



European
Commission

CASE STUDY

TURKEY



SPaN

Supporting people through crisis



Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

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Background to the Case Study

The Turkey case study was produced as part of the “Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus” (SPaN). It is the outcome of an initiative jointly led by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR) with the support of DEVCO Unit 04 and the MKS programme.



CASE STUDY

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Type of shock	Social protection instrument	Way the social protection system was used (typology)
Forced displacement, cross border (protracted)	Social transfer (unconditional cash)	Piggy backing (ex post)

Scene setting

In 2017 there were **3.3 million registered refugees** in Turkey, of which approximately 3.1 million were Syrians. Over 90% of the refugees were residing outside of camps, with 81% concentrated in three provinces in the South East, and Istanbul. In May 2017, 64.2% of refugees were estimated to be living below the Turkish poverty line. From January 2016, formally registered Syrian refugees could apply for work permits. However as of September 2017 only approximately 26 000 had been issued - less than 4% of the refugee population.

The Turkish Government has played a central role in supporting the refugee crisis, contributing over USD 25 billion since 2011¹. International funding for the response has increased year on year from USD \$80 million in 2012 to USD 795 million in 2017. Funding has come from a range of bilateral and multilateral sources, with the EU and US consistently the major donors. Cash transfer programmes (CTP) have been part of the response since 2012.

As the refugee situation became protracted, response plans transitioned to provide **increased support to national systems**. A crucial aspect of the Government's involvement in the evolution of this response was reform of the regulatory environment to increase refugees' access to services and open opportunities for more durable solutions. In 2013, Turkey's first asylum law, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, established a new agency, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) under the Ministry of Interior, responsible for registration of refugees. A regulation on Temporary Protection for Syrian nationals provides registered refugees with a temporary identification document granting the right to stay in Turkey and to access public services including health, education and social assistance.

Supporting a sustainable solution in Turkey was in the interests of political leaders in Western Europe given increasing popular concern about migration into Europe. Negotiations led to adoption of the EU-Turkish Joint Action Plan at the European Council in November 2015 to increase support for Syrian refugees under Temporary Protection and their host communities in Turkey and prevent irregular migration flows to the EU. It also opened the possibility of a source of more long-term, predictable financing for the crisis. Under this, the **Facility for the Refugees in Turkey (FRiT)** was established **to address both humanitarian and longer-term development needs of refugees and host communities**. The EC and Member States committed EUR 3 billion in 2016 and 2017 including EUR 1.4 billion for humanitarian needs. Under the FRiT, the overall objective of the European Commission Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations' (ECHO) strategy for Turkey is to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable refugees (and other persons of concern) through predictable and dignified support addressing basic needs and protection. ECHO's Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) 2016 committed EUR 348 million **to establishing an Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)**, to provide **longer term cash transfers to refugees and increase their self-reliance**. Another priority was improving access to quality education through increasing enrolment and attendance.

The Turkish Government was interested in **expanding cash assistance to Syrians by using the Turkish social protection system**. This is well established, with a range of cash based social transfers managed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP) and administered through 1001 Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF) in each province

¹ According to figures from AFAD website (March 2017)

and district centre. These include ad hoc cash (and in-kind) transfers to the poor, at the discretion of the board of trustees, and regular national schemes where Foundations are responsible for overseeing

applications, verification and enrolment according to nationally-defined regulations. The flagship programme is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) which reached almost 2.35 million children in 2014.

What it looks like

The **ESSN supports registered Syrian and non-Syrian refugees living outside camps in Turkey**, with the objective of stabilising or improving living standards of the most vulnerable refugee households. The programme provides monthly basic needs assistance to over one million refugees through multi-purpose grants – initially set at 100 TL (Turkish Lira approximately USD 27) per person, per month and subsequently increased to 120 TL. The intention of ECHO is to work through existing national administrative systems where possible whilst ensuring humanitarian safeguards. ECHO saw the potential of this approach to generate efficiencies compared to establishing a parallel system, and that it could also potentially support the transition to a nationally owned and institutionalised cash transfer for refugees in the future. The ESSN was designed in conjunction with the Turkish Government and implemented through a partnership of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP), the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), the Directorate General of Citizenship and Population Affairs (DGCPA), and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). Nationwide implementation began on 28th November 2016.

Alongside this, **ECHO co-funds a Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Refugees** through UNICEF. In its first year (2017-18) this aimed to provide cash assistance to 230 000 vulnerable refugee children attending Turkish public schools or Temporary Education Centres (TEC). The objective is to maintain school attendance and prevent drop out of vulnerable refugee children and (to a lesser extent) improve school enrolment for out-of-school children. The programme started being implemented in the second quarter of 2017 and is likely to run until mid-2019. This is a partnership with MoFSP, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and TRC and also makes use of the national social protection system.

The ESSN and CCTE for Refugees are designed to achieve different objectives and as a result they **link with the national social protection system** in different ways. They build on the existing administrative processes, systems and institutions used to provide social transfers to Turkish citizens. Processes have been adapted, where necessary, for the requirements of delivering humanitarian cash assistance at scale. They have been designed in close coordination and take advantage of common administrative processes where appropriate, in an effort to harmonise assistance and realise economies of scale. Funds are not transferred to government, but rather are channelled directly from WFP or UNICEF to TRC.

How it was done

This section summarises the processes followed through the programme cycle, enabling factors and challenges faced by the two programmes to date.

ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

At the end of 2015, in cooperation with the Turkish authorities, the European Commission launched a First Stage Needs Assessment for Syrians under Temporary Protection in Turkey. This was completed in April 2016 and showed that the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers were precarious and that economic insecurity was a key aspect of **vulnerability of refugees across sectors**, since refugees must access many goods and services they need through the market.

It also confirmed that, whilst legally entitled to benefit from education services, there were economic, socio-cultural and supply side barriers to refugees accessing these in practice. As of the start of the 2016/17 school

year, over 40% of Syrian refugee school-aged children remained out of school. Barriers to enrolment and attendance included economic hardship; distance from schools and transportation costs; limited knowledge of Turkish language; lack of catch-up programmes; and a lack of information about education rights and services.

The protracted nature of the crisis and the years of previous experience with cash and voucher programming had already established the appropriateness of a cash-based response for those out of camp in Turkey, so no further feasibility assessments were needed.

Donors and international organisations had to be confident that providing assistance through the Turkish social protection system was feasible. Discussions on linking with national systems all took place 'ex post'. Consideration was given to the political will for such collaboration, the regulations of governments and of donors, the strength and coverage of the national

social protection system, programme design features, targeting criteria and processes, cash delivery processes, possible risks and mitigation measures. Clear enabling factors in Turkey were the presence of a strong and willing government, a strong national non-governmental partner with national reach (the Turkish Red Crescent - TRC), an established social protection system with extensive coverage, and robust and often automated operating systems and processes.

UNICEF undertook a more detailed feasibility assessment which also highlighted some bottlenecks to be aware of in designing assistance linked to national systems. These included a time consuming and labour intensive application process; questions in the household survey for Turkish citizens that were not aligned to the situation of refugees; a lack of verifiable data on the socioeconomic situation of refugees²; lack of integration of the Government's refugee databases with the Government of Turkey's Integrated Social Assistance Information System (ISAIS); restrictions on access to national data beyond national agencies; a lack of capacity (staff, office space, languages) within the Foundations to administer a large refugee caseload; and a lack of communication materials and channels accessible to the Syrian population.

DESIGN

Building on existing national systems and processes enabled demonstrable time and cost savings and the development of more appropriate, effective, and durable solutions to the protracted crisis. There are also inevitable difficulties in designing a programme that meets humanitarian needs whilst also aligning with regulations or concerns of the national social protection sector, meaning compromises are needed on both sides.

Transfer Design

The ESSN makes use of the operational processes and institutions of the social protection system but is essentially a separate humanitarian programme. Therefore, the design of the ESSN (transfer modality, frequency and duration) was created specifically to address the humanitarian needs of refugees. According to standard practice in humanitarian CTP, the transfer amount was determined based on gap analysis in consultation with key stakeholders. During this process, the Turkish Government expressed concern that the ESSN transfer value should not exceed the social assistance benefits provided to poor Turkish citizens. Therefore, the ESSN transfer was set based on the calculation of needs, plus broader concerns around sustainability and social cohesion. Post distribution monitoring (PDM) demonstrated that the amount was insufficient to achieve the ESSN objective of meeting basic needs.

In June 2017 WFP and TRC negotiated an increase to the transfer value (from 100 to 120 TL per person) with MoFSP, as well as additional quarterly top-ups for households.

On the CCTE for Refugees, MoFSP wanted the programme to make use of the same design features, rules and regulations including the same transfer modality (i.e. Conditional Cash Transfer), frequency, duration and value. However, some of these design parameters may not be the optimum for meeting the needs of refugee children. For example, the transfer value on the national CCTE is insufficient to cover the income gap that refugee families face in meeting the needs of children. Therefore, the design of the CCTE for Refugees was aligned with design of the ESSN. Given the significant overlap of beneficiary caseloads on these programmes, the CCTE for Refugees programme effectively serves as an additional 'top up' assistance for education over and above the basic needs assistance provided by ESSN. UNICEF also negotiated with MoFSP for beneficiaries of the CCTE for Refugees to receive an additional, unconditional 100 TL payment at the beginning of each school semester. Another issue is the enforcement of the condition for 80% school attendance, given that refugee children face many barriers to education. UNICEF is addressing this through implementing certain complementary activities alongside the cash transfer (see the 'Monitoring' section).

Targeting design

In Turkey, eligibility for social assistance is based on a range of pre-defined socioeconomic criteria. Given the lack of verifiable socioeconomic data on refugees and the need for rapid scale up, the Turkish Government agreed that modifications would be needed for targeting assistance to refugees. Eligibility for the ESSN is determined based on six easily verifiable demographic vulnerability criteria, as proxy indicators for wealth, while eligibility for the CCTE for Refugees is determined based on enrolment of children in school.

Baseline application data from the ESSN analysed by WFP and the World Bank has shown this to be a sensible and pragmatic decision which has allowed the programme to quickly reach a good proportion of the intended target population. Data showed that these demographic criteria were excluding some vulnerable cases. The criteria for disabled members and dependence ratio were therefore relaxed in June 2017 to become more inclusive, with the aim of including 50% of the refugee population.

OPERATIONS

Registration:

As in the Turkish system, **application to the ESSN and CTE for Refugees is through the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF) offices**, who lead on the eligibility assessment and verification process. In areas with high refugee concentrations the SASFs are being complemented by 18 TRC Service Centres, set up by the ESSN to reduce the burden of work on the SASFs and speed up registration.

Under the regulations for social assistance in Turkey, an applicant's income, access to social security and assets are first checked through ISAIS. For those who qualify after these initial screening checks are completed, Foundation staff must then visit the household and complete the socioeconomic survey, generating a poverty score through a proxy means test formula. **This process had to be adapted for refugees.**

Firstly, pre-application processes must be completed by refugees before they could lodge an application for assistance. Refugees must be registered for Temporary Protection at DGMM (with an ID number beginning with '99'); and their residential address must be registered with the Population Department office (NUFUS). These pre-application processes required adaptation of ISAIS to enable these checks (see below). Secondly, there were adaptations to the application process followed at the SASF offices and Service Centres. In the initial screening, ISAIS screened for refugees that are registered as formally employed (i.e. with a valid work permit), who are accessing social security, or who own registered assets in Turkey (land, property, car etc.). In terms of the household survey form, refugee applicants are only required to complete their basic information and 19 of the 49 questions in the form at the time of application. Finally, it was also agreed with MoFSP that ESSN and CTE beneficiary households will only receive a household visit within one year of enrolment in the programme - rather than as a pre-requisite for enrolment in the programme³.

Inevitably in an approach tried and tested for the first time and at scale, there were challenges during implementation that presented barriers to vulnerable families receiving assistance. This highlights the importance of continual monitoring and of a flexible and adaptive approach to deal with issues as they arise. Programme monitoring showed that backlogs in DGMM's registration of refugees, and complexities for NUFUS in registering the physical address for each household (given the varied living arrangements of refugee families) were preventing refugees being able to apply for assistance. There were also protection risks, with very vulnerable and illiterate families

struggling to attend the Foundation offices or Service Centres, and to fill in the application form.

These barriers are being addressed through advocacy with government partners and complementary 'handholding' activities by other humanitarian actors, funded by ECHO and other donors. NGOs are supporting refugees to complete their applications, by taking people to SASF offices, providing translation, covering transportation costs, and referring families to the TRC helpline. NUFUS is showing great flexibility in supporting registration of multiple families at the same address and those living in non-residential accommodation.

For population groups that are clearly vulnerable but do not reflect the vulnerability criteria of the ESSN, ESSN partners, donors and International NGOs are looking at ways to assist these people through complementary activities and to ensure an equitable response. An idea making headway in 2017 was to give the SASF a discretionary allowance for supporting such cases, but this will take time to get approved since it is not the usual way of working for MoFSP. A gap in the design of the ESSN was the lack of 'bridging assistance' for those who faced difficulties in completing the registration process or were deemed ineligible but highly vulnerable.

On the CTE for Refugees, delays and technical difficulties with the integration of YOBIS (the education management information system for TECs) with ISAIS prevented TEC students from applying and benefitting from the programme in the beginning.

Enrolment:

Applicants that are eligible for support are enrolled into the system by the Foundation or Service Centre staff. Once enrolled, eligible families receive an ATM card and PIN from Halk Bank. One household member is the registered card holder. Beneficiaries receive a text message when their card is ready. It must be collected from a bank branch in their district and beneficiaries must sign a consent form for TRC to access, cancel or sweep their account. This was a constraint for some refugees, due to illiteracy and language barriers. In response, activities have been implemented to provide translation services and coverage of the costs of notaries both within the ESSN project, and also through complementary ECHO-funded project activities of NGOs where Service Centres don't exist.

Programme monitoring has highlighted some **gender related issues concerning enrolment**. Where men were the registered cardholder there have been reports of men taking control of the cash and expenditure decisions, leaving women and children without support.

3 In this visit it is expected that the rest of the application questions will be completed.



Payment:

Cash payments on national social assistance programmes are through PTT Bank. In contrast the **ESSN and CCTE for Refugees both use TRC's 'Kizilaykart'**: an ATM card provided by Halk Bank. This is the corporate payment system that WFP and TRC previously used to deliver their food assistance programme. Funds flow from WFP and UNICEF to TRC, who transfer funds to Halk Bank and manage the card accreditation process with the bank.

Protection-related risks relating to cash disbursement have included overcrowding at some ATMs, difficulties with accessing ATMs since the language was only in Turkish, and cases of vulnerable beneficiaries relying on others to access ATMs and losing some of their benefit. The programme design was modified to mitigate these risks. This includes crowd control practices and support staff to reduce the burden on Halk Bank branches and negotiating with Halk Bank to include Arabic as a language in their ATM service.

ESSN transfers are made monthly. In contrast, the payment schedule for the CCTE for Refugees is the same as the payment schedule on the CCTE for Turkish citizens - cash transfers are delivered every two months, for 10 months of a school year. This is good from the perspective of ensuring government buy in. However, the different payment schedules on the ESSN and CCTE for Refugees risked creating some confusion for beneficiaries.

Grievance redressal:

A TRC call centre provides a free of charge helpline for both CCTE and ESSN programmes, through which beneficiaries or community members can raise grievances. Complaints can be received in Turkish, Arabic, Farsi and Pashto. Feedback and complaints can also be logged at TRC Service Centres. Issues raised through these channels, and through programme monitoring, feed back into and inform programme design (see Monitoring section below). This is independent of the administrative processes of the Turkish social protection system.

Systems and institutions:

The success of these programmes in going to scale has been due to leveraging robust and well-established national systems (strong human resources, clear administrative procedures, and functioning operating systems and institutions). The ESSN has much greater coverage and cost efficiency compared to that of previous basic needs assistance programmes. Establishing the ESSN prior to the CCTE for Refugees meant that UNICEF's programme could make use of the same support structures, helping the CCTE for Refugees to go to scale immediately (56 000 children received transfers in the first month of payments).

Inevitable bottlenecks within the national system were recognised during implementation, since this is the first programme of its kind and the burden on the national systems is large. Some are mentioned above. Another was the need to adapt the integrated, electronic management information system underpinning the Turkish social assistance system to support scaling up of social assistance to refugees. The ISAIS connects to and accesses data on citizens that is held in a range of online registries managed by other government departments. These data management systems are highly advanced and have also taken many years to fully develop. Before programmes could get started, the ISAIS needed to be adapted to integrate refugee registration data from DGMM. And on the CCTE, the separate education Management Information System for the Temporary Education Centres (YOBIS) needed to be integrated with ISAIS, to confirm school attendance for these refugee children not enrolled in state schools. This created delays, but also eventually strengthened these national operational systems.

Close coordination between humanitarian actors and the Turkish Government has ensured flexible implementation and accountable programming.

Coordination has taken place at multiple levels and through different forums. On the ESSN, a Governing Board brings together WFP and TRC with government counterparts to regularly review programme progress and resolve issues with implementation. There were issues identified with the effectiveness of the Board, in terms of speed of decision making, but these were prioritised for action early in the programme. TRC and WFP programme teams are working through a Joint Management Cell located in a shared office. This approach has been appreciated by stakeholders in TRC and WFP, however it has not been enough to ensure strong coordination between all implementing partners. Coordination arrangements have not been standardised at local level but have nonetheless been effective. WFP seconded programme staff, selected by MoFSP, into the ministry to provide support there, as the start of a more formal process of working together. A steering committee has allowed joint management of the CCTE and ESSN, creating economies of scale and harmonised ways of working.

However, evaluation of the ESSN has concluded that coordination arrangements between international (WFP, ECHO) and government actors (MoFSP, DGMM, Nufus, TRC) remain as bilateral relationships, rather than being genuinely multilateral. Engaging in coordination activities has also been costly for government departments such as AFAD and the Ministry of Interior, where staff members had to act as focal points for the ESSN alongside other duties.

An ESSN Taskforce (donors, International NGOs, government and academic institutions) was set up to improve links and complement the wider response. The Taskforce holds monthly meetings in four project

locations. It has been effective in influencing changes to the ESSN transfer value and targeting criteria, and in aligning International NGO protection activities to improve access to the ESSN. The CCTE is a standing agenda item at these Taskforce meetings, and this has contributed to shared solutions to common problems on the ESSN and CCTE.

Considering the challenges refugees face in accessing information and services, communication processes are being prioritised, with information about the programmes being made available through a range of media channels accessible to the refugee caseload. These include printed materials in appropriate languages distributed through SASF, Service Centres, DGMM offices, Community Centres, Temporary Education Centres and NGOs. The UNICEF website, ESSN website and Facebook page, UNICEF's YouTube Channel and WhatsApp are also used to disseminate information. Content includes details about the programmes, the organisations, the support available, eligibility, who can apply, the application process, and the call centre. The TRC call centre provides a free of charge helpline for both programmes.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring is integral to the ESSN design, with monitoring and learning included as a fourth expected outcome. Activities are well staffed within WFP's Monitoring & Evaluation analysis unit, and within TRC. ECHO has also been heavily involved, with two joint monitoring missions and 12 donor monitoring mission during 2017. Monitoring findings have been shared with stakeholders at the various coordination meetings. Investments have proven effective in identifying constraints and informing necessary changes to programme design and implementation (e.g. transfer value, targeting criteria, registration and payment processes). Evaluation of the ESSN has highlighted that this activity, and ECHO's engagement, has important added value, being critical in building confidence about the programme with European politicians.

CCTE payments are conditional upon 80% school attendance, monitored through a partnership between MoFSP and the Ministry of National Education. Refugees face wider constraints to attending school than Turkish citizens and UNICEF were concerned that this risked penalising vulnerable children. The CCTE for Refugees includes a complementary child protection monitoring and case management component that aims to sustain education outcomes and mitigate child protection risks. This component is being established in 15 provinces through child protection offices. Outreach teams conduct household monitoring visits to children whose attendance drops or is at risk of dropping. A risk assessment is carried out through an adapted form from MoFSP's Directorate General of Family and Community-Based Services, and families are referred to appropriate services, if needed.

A major challenge has been the Turkish Government's restrictions on international agencies accessing data on refugees and ESSN/CCTE beneficiaries, due to data privacy legislation. WFP and UNICEF are reliant on a data sharing agreement between the government and TRC, which only allows access to a small sample of anonymized applicant data. This has proved challenging in ensuring accurate targeting, particularly verification of targeting decisions for ineligible applicants, which has compromised the programme's accountability.

Sources: Smith (2016) 'Developing Strategic Options for Building Social Assistance for Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Findings and Policy Options', report for UNICEF Turkey; Smith (2017) 'Linking Humanitarian Cash Transfers with National Social Protection Systems in the MENA Region', an internal lessons learned case study for UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office; Smith (2017) 'Approaches to Providing Cash Based Assistance to Meet Needs of Children in Protracted Crises - Lessons from Turkey', a lessons learned case study for UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office; CaLP (forthcoming) 'The State of the World's Cash Report', Accenture and CaLP; WFP (2016) 'Emergency Social Safety Net Programme: Frequently Asked Questions'; European Commission (2016) 'Managing the Refugee Crisis: the Facility for Refugees in Turkey', EC Factsheet; WFP (2016) 'Emergency Social Safety Net Programme: Frequently Asked Questions'; Maunder et al (forthcoming) 'Evaluation of the ECHO funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) in Turkey, November 2016–February 2018'.



Contact information

European Commission

International Cooperation and Development
Rue de la Loi 41 - B-1049 Brussels
Fax: +32 (0)2 299 64 07
E-mail: europaaid-info@ec.europa.eu