

*"ESSN means a roof
over our heads..."*

Assad



TESTIMONIES

"ESSN means a roof over our heads. You can deal with being hungry. You just eat bread to stay full. But rent doesn't wait for anyone. You have to pay the rent."

Assad, an ESSN beneficiary



**Esra receives support
from the CCTE programme**

"I will send my children to school. I did not have the chance to be educated but I want my kids to go to school. But with this cash support to education that UNICEF and ECHO give, school costs such as transportation and clothing will be covered so we can send our children to school."

Rabii Bawadiggi, father of Esra



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Turkey is an upper middle-income country and home to the largest refugee population in the world; over 3.1 million Syrians live under temporary protection, almost half of whom (nearly 1.4 million) are children. Only around 8% of Syrian refugees live in 22 official camps in provinces along the Syrian border,¹ while the remaining 92% reside in host communities – mostly in the southeast of the country, but also increasingly in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and other large cities in the north and west.

Turkey also hosts over 320,000 asylum seekers and refugees, primarily from Iraq and Afghanistan, and remains a leading transit country for refugees and migrants heading to Europe; over 180,000 people have made the perilous sea journey from Turkey to Greece since January 2016, and more than 400 are believed to have died in the attempt. However, movement from Turkey to Greece has fallen sharply (down 94% in the first half of 2017 compared with the same period in 2016) in response to measures taken after large movements in 2015 and first half of 2016.

The Turkish Government has shouldered the bulk of the significant financial burden of responding to the Syria crisis, spending more than US\$30 billion on direct assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey to date.² The current social protection system in Turkey is fragmented, with social security covering those in formal employment, and social assistance covering the rest via the Social Assistance General Directorate of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP). This Ministry is also mandated with meeting the refugees' social protection needs, working through some 1,000 district-level branches. However, given the protracted crisis which has strained local and national resources, the government requires more support from the international community to share the responsibilities of hosting a significant refugee population.

Refugees in Turkey find themselves in a protracted situation of displacement leading to economic, physical and emotional vulnerability. As families run low on assets and barriers to social support systems remain, vulnerability increases. Needs are especially acute in education, protection policies and social protection. Over 82% of refugees in Turkey are below the poverty line, with 24% in extreme poverty.³ According to the Ministry of National Education, nearly 500,000 Syrian and other refugee children are enrolled in formal education across the country; a 50% increase since June 2016. Nevertheless, it is estimated that more than 380,000 children remain out of school.⁴ Many vulnerable families who face considerable socio-economic pressure and struggle to meet their basic needs are increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as reducing basic needs expenditure and withdrawing children from school, child labor and child marriage.

PROMISING PRACTICES

LEGAL REFORM FOR REFUGEES:

In 2014, Turkey made substantial progress in adopting the Temporary Protection (TP) Regulation pursuant to Article 91 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The regulation aims to determine procedures and principles pertaining to temporary protection proceedings in response to mass movements of foreigners forced to leave their countries and seeking urgent and temporary protection, and whose international protection requests cannot be taken under individual assessment. The regulation determines proceedings related to their reception and stay in

¹ Directorate General of Migration Management, April 2017.

² "EU unlocks more than 200 million euros for Syrian refugees in Turkey," Hurriyet Daily News, 13 January 2017.

³ WFP-TRC, Emergency Social Safety Net Program: Pre-Assistance Baseline, July 2017 (report forthcoming)

⁴ Enrolment and OOSC data as of May 2017.



Turkey, their rights and obligations and their exit from Turkey. It also regulates measures against mass movements; provides Syrians in Turkey access to services; and has provisions on cooperation between national and international organizations. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection established a specialized institution, the General Directorate for Migration Management (DGMM), under the Ministry of Interior (MoI) to manage international protection and migration-related matters. Following registration, the TP Regulation foresees issuing a TP identification document granting the holder the right to lawful stay in Turkey and access to rights and public services. The regulation also allows registered and documented Syrian refugees the possibility to apply for work permits and potentially access social assistance according to criteria and procedures determined by the MOI and the MoFSP.

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET:

Launched nationwide in November 2016, as part of the EU-Turkey Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program is a multi-purpose cash assistance scheme for more than 1 million of the most vulnerable refugees living outside of camps in Turkey, funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). The ESSN provides Syrian and non-Syrian asylum seekers and refugees under international or temporary protection access to a social protection scheme to meet basic needs, including food, fuel, rent and utility bills. Coordinated by the Disasters and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and the Turkish MoFSP, the ESSN works through existing national social assistance systems and is implemented through local social assistance offices. Registered families must meet the criteria for the most vulnerable households (e.g. large family, elderly, female-headed households and people with disabilities). With its cash focus, national partnerships and integration into existing systems, the ESSN reflects the donors and aid agencies' commitments made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit to making emergency aid financing more efficient and effective as part of the Grand Bargain.

EXTENSION OF THE CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER FOR EDUCATION (CCTE) TO SYRIAN AND OTHER REFUGEES:

Since 2003, the Turkish Government has provided conditional education grants for children from the most vulnerable Turkish families, covering over 2.3 million Turkish children in 2014. In the first half of 2017, the program was extended to Syrian and other refugees in Turkey in a partnership between UNICEF, MOFSP and TRC, with plans to reach 230,000 children. Aligned with the national system, the program uses the same transfer amount, payment frequency, and conditionality as for Turkish children and was designed to complement and build on the ESSN's operational modalities and structures. The CCTE for refugees also includes complementary child protection outreach, assessment and referral activities for children that are not –or are at risk of not-- meeting the program's conditions, as a means of mitigating those child protection risks and violations most closely intertwined with economic vulnerabilities, such as child labor, early marriage, physical and emotional violence and family separation.



ESSN beneficiaries



MAIN CHALLENGE(S) AHEAD AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Despite its advanced economy and well-established systems for social protection, Turkey has faced challenges in hosting such large numbers of refugees, with specific needs and increasing vulnerabilities. The sheer number of refugees, along with language and other barriers to accessing the services provided under the Temporary Protection Regulation, have overstretched the government's capacity to provide services. Following an initial surge in ESN applications, an additional challenge is to continue to ensure that the remaining vulnerable refugees — many of whom face particular difficulties with required government registration for many reasons — can access the program.

Building on existing social assistance systems created an opportunity to use resources efficiently and effectively; adapting existing systems rather than creating new arrangements allowed the nationwide ESN program to scale up to assist more than 1 million people in less than a year. The Syria crisis also created an opportunity for the Turkish government to increase its experience in delivering social assistance programs in emergency settings.

However, the conflict in Syria continues to put lives and futures at risk, both inside Syria and in neighboring countries. Well into the crisis's 7th year, negative coping mechanisms are rising, making a strong and inclusive social protection system even more essential. Continuity of financial and technical support from international actors is needed to support sustained access by refugees to national social protection mechanisms in the medium and longer terms.

While opening the labor market to refugees and the ESN and CCTE programs are all important advances in addressing vulnerability among refugees in Turkey, complementary programming, including protection policies, livelihood support, shelter, healthcare and psycho-social activities are still required.

USEFUL RESOURCES

[Turkish Red Crescent](#)

[Ministry of Family and Social Policies](#)

[EU's Press Release on ESN](#)

[EU's Press Release on CCTE](#)