GUIDANCE NOTE ON HOST COMMUNITY TARGETING APPROACHES WITHIN THE SYRIA REGIONAL REFUGEE AND RESILIENCE PLAN (3RP)

2024

3RP
REGIONAL REFUGEE
& RESILIENCE PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Providing support to vulnerable host communities has been an integral part of the international response to the Syrian crisis. However, in recent years, host governments are facing even more challenges in providing services for all those in need, including refugees. Competition over resources, overstretched services, and scarcer livelihoods opportunities are increasing the risks of tensions between and within communities. While vulnerable host communities are currently being targeted across a multitude of programs implemented under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), the practices around targeting host communities and vulnerable host community members (VHCM) have been largely left up to individual host governments, donors, and partner agencies under the 3RP. Common practices are now emerging from years of accumulated experiences, which provide an opportunity to tackle the issue at a more systematic and regional level.

This guidance note aims to harmonize the understanding around targeting VHCM, to provide concrete suggestions to the interagency coordination teams in Egypt, Jordan, and Türkiye in terms of choosing effective targeting models and engaging vulnerable host communities, and to ensure that resilience is effectively delivered, and social cohesion is promoted among displacement-affected population groups. The audience of the guidance note is intended to include the 3RP Joint Secretariat, the Interagency Coordinators specifically in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye, relevant policymakers in host country governments, and all other partners and organizations across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spectrum that are currently working in support of refugees and vulnerable host communities alike.

The guidance note offers a total of 8 concrete steps, which can be used to review, re-assess and, if and where relevant, recalibrate targeting strategies. The guidance note seeks to emphasize that improving such strategies should require thinking across the three broad domains, which represent key objectives of the response in each affected country. These are: (i) Building a Country-Responsive Strategy, (ii) Ensuring Coherence, and (iii) Enabling or Retaining Flexibility.

BUILDING A COUNTRY-RESPONSIVE STRATEGY

Building a country-responsive strategy refers to the need for all interventions to be designed to address the specific needs, priorities, and concerns of VHCMs, which vary significantly from one country to the next, and the host country governments.

STEP 1

DEFINE VULNERABLE HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Currently, there is no single standard or formal definition of vulnerable host communities. Rather, what exists is a general understanding or an informal definition which can lead to some confusion and a wide range of different targeting approaches. Three recommendations are made:
1. Clarify the definition of VHCMs at national level.
2. Launch dialogue with national partners.
3. Review and assess and the availability of reliable data.

STEP 2

IDENTIFY AVAILABLE ENTRY POINTS

Given how VHCMs are targeted depends a lot on the context, 3RP partners should review the nature and scope of the response – whether it is more of a humanitarian assistance or development programme and identify available entry points for effective targeting. Two recommendations are made:
1. Identify priority entry points for targeting strategies.
2. Review and clarify the formula (or formulas) for calculating targeted host community members.

STEP 3

ASSESS & RESPOND TO RELEVANT NATIONAL POLICIES & REGULATIONS

Targeting approaches and strategies need to take into account existing policies and regulations for VHCM targeting set by the host governments. These include ratios that several host governments require 3RP partners to use in interventions which can have significant effects on targeting strategies. Two recommendations are made:
1. Define collective outcomes.
2. Launch or increase advocacy efforts.

ENSURING COHERENCE

Ensuring coherence refers to the need to see that interventions across 3RP countries and sectors reflect the regional nature of the response and that they adopt common operational standards.

STEP 4

MAINSTREAM SOCIAL COHESION

An important driver for targeting VHCMs is the need to mitigate and prevent any potential risk of tensions and disputes between refugees and host communities. Social cohesion is indeed a central aspect of the regional response and a strong regional guidance exists. However, social cohesion is not considered a priority at the same level in every country. Three recommendations are made:
1. Explore the most suitable platform for sharing vulnerable host community targeting criteria, lessons learned and best practices.
2. Develop standards for specific targeting approaches.
3. Review and assess the availability of reliable data.

STEP 5

ASSESS & RESPOND TO RELEVANT DONOR POLICIES/GUIDELINES

Donor policies or guidelines can provide opportunities to expand VHCM targeting. Where social cohesion is a priority, for example, donors can support expanding assistance to vulnerable host communities. Rules and priorities, however, can also create rigidities. Changing this will require analysis and interventions at different levels. Two recommendations are made:

1. Explore the most suitable platform for sharing vulnerable host community targeting criteria, lessons learned and best practices.
2. Launch or increase advocacy efforts.

ENABLING/ RETAINING FLEXIBILITY

Enabling and retaining flexibility includes steps necessary to ensure that regional response efforts can change in response to external shocks and crises, without losing effectiveness or sacrificing coherence.

STEP 6

COMBINE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

The effectiveness and impact of VHCM targeting is likely to be increased by combining different approaches together, which in turn can also ensure that, within each country, there is flexibility, should an external shock or crisis happen. This said, it is important to note that no standard exists for specific targeting approaches. Two recommendations are made:

1. Create awareness about the different targeting approaches.
2. Design interventions that mix (or integrate) approaches.

STEP 7

CONSIDER IMPACT OF EXTERNAL SHOCKS OF CRISES

Egypt, Jordan, and Türkiye have experienced recent external shocks or crises, which have impacted host community targeting approaches. Shocks require adaptation as it can represent challenges while also it can lead to potential opportunities. Two recommendations are made:

1. Integrate elements from adaptive management approaches.
2. Review and assess the availability of reliable data.

STEP 8

ASSESS & TAKE INTO ACCOUNT AVAILABLE FUNDING

VHCM targeting can be affected by the availability of funds, especially given that there has been a decrease in yearly funding levels since 2018. Two recommendations are made:

1. Engage in effective prioritization.
2. Launch or increase advocacy efforts.

ACRONYMS

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
IDP	Internally Displaced Person(s)
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
JRPSC	Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAF	National Aid Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMM	Presidency of Migration Management
SADG	Social Assistance Directorate General
SDC	Development Centers
SFD	Social Fund for Development
TCA	Temporary Cash Assistance
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAF	Vulnerability Assessment Framework
VARON	the Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees of Other Nationalities
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees
VHCM	Vulnerable Host Community Member(s)
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

SPARK, Turkiye: After receiving the necessary resources & business incubation support, Omar & Osama relaunch their food delivery app with an improved business model & framework.

1 INTRODUCTION

Providing support to vulnerable host communities has been an integral part of the international response to the Syrian crisis. However, the practices around targeting vulnerable host community members (VHCM) have been largely left up to individual host governments, donors, and partner agencies under the 3RP, which has led to using flexible and diverse approaches. Common practices emerging from years of accumulated experiences, coupled with pressures resulting from external shocks, increased threats to social cohesion across the region, and reduced financial resources, provide an opportunity to tackle the issue at a more systematic and regional level.

Indeed, increasing social and economic tensions combined with a steady drop in funding for the 3RP highlight the importance of quantifying vulnerabilities and tailoring targeting methodologies for vulnerable host communities. The changing global funding landscape and budget pressures on donors due to the concurrent crises highlight the importance of adopting clear methodologies in terms of needs analysis, targeting, planning, and costing.

It is in this context that this guidance note has been developed. The objective of this guidance note is to harmonize the understanding of the vulnerable host community members (VHCM) targeting, to provide concrete suggestions in terms of choosing effective targeting models and engaging vulnerable host communities, and to ensure that resilience is effectively strengthened, and social cohesion among displacement-affected population groups is promoted in line with the 3RP's 'Resilience for All' and the 'Leave No One Behind' principle. The audience of the guidance note includes the 3RP Joint Secretariat of the 3RP, Interagency Coordinators in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye, relevant policymakers in those host country governments, and all other partners and organizations—across the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding spectrum—currently working in support of refugees and vulnerable host communities alike.

The development of the guidance note has been driven by three specific objectives: (i) to map the current and past identification and targeting practices for vulnerable host communities in the 3RP countries; (ii) to define "host community" in the current context of the 3RP and protracted Syrian crisis; and (iii) to recommend key elements that can inform approaches to target vulnerable host communities in relevant 3RP countries. The data used to develop the guidance note comes from primary sources, which include interviews with representatives from UN agencies, donor governments and NGOs engaged in the Syria regional response, and from secondary sources, including analytical and programmatic reports from host country governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and research institutions.

The focus of the guidance note is to help inform decision-making in countries affected by displacement. The scope for primary data collection was limited to Türkiye, Jordan, and Egypt, while for secondary sources it was extended to all 3RP countries.

Overall, the approach used to develop the guidance note has been based on elements of action, research, and desire to answer questions related to the operational implementation of existing and future interventions. The result, however, was not to produce a systematic review of response interventions or a conceptual review about definitions, rather, to draw attention to a set of critical decision points, which need to be addressed in order to strengthen efforts to target VHCMs without sacrificing the assistance being channeled to refugees. Therefore, the analysis produced as part of the process of reviewing current practices in targeting VHCMs has been used mainly to justify or frame the proposed concrete steps and is intended to assist 3RP partners to harmonize and improve their practices in the future.

Following this introduction, a background section looks at the recent developments in the Syria regional response to contextualize the guidance note and the analysis therein. Then, a total of 8 concrete steps are discussed in detail, under three broad headings: (i) Building a Country-Responsive Strategy, (ii) Ensuring Coherence, and (iii) Enabling or Retaining Flexibility. Recommendations for follow-on actions are included under each step. The note then ends with some conclusions.

2 | BACKGROUND

After thirteen years of conflict, Syria remains the world's largest refugee crisis. Approximately 6.3 million refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons—5.8 millions of whom are Syrian refugees— live in the five countries neighboring Syria: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye. The vast majority of refugees reside in urban (non-camp) areas, in proximity and side-by-side with their host communities. Basic public services and infrastructure in affected host countries have become overstretched, with pre-existing vulnerabilities exacerbated in certain cases. The 3RP targets both refugees and vulnerable host communities since its inception in 2015, in recognition that affected host communities similarly face multiple needs, from accessing services to finding decent jobs, among others.

The challenges faced by VHCMs have become direr in recent years; in several countries, there exist policy and socio-economic limitations for providing services for those in need, including refugees. The COVID-19 pandemic brought profound economic and social stress across the region. Many people, among refugee and host communities alike, lost their livelihoods and were pushed into poverty because of the pandemic, and of the economic recessions that the latter contributed to triggering. In all 3RP countries, the levels of unemployment and poverty have been rising dramatically. In Jordan, as one example, the unemployment rate has increased from 12% in 2015 to 22.3% in 2023. The most vulnerable in affected countries remain in day-to-day survival mode, with some adopting harmful coping mechanisms. High levels of gender-based violence (GBV) continue to be reported both among refugees and host communities. Competition over resources, overstretched services, and scarcer livelihoods opportunities are increasing the risks of tensions between and within communities.

The 3RP is a strategic, coordination, planning, advocacy, fundraising, and programming platform that includes some 270 humanitarian and development partners. Co-led by the UNHCR and the UNDP, the 3RP comprises one regional plan, with five standalone country chapters covering Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (the so-called 3RP countries). The 3RP was created in 2015 as an innovative platform to address both the regional and protracted dimensions of the Syria crisis.

The 3RP has been targeting host community members as part of the response since its creation. Over the years, the 3RP's Joint Secretariat has sought to bring additional coherence to targeting practices, in an effort to address limitations related to the nature of the response itself and the regional and national contexts. In general, there has been a push by host country governments to have more VHCMs targeted as part of the 3RP's humanitarian and stabilization efforts. This push has been partially supported by donor countries despite their support towards a response to continue to prioritize meeting the needs of refugees.

Currently, vulnerable host communities are targeted across a multitude of programs implemented under the 3RP, which are implemented across a total of eight priority sectors, including livelihoods, economic empowerment, and basic services (e.g., education and healthcare) among others. In each 3RP country, however, host communities are targeted differently depending on the context and socio-economic and policy dynamics.

The most recent available figures indicate that the Syria response has targeted a total of 6,624,750 host community members across the five 3RP countries[1]. This is a figure higher than the number of targeted refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, which is 6,344,365 (5,808,206 of whom are registered Syrian refugees). The overall trend in relation to targeted vulnerable host community members is one of growth. As seen in Graph 1 below, in 2015 the figure was 1,880,000, and in 2019 it was 3,989,110[2].

Graph 1: Number of targeted vulnerable host community members and refugees (regional)
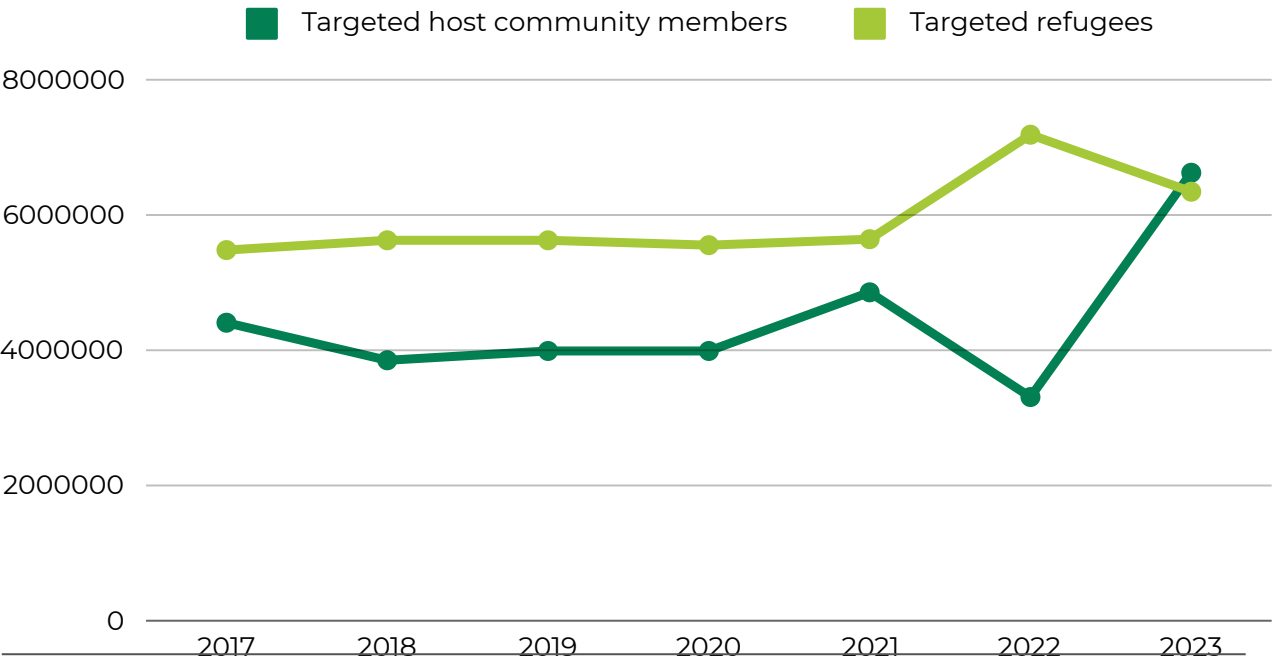
The outlook, however, is very different from one 3RP country to the next. The following table thus provides a snapshot of the VHCMs being assisted, the overarching targeting trends, and their general profile in each 3RP country.

[1] "Regional Strategic Overview 2024", 3RP (2023), p. 2.
[2] "Annual Reports", 3RP (2016-2023).

Table 1:

Country	# of people receiving assistance (# from 2023)	Trend	Profile of VHCMs
EGYPT	31,000 VHCMs 156,678 refugees	The estimates of targeted host community members have changed significantly year to year. Egypt is also the country that, financially, receives the fewest funds for interventions related to the Syrian response, meaning that resources for host community members are very limited.	The profile of VHCMs in Egypt is not well known, because refugees are spread widely across the country, mostly in urban areas, and the country has such a large population that there are rarely concentrations similar to those found in other 3RP countries.
JORDAN	810,000 VHCMs 540,436 refugees	The figure of targeted VHCMs was fixed from 2017 to 2022, then increased in 2023, because of the Government's decision to close down most refugee camps and of the country's economic crisis.	The profile of host community members in Jordan focuses on their proximity to refugees, and also their vulnerability—this primarily intended as poverty. VHCM targeting happens across the country, with a focus on areas where refugees are concentrated (the northern governorates and Amman), and with increasing attention to threats to social cohesion.
TÜRKIYE	3,867,350 VHCMs 3,629,581 refugees	The numbers of targeted VHCMs have increased over the years, with a dip in 2022 and a spike in 2023, following the devastating earthquake, which drastically increased the number of people in need of aid among host communities.	The profile of host communities in Türkiye is not well known, because refugees are spread across the country, mostly in urban areas, and that the country has such a large population. The Türkiye government has also maintained direct responsibility over all assistance directed towards its own citizens, including the collection of relevant data.

In summary, targeting vulnerable host communities has been a defining feature of the 3RP since its inception. The framework of the regional response has, in fact, always aimed to "cover all populations in need", effectively merging the approach enshrined in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) with the primacy of national leadership. At the policy level, this approach is best enshrined in the resilience component of the 3RP, which represents an important element to define approaches to targeting vulnerable host communities. It is also tied to the concept of social cohesion, which is a key pillar of the 3RP, and which has gained more prominence year after year. Social cohesion represents an important rationale for assisting VHCMs, and emphasizing it is an important way to ensure that refugees are not labelled as a burden on host communities.

3 OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

Under this section, a total of 8 concrete steps are offered for relevant stakeholders, which can be used to review, re-assess and, if and where relevant, recalibrate targeting strategies. The steps are organized under three broad headings, which represent key objectives of the response in each affected country. These are: (i) Building a Country-Responsive Strategy, (ii) Ensuring Coherence, and (iii) Enabling or Retaining Flexibility.

Each step describes the rationale – why the step is necessary, presents relevant analysis of the issues inherent in the step – what the step is about, and looks at how the step can be concretely operationalized. There will also be recommendations, where relevant, that can be taken up by 3RP partners, and interagency coordinators, in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye, as relevant.

The steps do not have to be followed in sequence. It is likely that their relevance will vary from one country to the other. However, they are connected which users should be aware of. To provide assistance in using the steps, an additional checklist is included as Annex 1.

3.1. Building a country-responsive strategy

Building a country-responsive strategy refers to the need for all interventions to be designed to address the specific needs, priorities, and concerns of VHCMs—which vary significantly from one country to the next—and host country governments, which retain ultimate responsibility for meeting the needs of their own citizens.

STEP 1: Define Vulnerable Host Community Members

Currently, there is no standard or formal definition of vulnerable host communities. Rather, what exist is a general understanding or an informal definition which may sometimes lead to some confusion although being used by 3RP partners and a wide range of different targeting approaches. Without a clear definition of vulnerable host communities not only targeting is difficult, but also prioritization.

One of the key differences between the refugee and host community targeting approaches is that refugees are a legally defined population. The 1951 Refugee Convention clearly provides a definition of who is (and who is not) a refugee. On the contrary, VHCMs are not a clearly defined population neither at country or regional level, leading to several challenges in responding to their needs. For this reason, the first step to choose the most appropriate targeting approach in any given 3RP country is to develop a clear definition of VHCMs, which would then help adequately identifying a target population.

There are many reasons for why a clear definition of VHCMs has been hard to pin down and subsequently use at national or regional levels. One of these is related to the general understanding of VHCMs —as presented in Box 1 below. Analyzing the foundations of where this general understanding comes from and how it can be improved—possibly into a more formalized definition—is a useful step to harmonize and improve targeting practices.

BOX 1. DEFINING VULNERABLE HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The current general understanding of VHCMs can be traced to two sources. The first is the formal definition of host communities as this has been enshrined in UNCHR's standard practices from before the Syria regional response. The second source is the understanding of vulnerability as it relates to both refugees and non-refugee populations. For the latter, an important reference point is the concept of resilience.

UNHCR's formal definition of host communities reads as follows:
"A host community in this context refers to the country of asylum and the local, regional and national governmental, social and economic structures within which refugees live. Urban refugees live within host communities with or without legal status and recognition by the host community. In the context of refugee camps, the host community may encompass the camp, or may simply neighbor the camp but have interaction with, or otherwise be impacted by, the refugees residing in the camp."

The UNHCR definition is important because it focuses on what is, to this day,

the primary determining factor for identifying host communities: their proximity to refugees (and the impact that this closeness may have). In the context of the Syria regional response, however, the definition of host communities has also evolved, and this has happened thanks to the second source contributing to the current general understanding: vulnerability.

Targeted host communities are those who share not only proximity to refugees, but also some of the same elements of vulnerability affecting refugees, as these are defined, for example, in UNHCR's Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) in Jordan, as follows:
"The risk of exposure […] to harm, primarily in relation to protection threats, inability to meet basic needs, limited access to basic services, and food insecurity, and the ability of the population to cope with the consequences of this harm."

Importantly, the idea of vulnerability in the context of the Syria regional response has been expanded based on the concept of resilience, which acknowledges that host communities' vulnerability can be affected not only by refugees, but also by other types of shocks, such as the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye.

Resilience, which has been defined as "the ability and strength of individuals, communities and institutions to cope with, withstand, recover, adapt and transform in the face of specific shocks", requires that agencies involved in the regional response take into account the needs of host community members and refugees alike, both having been made more vulnerable by the impact of the Syria crisis (the "shock"). The concept of resilience also allows the expansion of assistance beyond the crisis, acknowledging that host communities' vulnerability can also be affected by other types of shocks, as was the case with the earthquake. This is an example further discussed under the third heading of the operational guidance.

A suggested definition therefore reads as follows: "Host communities are those citizens of a country receiving forcibly displaced people (e.g., refugees), whose stability is compromised and vulnerability to socio-economic risks and shocks is affected by the presence of displaced people, and who can face unfair competition for services, resources, and livelihood opportunities."

There is an important aspect that needs to be specified about this understanding. In the case of refugees, the vulnerability that they face is defined in relation to their status as refugees (or person in need of special protection). The actual needs experienced by refugees may vary depending on their socio-economic background, but they exist and are measured.

On the other hand, in the case of host communities, a distinction needs to be made between two conceptually different vulnerabilities: the first can be called pre-existing, referring to the needs faced by host community members before the arrival of refugees (and therefore independently of whether they live in proximity of refugees); the second vulnerability is thought to emerge with the arrival of refugees, and is usually associated with the effects resulting from competition over limited job or income opportunities and the increased pressure on basic services and infrastructures, from shelter and livelihoods to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, and education. These are two separate types of vulnerabilities, which can be triggered by different events and can thus help to define and choose different targeting approaches.

How to operationalize this step requires, ultimately, an effort to clarify the definition of VHCMs for each affected country. A better, clearer definition will help identify both the best entry points for assistance and the most appropriate and effective targeting approaches. In Jordan, for example, the general understanding of vulnerable host communities that is used today is primarily linked to their vulnerabilities prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees: vulnerability is essentially defined as poverty. The agency responsible for addressing the needs of poor Jordanians is the National Aid Fund (NAF). The NAF maintains statistics related to poverty and based on these, it has identified so-called "poverty pockets"—i.e., areas where poverty indicators are particularly worrisome. The Jordanian Government has therefore sought to give priority for targeting VHCMs in these areas.

This approach has been based on a definition of pre-existing vulnerability and the assumption that this will be made worse by the presence of large numbers of refugees. However, the definition does not clarify how or why the specific situation of VHCMs is made worse. The lack of clarity has led to targeting practices that differ from sector to sector, and from intervention to intervention, and this has made it difficult to track the number and profile of targeted VHCMs. A similar situation has been found in Egypt, where vulnerability is defined in the context of safety net programs implemented by the Social Fund for Development (SFD).

STEP 1 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Clarify the definition of VHCMs at national level.

First and foremost, it is important to define VHCMs at country level to design intervention approaches that effectively address implementation challenges and simultaneously improve the monitoring of effectiveness and impact of 3RP programs. In Egypt, Jordan, and Türkiye, targeting approaches could be made more effective by clarifying the definition of vulnerable host communities. Specifically, there would be benefits from exploring more closely the combination of the proximity element of the definition in tandem with the vulnerability element of the definition. This could help to clarify the vulnerability criteria based on which vulnerable host community members can then be identified and targeted through prioritized assistance.

Launch a dialogue with national partners.

At country level, 3RP partners, under the lead of UNHCR and UNDP, could launch a dialogue with the national authorities responsible for assisting vulnerable host country nationals: the SFD in Egypt, the NAF in Jordan and the Social Assistance Directorate General (SADG) in Türkiye. If a dialogue already exists, then it could be re-focused on defining who VHCMs are. The definition could then be formally included in the 3RP country chapters, providing both rationale and a framework to clarify targeting practices.

Review and assess the availability of reliable data.

This is a cross-cutting recommendation for Step 4 and 7. There should be efforts to improve the quality and quantity of data on VHCMs which is a weak spot in all countries, clearly linked to the lack of a clear definition and how information is presently generated and shared (and the sensitivities that might be understandably preventing this). If a definition was put in place, the logical next step would be the collection of data about the specific needs of VHCMs. Some of this work is already happening, but its impact remains limited. Take, for example, WFP's assessments, which are data-rich and regularly conducted, but only in the food security sector. Another example is represented by the recent efforts of the Department of Statistics in Jordan to update national poverty data: the initiative responds to an identified gap, but it remains unclear whether and how this data, once available, will be shared with 3RP partners. In general, more data about vulnerable host communities is necessary, and gathering this data should be a priority for 3RP partners to be discussed and decided with host country governments.

STEP 2: Identify Available Entry Points

The extent to which and how VHCMs in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye are targeted depends on the structure of the 3RP response at both national and regional levels. For instance, while the 3RP is known for its humanitarian and development integrated plan, humanitarian programme tends to outweigh stabilization or development programme whereby the targeted population is primarily refugees and the most VHCMs, who have been identified through the national welfare systems or other ways. In order to identify the available entry points for effectively targeting VHCMs, it is important that 3RP partners mainstream the definition of VHCMs into their response plans.

The architecture of the response offers elements of both flexibility and rigidity in defining interventions that target VHCMs. This begins with the distinction between the overall objective of interventions in a given country, which are generally defined as humanitarian (i.e., lifesaving), or stabilization or "development" focused.

Beyond the overall objective of response efforts, there are also sector-specific objectives and standards, which provide an additional layer of rigidities and opportunities. Within this, for instance, there is the expectation that each sector will have a certain level of autonomy granted to all the organizations that operate within them. This flexibility is granted even when host governments have indicated fixed ratios for the support that should reach refugees and VCHMs (see Step 3 for more information). This is the reason why interventions can deviate from the application of national guidelines. Looking at rigidities, several sectors (e.g., protection and basic needs) remain primarily associated with humanitarian objectives. As such, interventions under those sectors continue to primarily target refugees. Other sectors (e.g., livelihoods and WASH), which are primarily associated with stabilization or resilience objectives, can instead be seen as more appropriate for assisting VHCMs.

The lack of a clear definition of VHCMs often leads to the adoption of various targeting approaches even within the same sector, which complicates efforts to monitor the extent to which those in need are effectively reached. In this sense, the 3RP regional response remains anchored to the priority sectors, each offering different entry points, opportunities, and limitations. For instance, interventions in the protection sector are refugee-focused, but can be extended to vulnerable host communities through area-based approaches. In the education sector, some interventions have been designed to meet the needs of both refugees and VHCMs, including through the "No Lost Generation" initiative, which advocates for strengthening national educational systems, and making them accessible to Syrian children and their families. This, however, is done very differently from one country to the next. Overall, the targeting of VHCM can either be direct or indirect (i.e., done through institutions, for example), depending on the specific sector in which an intervention is being implemented.

Lastly, the response's architecture is itself dependent on a number of other factors, including the national policies that regulate assistance to refugees and VHCMs (see Step 3) and the rules that govern financial allocations from international donors (see Step 5), which therefore affect choosing the most appropriate and effective VHCM targeting strategies.

How to operationalize this step requires, first and foremost, an in-depth review of the definition of VHCMs, with a specific focus on identifying the factors of vulnerability that the response overall and specifically, each sector should target. In other words, the definition of VHCMs should be mainstreamed within each country's national response plan once clarified. While this may have been done to some extent (i.e., 3RP Türkiye Country Chapter 2023-2025, the 3RP Egypt Country Chapter 2019/2020), indications received during the information gathering for the guidance note suggests that it was not a systematic process, nor was it based on a clear definition of VHCMs as discussed under Step 1.

UNDP Iraq: Cultivating a path towards sustainable agriculture in rural areas

STEP 2 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Identify priority entry points for targeting strategies.

With a revised and clearer definition of VHCMs (as recommended under Step 1), 3RP partners should review and assess targeting approaches first at sectoral level, and then at the inter-sectoral level. With a clearer definition of VHCMs, it should then be possible to define priority sectors for VHCM targeting. This would depend both on the specific definition of vulnerability chosen in a given country, and subsequently, on the needs assessment of VHCMs. In Jordan, for example, where there is evidence that the presence of refugees has increased the demand for water and sanitation, the WASH sector could be identified as a priority sector for targeting VHCMs, whereas other sectors, where the needs of refugees are deemed to be more immediate and dire than those of host communities could prioritize for refugee assistance. The general idea would be to move away from a 'general blanket' approach, to one that is more responsive to the specific situation of VHCMs in each country.

Review and clarify the formula (or formulas) for calculating targeted host community members.

With support from the 3RP Joint Secretariat, interagency and sector leads can invest in reviewing and clarifying the formulas used to calculate the number of targeted host community members for each sector, using the agreed definition of VHCMs. With a clearer definition it should be possible to arrive at clearer formulas. With clearer formulas, it should help to arrive at populations' tables that are simultaneously more accurate and easier to monitor. This will also depend on the level of information sharing, which should be considered an important component of any effective targeting strategy (further discussed under Step 4).

STEP 3: Assess & Respond to Relevant National Policies & Regulations
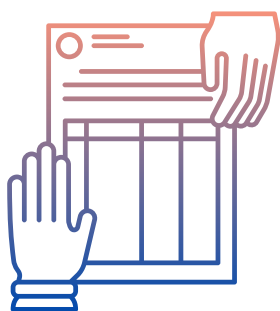
Host country governments have the prime responsibility for providing assistance to their citizens, and they decide how to share this responsibility with other governmental agencies (national and sub-national), as well as international and non-governmental organizations. Host country governments also have responsibility over the mechanisms or platforms that are put in place to deliver assistance to their citizens, as well as assessing and monitoring the needs of host communities. While in all 3RP countries there are national coordination mechanisms along with response coordination platforms, the engagement of specific government institutions or local authorities varies from country to country. Leadership on working with vulnerable host communities also varies across 3RP countries, as does the devolution of responsibilities to sub-national institutions.

In this context, targeting approaches and strategies need to take into account existing national policies and regulations for VHCM targeting, such as ratios that several host country governments require 3RP partners to use in interventions. These can be formal or informal,

and can be general or sector specific. The Government in Jordan, for example, has a response-wide regulation determining that a maximum of 70% of targeted individuals be refugees and a minimum of 30% be host community members at project level. Ratios can vary depending on the sector of the intervention (e.g., in the livelihoods sector, rations can be much more favorable to VHCMs).

Agencies across all sectors provide direct assistance to host community members based on such national guidelines set by the Jordan Response Plan (JRP). In doing so, they act under the nominal supervision of the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, which coordinates response efforts through the Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis (JRPSC). At sectoral level, however, other institutions also become involved, like the NAF, or the local administrations of the governorates most affected by the inflow of Syrian refugees. The Turkish Government has also adopted ratios as key element for guiding response interventions, including the targeting of VHCMs, and these adopted ratios apply to all interventions within the context of the regional response. Moreover, the structure in Türkiye is significantly more centralized, and the main entity in charge of the response is the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) within the Ministry of Interior, which then coordinates the participation of all other governmental agencies, including relevant line ministries. In Egypt, the main institution tasked with coordinating response efforts is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas the involvement of additional institutions stakeholder, like the SFD, is left to individual partners and interventions.

Overall, the differences between national approaches are therefore wide, despite the common overarching principle of national leadership. Decisions and plans might be further complicated by institutional divisions and policies, granting different powers to different entities (i.e., NAF in Jordan, and SDF in Egypt) which are not naturally integrated into the 3RP's coordination mechanisms. These differences, coupled with the lack of a clear definition of VHCMs, can thus lead to a situation where information about the needs and characteristics of targeted host communities may not be effectively generated or shared.

How to operationalize this step starts with the principles of national ownership. The 3RP regional response is a country-led response and this should remain the case also in defining the most appropriate and effective approaches to targeting VHCMs. At the same time, while acknowledging the challenges around data sharing, efforts should be made to balance the absolute need to comply with national guidelines and legal obligations with the need to ensure that all those in need—whether refugees or host communities—are effectively reached.

CARE Iraq: Enhancing case management, providing essential cash assistance for protection, supporting awareness campaigns & capacity building efforts for vulnerable children.

STEP 3 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Define collective outcomes.

The concept of collective outcome comes from the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, or Triple Nexus, which is a framework that is relevant for the Syria regional response. The practical application of the Triple Nexus is very much ongoing, and there are several emerging elements that could help with designing targeting strategies. Collective outcomes represent a concept, which refers "to a commonly agreed measurable result or impact enhanced by the combined effort of different actors, within their respective mandates, to address and reduce people's unmet needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increasing their resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict."*[3]* Defining collective outcomes among government institutions, local authorities, partners and other actors involved in the response could be useful to design more effective targeting approaches, while also integrating the need to prioritize in the face of reduced funding.

Launch/increase advocacy efforts.

This is a cross-cutting recommendation for Step 5 and 8. In each country, not only should a VHCM definition be developed, but also it should be integrated within the national response plans (or chapters). Mainstreaming the definition of VHCMs across specific sectors, whether by developing collective outcomes or through other means, should then be a process with a high level of participation from host country governments. Given, however, the sensitivities that are likely to accompany the definition of vulnerability and the targeting of host communities, as well as the need to navigate already existing national and international policies, it will be important that this process is carried out in a coordinated and sensitive way. International donors should be part of the conversation, and advocacy efforts need to consider policy changes, where required, to ensure that those in need are more effectively reached.

3.2. Ensuring Coherence

Ensuring coherence refers to the need to see that interventions across 3RP countries and sectors reflect the regional nature of the response and that they duly reflect common operational standards.

STEP 4: Mainstream Social Cohesion

An important driver for targeting VHCMs that is common to all 3RP countries is the need to mitigate and prevent any potential tension between refugees and host communities, which may arise from the perception that the former is being favored through assistance. Social cohesion is indeed a central aspect of the regional response, one on which strong regional guidance also exists*[4]*. The targeting of host communities is not the primary concern of existing guidance on social cohesion, yet many issues discussed in the regional guidance note are relevant and it could help also with VHCM targeting approaches. The guidance note, for example, points to the need for conducting adequate needs analyses, and for ensuring monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

[3] "Nexus Approaches in Humanitarian Settings: A Guidance Note for the Protection Cluster", Global Protection Cluster, p. 4.
[4] "Integrating Social Cohesion in the 3RP: A regional guidance note", 3RP (2022).

Yet, social cohesion dynamics are assessed differently in 3RP countries. For example, in some 3RP countries perception surveys on social cohesion are regularly conducted, which collect data about needs and how specific groups perceive each other in terms of the opportunities and assistance they are receiving. Perception surveys are more common in the 3RP countries that were not covered under the analysis for this note, whereas in Egypt, Jordan, and Türkiye, they might take place within specific interventions, but do not appear to be common practice across any specific sector.

The difficulty to gather and share information on social cohesion can also be due to the fact that not all response actors are equally engaged in the response's coordination structures. As already discussed, governmental entities that play an important role in tracking the needs of host communities—the NAF in Jordan and the SFD in Egypt—are not integrated into the response's architecture. Also, some NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), especially smaller ones that do not always have the capacity to partner with governmental entities, might engage VHCMs using different criteria and without ever sharing the data with larger response partners—or in the context of interagency or sector working groups. More generally, even where data on social cohesion exists, this can be distorted by larger debates on the acceptance of refugees in a given host country. Anti-refugee speech can be used to advocate for the prioritization of assistance to VHCMs, without, however, providing any information on what the latter are already receiving.

How to operationalize this step starts with the extent to which social cohesion should always be a priority. For example, in Jordan this is already the case and has been for some time, same in Türkiye, albeit more recently. Following the Sudan crisis, Egypt has also started to put more emphasis on social cohesion. Having determined the level of priority could then be a way to chart subsequent decision points. In particular, where risks to social cohesion are determined to be high, there should be a concerted effort to gather data about VHCMs, perhaps even with frequency. This will likely be made easier by having a clear definition of VHCMs (as discussed in Step 1).

STEP 4 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Explore the most suitable platform for sharing vulnerable host community targeting criteria, lessons learned and best practices.

Where social cohesion is flagged as a priority, there should be a system to bring together existing and new data about VHCMs and promote joint discussions among partners. 3RP can explore which of the most suitable existing platforms to use to focus in more depth on social cohesion analysis, with the alternative to create a specific group to explore such dynamics.

Develop standards for specific targeting approaches.

Social cohesion being a priority, the sharing of information and the coordination of efforts targeting VHCMs would be aided by the development of common standards around specific targeting approaches or strategies, as these are discussed under Step 6. There are, in fact, several different macro-approaches that are regularly used to deliver assistance to VHCMs. Each of these approaches has strengths and limitations, yet their application presently varies from country to country, sector to sector, and agency to agency. If guidance were to be developed, this could not only help the choice of approach—based on the likelihood that they will effectively reach the targeted host community members—but could also specify the advantages (or disadvantages) that each has in terms of strengthening social cohesion. This recommendation is well aligned with the focus on ensuring Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity, as this is described in the Guidance Note on Integrating Social Cohesion in the 3RP. Review and assess the availability of reliable data as a cross-cutting recommendation. (See Step 1 recommendation.)

STEP 5: Assess & respond to relevant donor policies or guidelines

Donor policies or guidelines can provide opportunities to expand VHCM targeting. Rules and politically determined priorities, however, can also create rigidities, around the use of funds allocated for the regional response. In other words, there are opportunities and limitations that come with funding, and it is therefore important to understand the latter and leverage the former.

The interventions under the regional response are based on funding, which is gathered through annual appeals. In response to these, international donors commit a significant amount of financial resources to the 3RP partner agencies. As each donor has its own mandate, rules and priorities, there are some conditions as per what the funding should be used, and for whom.

At the same time, the donor landscape is not fixed, but rather it evolves and can accommodate shifts in priorities and rules, which can be more difficult. Such change can be seen in the context of the Syria regional response, which over the years, has shifted some of its priorities, giving more attention specifically to resilience, and programming that is meant to contribute to strengthening the systems of host country governments and the capacity of host communities to respond and adapt to shocks or crises.

While resilience has been a core aspect of the regional response from the start of the 3RP, it has required additional conversation between 3RP partners, host country governments and donors to chart the path forward and re-assess the inflow and allocation of financial resources. In relation to resilience, this debate coalesced around the Dead Sea Resilience Agenda in 2015, a policy initiative sponsored by UNDP[5]. Thanks to this effort, all stakeholders in the regional response were able to come together, re-assess priorities and jointly decide to support the further integration of a resilience-based approach in interventions being implemented at both national and regional levels. The resilience agenda was further expanded on and discussed at subsequent Brussels Syria conferences, and in initiatives such as the Jordan Compact in 2016.

How to operationalize this step requires an analysis at different levels. Regionally, the policies of donors need to be fully understood and, nationally, there has to be an effort to map out what the policies determine in terms of targeting refugees and VHCMs alike. Such an analysis should allow to identify the rigidities affecting effectiveness, and the opportunities to move beyond them. The process of changing these restrictions and leveraging identified opportunities, need to be considered as a medium to long-term, requiring dialogue and consensus among different stakeholders.

UNHCR Turkiye: Vocational training courses & business advisories for women from refugee & host communities to increase their self-reliance, livelihood & resilience.

[5] UNDP. 2015. *The Dead Sea Resilience Agenda*.

STEP 5 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Explore the most suitable platform for sharing vulnerable host community targeting criteria, lessons learned and best practices.

The 3RP can explore which of the most suitable existing platforms to use to focus in more depth on social cohesion analysis, with the alternative to create a specific group to explore such dynamics. The idea of creating a space to promote a collective and focused discussion among 3RP partners would be extremely relevant under this step. Evidence of effectiveness and impact, around VHCM targeting, are potential starting points to influence how donors see the issue, and thus change their mindsets about the linkages between VHCMS-focused interventions and refugee-focused ones.

Expand advocacy efforts.

This is a recommendation that has already been identified under Step 3 (see above), to aim at promoting the mainstreaming of a revised and clearer definition of VHCMs within national response plans (or chapters). Under this step, advocacy efforts should be conducted at both national and regional levels, with a focus on the role of donors. Such a process would definitely be aided by a clearer definition of VHCMs, which would likely result in a more precise population target in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye, and regionally.

3.3. Enabling or Retaining Flexibility

Enabling and retaining flexibility includes steps necessary to ensure that regional response efforts can change based on external shocks and crises, without losing effectiveness or sacrificing coherence. The importance of planning for such external shocks is, in fact, one of the key findings from the analytical part of the assignment. Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye have all faced such shocks—which have included, among others, financial crises and natural disasters—and these have required adapting response strategies and interventions, leveraging, and at times creating, flexibility within regional response structures.

STEP 6: Combine Different Targeting Approaches

Given the diversity and scope of the challenges facing the delivery of assistance to VHCMs, including the national policies, donor regulations, and contextual factors (including perceived threats to social cohesion) that exist in each country, and the complex, multi-mandate nature of the response itself, effectiveness and impact are likely to be increased by combining different approaches together.

This can ensure flexibility and adaptability within each country should an external shock or crisis happen. It requires 3RP partners and stakeholders to have a common awareness of the different approaches that are in use within the response, and of their pros-cons.

As already noted, the specific approaches used to reach and deliver assistance to VHCMs vary from country to country, from sector to sector, and from agency to agency. This said, based on the analytical component of the assignment, four targeting "macro-approaches" can be identified: (i) needs-based, (ii) area-based, (iii) systems-based, and (iv) community-based.

Table 2:

Approach	Description
NEEDS-BASED	It directly targets VHCMs at the individual or household level, which are identified on the basis of vulnerability criteria and through vulnerability assessments. This macro-approach is most used in sectors such as protection, food security, and shelter. It is based on vulnerability assessments such as the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR), and the VAF in Jordan. In several countries—in Jordan, for example—host community members are included in those vulnerability assessments. This data is used to identify the most vulnerable among host community members, who are then targeted for assistance. This is a common practice for the World Food Programme (WFP) and other NGOs for example.
AREA-BASED	In the case of the Syria regional response, it is usually applied based on refugee data. The assumption is that basic services, especially education, health, and WASH are most burdened where refugees are concentrated; directing assistance to those locations is therefore thought to be an effective (albeit indirect) way to target both refugees and host community needs (e.g., cash-for-work programs in the WASH sector run by UNDP Egypt in partnership with the SFD). Area-based approaches have long been used in humanitarian and development efforts and advocated for as they are thought to enhance cross-sectoral interventions and empower local partners (authorities and civil society), as well as beneficiaries.
SYSTEMS-BASED	In the context of the Syrian regional response, this approach refers to the indirect targeting of host communities through support aimed at institutions (national or sub-national). As an approach, it is commonly used across the 3RP, given that it is well aligned with the fourth 3RP Strategic Direction on "Enhancing Local & National Capacities". An example of this approach related to the basic services and livelihood sectors, is the Municipality Support Programme in Jordan, which focuses on improving basic and social services delivery in four refugee hosting municipalities. Most examples of this approach are found in Jordan, as a certain level of administrative decentralization is a necessary pre-condition.
COMMUNITY-BASED	The use of this approach appears more limited than the use of the others. There are many examples of interventions that rely on community input and guidance to collect vulnerability data; only a few, however, channel actual assistance through community-based structures. While community-based approaches of this type are rare, community engagement is a common feature in interventions across various sectors.

NABAD Lebanon: Activating social integration through activities including women entrepreneurs who had started their own businesses.

How to operationalize this step requires two points to be made. First, these are not formally recognized approaches, nor does using any of them require agencies or organization to accept the categorization as just presented. When reviewing interventions, what is often found is the use of specific targeting approaches that combine elements from different macro-approaches. "Often these approaches are combined to reduce the likelihood that a vulnerable individual or family in need of support is excluded", notes one document, adding, "for example, the Shelter Sector relies on geographic targeting for assessing shelter needs at the cadastral level, then categorical [i.e., needs-based] targeting to identify the most vulnerable households."*[6]*

The second point is that data and targeting models are inherently linked. All 3RP partners target individuals and households based on available data and assessments. It is important to note that the quality of data affects targeting approaches: lack of data, for example, appears to favor approaches, such as area-based or systems-based approaches, that are not based on directly meeting individual needs. Changes in data can also lead to changes in targeting approaches. In the 2023 Southern Türkiye earthquake, the needs created by the disaster, once identified and mapped, led to greater targeting of host communities and refugees alike.

STEP 6 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Create awareness about the different targeting approaches.

These four macro-approaches follow similar efforts that have already been ongoing in the context of the 3RP to some extent, albeit more at country level than at regional level, and perhaps informally. Analysis of the differences between approaches and their appropriateness to a given sector or context need to continue, while also ensuring that a common awareness or understanding exist among all 3RP partners. By presenting them in this guidance note, the intention (and hope) is to contribute to formalizing their understanding and thus contribute to a more structured conversation about how best targeting approaches can be designed.

Design interventions that mix (or integrate) targeting approaches.

Area-based and systems-based approaches have been preferred in some countries because of the challenges relating to the available data for host communities. However, the use of these approaches in their purest form might have more drawbacks than benefits. The optimal scenario, based on information reviewed for this note, is generally found when macro-approaches are combined in a way that the weaknesses of each approach are offset by the strengths of the others.

[6] "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan Overview and Scope", UNHCR Lebanon (2023), p. 2.

Designing the most appropriate approach should be done using the seven principles described in the previous section. Particular attention should be paid to the feasibility of specific approaches. This could then be offset by integrating elements of community-based approaches, which could give a more central role to community-based, civil society and grassroots institutions. Similarly, assessing the availability of reliable data could lead to prefer needs-based approach, which could help to generate data that is missing. Lastly, mixed approaches should regularly be assessed to ensure that they are effective.

STEP 7: Consider Impact of External Shocks or Crises

All 3RP countries have had experience of external shocks and crises: the earthquakes in Southwestern Türkiye in February 2023; the start of the civil war in Sudan in April 2023, which has increased the flow of refugees into Egypt; the economic challenges in Jordan, which has negatively affected employment and led to increase in the cost of living; and more recently, the war in Gaza since October 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic should also not be forgotten, as many countries are still recovering from its social and economic impacts. All these shocks and crises have

impacted host community targeting approaches. The response to the 2023 earthquake, for example, produced an increase in the data about host communities' needs, and reshaped the national response. The earthquake made it possible to share vulnerability data more swiftly and vastly expanded the assistance provided to vulnerable people, regardless of status, something that had not happened before.

Shocks or crises require adaptation, and in practice, they have led to vertical (i.e., increased levels of assistance) or horizontal (i.e., increased numbers of beneficiaries) expansion of targeted VHCMs. External shocks and crises should be seen as defining features of the regional response and considered when choosing targeting approaches.

The relationship between shocks or crises and targeting approaches warrants more analysis and could also be an entry point for more effective regional engagement. 3RP partners have continuously had to respond to shocks, and response approaches appear to be similar across countries. For example, in crises that have affected everyone, interventions have generally tried to increase the quantity of aid provided to beneficiaries regardless of status. In other words, vertical expansion, of which there are many examples. Other interventions have tried horizontal expansion: increasing the number of beneficiaries. This is most notably the case of the 2023 Türkiye earthquake. Still, responses have included increases in the number and quality of intermediary actors, thus creating the space for community-based approaches.

How to operationalize this step requires a review of existing coordination systems and structures, at national level, and an openness to revise intervention strategies, including the very definition of vulnerability, depending on circumstances. In response to the 2023 earthquake, the positive adjustments made by 3RP partners were likely to be the result of the willingness on the part of Türkiye authorities to allow increased support on the part of international organizations and NGOs, which helped both with vertical and horizontal expansions, and the sharing of newly generated vulnerability data.

STEP 7 **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Integrate elements from adaptive management approaches.

Adaptive management refers to a "process that charts an evolving course through a structured, iterative process of monitoring, feedback, learning and decision-making."*[7]* While a commonly accepted definition does not exist, the approach emphasizes the need for interventions to have continuous analysis of the operating context, regular reflection on progress towards impact, and the flexibility to change stra§tegies based on analysis and reflection. As an approach, it started to be piloted in the 2010s, thanks in large part to the efforts of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). Since then, it has been increasingly adopted both by humanitarian and development actors, with a further push coming from the Triple Nexus, which has emphasized many of the priorities that are implicit in adaptive management. In particular, organizations could consider investing in scenario planning efforts: based on known risks, they could anticipate what would be required to change should low-probability events occur and prepare accordingly.

Review and assess the availability of reliable data.

As already indicated, data is fundamental for the integration of adaptive management approaches, as it is through data that progress is reviewed and decisions made. Specifically, it is data resulting from monitoring and evaluation that is particularly important, and, furthermore, this should be generated and reviewed through regular monitoring cycles—potentially on a quarterly basis. While many 3RP partners are already doing this, efforts could be made to integrate data at national or sectoral level.

STEP 8: Assess & Take into account Available Funding

The last and final step focuses on funding. While the general principle has been that resources allocated under the regional response should serve both refugees and VHCMs, VHCM targeting approaches have been affected by the availability of funds. The 3RP works through funding appeals, based on population tables that present people in need by country and by sector. Moreover, the appeals' process has its own limitation: international donors will fund what they can, which usually does not meet the needs.

This can happen on account of many factors, including competing demands (e.g., provide assistance to other crises around the world), the availability of humanitarian funding, as well as the fatigue from sustaining a large-scale protracted crisis. As a result, there have been changes in yearly funding levels (to a country or to a sector).

In parallel, funding flows have not prevented an expansion of assistance to VHCMs, as described in the background section, and this is in part related to how the numbers of assisted host community members has been calculated. Recently, however, funding has been decreasing more significantly than before, which is leading to a review of prioritization efforts across the 3RP.

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[7] "Guidance note: Practical introduction to adaptive management", DT Global (DT Global, 2022), page 1.

Presently, funding allocation—and the process of allocating funds—tends to reinforce the rigidities within the response system, rather than contributing to making the latter flexible and responsive. Such elements are very difficult to change in the short-term. In this context, they represent a landscape, which individual 3RP partners can only map and navigate. Any changes to the funding landscape should therefore be thought of as the result of long-term and coordinated efforts.

How to operationalize this step will require the design of efforts at multiple levels, and involvement of multiple stakeholders. Particular attention should be paid to balancing needs and priorities in a context which influencing short-term funding allocation is unlikely. In this regard, concerted action at both national and regional levels will be important: 3RP partners should continue to be accountable to affected communities while building their case for change in the long-term, all the while coordinating with host country governments.

STEP 8 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Engage in effective prioritization.

In the short-term, 3RP partners should conduct a prioritization exercise to ensure the most efficient allocation considering long-term objectives and potential short-term funding limitations. In order to do this, partners can rely on the *3RP Guidance Note on Prioritization[8]*, which identifies three key principles (commitment and commitment by the individual agencies, ownership and leadership of national/ local governments and localization efforts, and engagement of donors) and a series of parameters to guide national-level decision-making. The guidance provided on prioritization could additionally be helped through a clarification of the definition of VHCMs (Step 1), which could assist in producing precise targets for those to be reached in each country.

UNDP Jordan: Palestinian farmer in Jordan founds a hydroponic farming business, reducing water use by 70% in the hosting community.

Launch or increase advocacy efforts.

In the long-term, influencing the funding landscape will mean engaging with relevant stakeholders, chiefly the host country governments and donor agencies. This will require continued engagement at both national and regional levels. In this regard, national 3RP partners could take the lead on ensuring accountability and reporting of progress against short-term obligations; and 3RP regional actors could carry forward discussions on long-term priorities. As suggested under Step 3, it will be important that this process is carried out in a coordinated and sensitive way. Donors should be part of the conversation, and advocacy efforts should not shy away from putting pressure on policy changes to ensure that those in need are more effectively reached.

[8] *"Guidance Note 16: Prioritisation", 3RP (2023).*

4 CONCLUSION

The guidance note has provided background, analysis, and ultimately operational guidance on the practices of targeting VHCMs in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye as countries affected by the Syria regional crisis, and based on this, it has sought to provide a series of steps useful to design more effective targeting approaches or strategies. This task is by no means simple and will remain in the hands of those agencies leading the 3RP. Yet, the guidance note hopes to have provided elements useful for purposeful design that can help mitigate limitations and leverage opportunities for meaningful action.

Through the 3RP, assistance has been provided to the millions of people who have been impacted by the Syria crisis in the neighboring countries, be they refugees or members of the host communities. What the guidance note wants to draw attention to is the need to invest in better defining who the latter group entails. While refugees represent a clearly defined population at national and regional levels, with individual and household statistics that can be broken down in several different and useful ways, VCHMs are not similarly defined. Efforts by the 3RP Joint Secretariat have improved the way in which these people are counted. Yet, overall, the VHCM population remains unclear, and this could lead to several challenges in how they are reached. Beyond the definition, there are other aspects that complicate the choice of effective targeting approaches. The guidance note has sought to emphasize that improving such strategies should require thinking across the three broad domains of defining a country-responsive strategy, ensuring coherence, and enabling or retaining flexibility. These domains are aligned with the 3RP's core principles, and also respond to the realities in Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye as these have been described by those responsible for planning and executing interventions.

Plan International Egypt: Intensive training conducted targeting university students & graduates that aimed to enhance employability skills & fully qualify young people to enter the labor market.

ANNEX 1. CHECKLIST

Step	Why is it important	Choose this step if	Key question to address	Be aware of	Recommendations
1. Define Vulnerable Host Community Members (VHCM)	Currently, there is no one, standard or formal definition of vulnerable host communities, regionally or nationally.	There is no clear definition of VHCMs, and this is impacting the effectiveness of interventions.	How are host communities vulnerable?	Pre-response definitions of vulnerability. Competencies of relevant national bodies.	1. Clarify the definition of VHCMs at national level. 2. Launch dialogue with national partners. 3. Review and assess the availability of reliable data.
2. Identify available entry points	To assess how VHCMs are and can be better targeted.	Targeting is taking place, but indications are that it can be made more effective.	Across which sectors and how can VHCMs best be reached?	Overall scope and nature of national response. Sector-specific standards. Donor policies and regulations.	1. Identify priority entry points for targeting strategies. 2. Review and clarify the formula (or formulas) for calculating targeted host community members.
3. Assess and respond to relevant national policies and regulations	National laws or policies are one of the main factors for defining and targeting VHCMs.	Roles for targeting VHCMs are unclear. Definitions of VHCMs are unclear.	Who is responsible for monitoring vulnerabilities among host communities, and how can they be more effectively engaged?	Existing laws and policies. Existing coordination mechanisms. Capacities of relevant national bodies.	1. Define collective outcomes. 2. Launch or increase advocacy efforts.
4. Mainstream Social Cohesion	Social cohesion is an important driver for targeting VHCMs.	Data suggests that relations between refugees and host communities is worsening, and tensions are increasing.	Are interventions being implemented in a conflict sensitive way?	Regional guidance on social cohesion. Existing laws and policies. Donor policies and regulations.	1. Explore the most suitable platform for sharing vulnerable host community targeting criteria, lessons learned and best practices. 2. Develop standards for specific targeting approaches. 3. Review and assess the availability of reliable data.

Step	Why is it important	Choose this step if	Key question to address	Be aware of	Recommendations
5. Assess and respond to relevant donor policies or guidelines	Donor policies or guidelines can limit or provide opportunities to expand VHCM targeting	Targeting is taking place, but indications are that it can be made more effective.	Is assistance reaching the most in need?	Donor policies and regulations. Existing coordination mechanisms.	1. Explore the most suitable platform for sharing vulnerable host community targeting criteria, lessons learned and best practices. 2. Launch or increase advocacy efforts.
6. Combine Different Targeting Approaches	The effectiveness and impact of VHCM targeting approaches are likely to be increased by combining different approaches together.	Targeting is taking place, but indications are that it can be made more effective.	Across which sectors and how can VHCMs best be reached? Is assistance reaching the most in need?	Sector-specific standards. Best practices in delivering assistance in specific countries. Standard procedures for designing interventions.	1. Create awareness about the different targeting approaches. 2. Design interventions that mix (or integrate) targeting approaches.
7. Consider impact of additional external shocks of crises	External shocks or crises impact host community targeting approaches. They represent challenges, in other words, but also opportunities.	Data suggests that socio-political or economic context might be changing, of if risk of natural disaster is identified.	How can the response remain relevant and effective in case of low-probability external shocks or crises?	Best practices in adaptation to external shocks. Existing coordination mechanisms. Existing laws and policies. Competencies of relevant national bodies.	1. Integrate elements from adaptive management approaches. 2. Review and assess the availability of reliable data.
8. Assess and take into account available funding	VHCM targeting approaches are affected by the availability of funds.	Funding targets are not met.	How can the response remain relevant and effective in the situation of under-funding?	Regional guidance on prioritization. Existing coordination mechanisms.	1. Engage in effective prioritization. 2. Launch or increase advocacy efforts

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