

1-pager for EPDF: Strengthening Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in Urban Policies for the Social Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants

The how and why of multi-stakeholder partnerships

Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) are a whole society approach on targeted initiatives involving a wide span of actors including businesses, civil society actors, governments, international organizations, media, non-governmental organizations, and religious actors. A key pillar of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined in goal 17, MSPs link civil society, private and public sector partners while aiming to include the beneficiaries as equal partners. Irrespective of the issue or topic however, there is no one-size-fits-all rule for successful MSPs and they do not necessarily need to include every type of actor to be effective. Every partnership needs to be tailored to its specific purpose and must adopt appropriate definitions of roles, power sharing, accountability, and strategic influence.¹ Effective MSPs should bring together actors with complementary skills to strengthen the capability to address the complex needs and changing issues involved in social cohesion initiatives. Actors involved in MSPs need to understand the advantages and expertise of each partner involved and maintain a clear division of labour.

Opportunities for social inclusion with MSPs

MSPs are a key partnership modality for successful social inclusion initiatives for refugees and migrants at the urban level in Europe. Such MSPs tend to include certain types of actors in favour of others. Many involve civil society actors and religious actors, including faith-based organizations, local government entities, non-governmental and/or international organizations. While MSPs involving the media and the private sector exist, skepticism remains about the involvement of such actors, yet the innovation and reach of such entities offers much potential for social inclusion. Similarly, the same civil society and faith-based organizations are regularly involved leaving less room for individual actors, newer organizations or less formal entities, such as religious community organizations, or networks of migrants. It must be noted that partnership with diverse religious actors is often underutilized. Greater involvement with religious actors has the potential for greater insight in the faith and religious identities of refugees and migrants and how faith can be a tool to help with recovery from trauma and social inclusion in urban communities. Too often the different sectors are over-generalised, when in reality they are each extremely diverse, which means there is greater opportunity for involving partners that can strengthen MSPs.

Summary

Ensuring the effectiveness and success of the MSP and its initiatives should still outweigh 'ticking boxes' of the types of entities included. MSPs are a proven form of collaboration in addressing development and humanitarian issues and many successful examples of MSPs working on the social inclusion of refugees and migrants exist at the European and city level. A well-designed MSP on social inclusion has specific roles for each stakeholder, a clear division of responsibilities and mitigates traditional power inequalities. In sum, MSPs can be highly effective, wide reaching, and impactful in fostering social inclusion in cities, however the emphasis on MSPs should not prevent single actor initiatives. In the end, the aim is social inclusion that benefits both the refugees and migrants and the local community.

¹ Vayaliparampil, M. *et al.* (2021). The Missing Ingredient for Successful Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Cooperative Capacity, p.2. Available at: <https://cooperativecapacity.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/The-Missing-Ingredient-for-Successful-Multi-Stakeholder-Partnerships.pdf>