women farmers” by licensing their products via cooperative. The targeted women who grow their products will enter the food market with their own brandmark in İstanbul, big cities in Turkey and beyond.

In addition, language skills training as well as mentoring activities will be provided to the targeted women to strengthen social cohesion among Syrian and host community.

Session 3: Visit CIPE Entrepreneur incubation and meet L.I.F.E project members

FSA sector partners had the chance to meet with the L.I.F.E Project members (Beneficiaries) who are well-skilled and have their own project ideas with regards to healthy diet, healthy food and entrepreneurship in food sector. It was an extraordinary opportunity for the workshop's participants to hear the stories of their journeys how to become food entrepreneurs in Turkey. In their turn the members (trainees) got the opportunity to share their project plans with all participants.

Some of the project ideas were written as below;

- Set up a kitchen /cooking project and provide training to the beneficiaries on how to produce organic bread.
- Produce organic peanut butter and market it through organic shops in Turkey as well as online channels.
- Production of organic bread by using organic seed with the slogan of “clean seed, clean food”

Gastrodiplomacy event within the scope of L.I. F.E project team was combined with the workshop. The trainees (members) of both Syrian, Turkish communities showcased their food businesses, using pitching and networking skills developed during the L.I. F.E program. The food prepared by trainees with strong believe that food is a powerful tool to upend misconceived stereotypes and encourage social bonds, while also promoting professional networking opportunities. The participants have had the opportunity to test various types of food, as well as the event featured a curated discussion on the role of food in bridging communities and creating livelihoods.

Session 4: Guidelines for implementing Food Entrepreneurship project

Mr. Mert Okcebe, Livelihood Officer of Mülteciler Association, shared with partners the programmes implemented on Refugee Response in the province of Sultanbeyli, İstanbul Turkey.

The total number of refugees in Sultanbeyli Municipality is around 30.000 most of whom are Syrians. However, the total population in Sultanbeyli Municipality is 327.000 means that refugees' community is representing around 10% of the total population. The Refugee Association was established with the support of Sultanbeyli Municipality in 2014, consisting of Community Rehabilitation, Refugee Health and Turkish Education as well as Youth and Children Education Centres. In addition the association provides legal consultancy, business counseling and playground for children. Refugee Association implements various projects with the funds provided by different donors (UNHCR, WHH, GIZ, Relief Int.,IBC etc.) to support refugees in aforementioned sectors.

Session 5: The role of private sector in supporting Food Entrepreneurship innovations in Refugee Response

Mr. Rasheed Hamwi, one of the executive committee members of Syrian Business International Association (SIBA) informed the participants about the activities of association as well as challenges and opportunities that are faced by the Syrian entrepreneurs in food sector. SIBA support Syrian

entrepreneurs by providing mentoring and coaching activities as well as facilitating the start-ups to reach the market. In addition, SIBA is working on to launch an 'Entrepreneurship Club'.

The gaps and challenges were identified as;

- Administrative, legislative issues and access to finance for both Syrian entrepreneurs and host community members;
 - Language, for Syrians to access food sector and local market;
 - Disability to reach best suppliers due to the lack of knowledge of local market;
 - Limited funding opportunities to support food entrepreneurship programmes;
 - Lack of connection with NGOs, organizations and institutions;
 - IFIs have lack of knowledge about **social entrepreneurship**.
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- Mr. Rasheed Hamwi has suggested the following initiatives to be considered for any funding opportunity in food sector: **Eco-friendly production** for food industry;
 - Engage more with multisectoral organizations: Zorlu Holding, given as an example, from private sector co- leads one of the well-established entrepreneurship programme for refugees, named IMECE. (social innovation platform)
 - Marketing the agricultural food products through digital media channels;
 - Promote Syrian-Turkish products and raise awareness globally about these types of products. The objective of this initiative is to increase the export rate. Organize match-making events by bringing together Syrian and Turkish companies.

Conclusions and recommendations

The one-day workshop provided the participants with concrete knowledge on planning, designing and implementing food business programmes. The participants found it very useful and relevant to their functions in the refugee response. Food entrepreneurship programs focused on strengthening existing initiatives for both refugees and host communities, as well as improving the resilience of their initiatives and ensuring sustainability of income stability.

There is a need for a follow-up through more technical workshops on food interventions for refugees.

The following suggestions have been proposed by the participants:

- To conduct a training on **social cohesion aspects in FSA sector**, in order to mitigate any potential competition between refugees and host community members.
- Involve private sector, public institutions as well as academics to the next events.