General Highlights

Turkey was one of five co-convening countries of the Global Refugee Forum which took place on 16-18 December in Geneva. The Turkish delegation was headed by the President of Turkey, several Ministers and high-level officials who participated in plenary sessions, high level dialogue discussions, spotlight sessions and speaker’s corners. Some 50 good practices were shared from Turkey in all areas of refugee response, primarily in education, protection, registration, health, access to self-reliance, social cohesion and support to Syrian youth to participate in higher education. Pledges in education, micro-credit solutions, statelessness, refugee rights and youth activities were announced.

The Directorate General of Migration Management was supported by UNHCR in closing six and decongesting four temporary accommodation centres by providing relocation grants to refugees opting to relocate to host communities, and transportation assistance to those opting to transfer to other temporary accommodation centres.

The Turkish version of the Handbook for Parliamentarians, A Guide to International Refugee Protection and Building State Asylum Systems was published in June and presented at the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara. The handbook, which was published by UNHCR in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union Group of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, was disseminated to parliamentarians as a guide to international refugee protection and the role of state asylum systems.

In July, a Conference on Higher Education for Students under International Protection was organized by the Presidency for Turks Abroad (YTB), UNHCR, TRT World Research Centre, and TRT World Citizen. The conference brought together 150 stakeholders in higher education and provided a forum to share experiences of students under international protection in Turkey. It also permitted to showcase the importance of access to higher education of refugees, where 33,000 Syrian students are enrolled in universities in Turkey, double the average global enrolment rate of refugees in tertiary education.

Support for Turkey’s refugee response is coordinated and consolidated through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in response to the Syria crisis; a platform bringing together 46 appealing UN
and civil society organizations, co-lead by UNHCR and UNDP. By December 2019, the 3RP Turkey Chapter had raised USD 1.03 billion (63 per cent) out of a total financial requirement of USD 1.65 billion.

The vital role of municipalities in Turkey’s refugee response was evident at the International Municipal Forum held on 26-27 November in Gaziantep. The Municipal Forum provided a platform to share experiences of mayors around the world in supporting refugees and displaced people in their communities in line with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. The resulting Gaziantep Declaration outlines pledges to promote and replicate efforts to transition from emergency to resilience in responding to complex refugee and migration situations.

The Turkish Court of Accounts and UNHCR signed a Letter of Understanding in April to strengthen oversight for UNHCR’s support to Turkish public institutions. The Turkish Court of Accounts (TCA) is the supreme audit institution of Turkey mandated to conduct audits, produce reports and take final decisions on the accounts and transactions of public administrations to serve efficiently and effectively in compliance with laws and public resources. The cooperation allows UNHCR to receive detailed audit reports for the support provided to government partners. In November, UNHCR received the audit reports for funds provided by UNHCR to the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, the Directorate General for Migration Management and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services Provincial Directorate of Ankara, presented by the TCA.

Key Figures

3.9 million refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey
Almost 3.6 million Syrian nationals and close to 330,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers of other nationalities according to the Directorate General of Migration Management

17,552 refugees
Submitted for resettlement consideration to 18 countries, 67% of them Syrian

100,337 refugees
Supported financially through UNHCR’s cash-based intervention initiatives including cash for protection, education assistance and alternatives to camps

Strategic Directions and Priorities

Turkey has adopted a comprehensive legal framework, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the Temporary Protection Regulation, which form the basis of UNHCR’s priorities and strategic directions in 2019.

Promoting Access to and Provision of Protection

UNHCR promotes access to and provision of protection, by working in close partnership with the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), the Turkish Coast Guard and Land Forces, the Gendarmerie General Command (GGC), the Ministry of Justice, and the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), advocating for the admission of persons in need of international protection, their access to fair and efficient national asylum-procedures and promoting procedural standards.
and safeguards. Cooperation with DGMM to support continuous registration and international protection procedures is a priority.

Protection of sensitive border management and cooperation with border actors

The Gendarmerie General Command (GGC) and UNHCR in 2019 jointly organized training courses on International Protection and Mixed Migration, including a training of trainers; a study visit to Germany; and five joint field visits to selected provinces to identify trends on mixed migration, support coordination efforts between different public institutions and NGOs, and identify needs and challenges responding to mixed movements.

UNHCR delivered over 100,000 humanitarian relief items such as thermal clothing, hygiene kits, food and water to support the Turkish authorities in responding to immediate humanitarian needs of persons rescued, intercepted and apprehended at border areas. Reception conditions were also improved at the border areas of Izmir and Aydın by providing seven accommodation spaces and water and sanitation facilities.

In November, the Turkish Coast Guard in cooperation with UNHCR inaugurated the Kuşadası Turkish Coast Guard Processing and Screening Centre established at the Aydın Kuşadası Marina. The facility was established to support border authorities in the timely identification, assistance and referral of intercepted, apprehended and rescued individuals, especially those with protection and other humanitarian needs.

Support to registration and development of the national asylum system

Following the completion of the verification and registration records of Syrian refugees in February 2019, UNHCR supported DGMM and Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) with a surge capacity of bilingual support staff and ongoing technical assistance in registration. UNHCR conducted 79 registration missions in 2019 (20 of them jointly with DGMM) to observe registration practices across the country to support the effective reduction in waiting periods and registration backlogs.

DGMM and UNHCR conducted trainings for 368 staff to develop their capacity in operational data management and coordination of case processing. Joint initiatives on interviewing techniques, application of relevant professional standards as well as the research and use of country of origin information were organized at the central and provincial levels. UNHCR also carried out joint on-the-job visits with DGMM staff to 18 provinces to identify needs and gaps in implementation of international protection determination procedures.

UNHCR supported DGMM with 239 qualified interpreters and 25 support staff at PDMMs and International Protection Bureaux (Decision Centres) as well as material support in the form of equipment and office furniture in Ankara and Istanbul to support provinces with higher backlogs.

The DGMM-UNHCR Quality Assurance Board tasked to revise and develop tools for the international protection procedures was re-activated in 2019. Meetings were held to discuss key findings and recommendations from joint on-the-job visits to the provinces, observations from the Ankara and Istanbul decision centres were received and quality assurance checklists and tools such as the registration, interview, decision forms and the decision-making guidelines for caseworkers and reviewers were developed and finalised.

Access to legal protection, information and legal assistance

In cooperation with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), the legal clinics in Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep and Hatay provided legal assistance to more than 2,700 refugees and asylum-seekers and information on national procedures, rights and obligations,
appeal mechanisms, matters of civil law, and the protection of women and children. In 2019 legal clinics in Gaziantep and Hatay were established and lawyers trained in international and temporary protection to respond to the need to provide legal protection and assistance in South East Turkey.

UTBA and UNHCR cooperated with 18 Bar Associations across Turkey to cover legal fees for refugees through the national legal aid scheme. Litigation fees and other legal expenses were covered for more than 2,700 cases thus allowing refugees to access legal aid in civil and administrative matters.

Over 280,000 information leaflets and 10,000 posters on legal aid, illustrating national registration and international protection procedures, were produced and distributed in 81 provinces. The materials were jointly developed by DGMM, UTBA and UNHCR, and were translated and printed into seven languages: Turkish, English, Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, French and Russian.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice (Victims’ Rights Department) and UNDP, some 13 information leaflets were developed in four languages (English, Turkish, Arabic, Farsi) for Arabic and Farsi speaking refugees for distribution at awareness-raising sessions. The leaflets provide information on the legal provisions and procedures of specific topics such as domestic violence, traffic accidents, crimes against property, sexual offences, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, legal aid and key concepts used in the legal process.

Two workshops bringing together 110 lawyers from 52 bar associations in Turkey and 20 DGMM staff were organised to enhance cooperation and information on rights and services provided under temporary and international protection frameworks, legislation on residence permits, administrative detention and human trafficking in Turkey.

Strengthen Protection and Access to Quality Services of Refugees with Specific Needs

Cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services

The cooperation between the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) and UNHCR focused on supporting the capacity of social service centres to provide protective, preventive, and supportive services, as well as counselling and rehabilitation for refugees.

UNHCR engages with the Directorate General of Family and Community Services to support capacity development for social service centre staff. In 2019, some 780 staff members under MoFLSS were trained on refugee protection, with a focus on the protection of women and children, the legal framework and interview techniques. Furthermore, 117 social service centres, three centres of the Provincial Directorate of MoFLSS, three child support centres, and six violence prevention centres in 43 provinces were supported with staff, vehicles and technical assistance.

UNHCR also expanded its cooperation with MoFLSS, engaging in extensive consultations to prepare a new Letter of Understanding, while also collaborating closely on comprehensive work plans with its General Directorates of Family and Community Services; the Status of Women, Persons with Disabilities and Elderly; and Child Services.

Child Protection, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and response, identification of and social support to refugees with specific needs

For the prevention, mitigation and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), UNHCR carried out information awareness raising sessions with refugees regarding the identification and reporting of gender-based violence (GBV). In 2019, UNHCR trained 75 NGO staff members on gender equality and different types of SGBV, as well as SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and response. Also, as part of the global 16 days of activism campaign against gender-based violence, numerous actions were undertaken jointly with refugees and host community members across the
country to raise public awareness. For example, close to 2,000 individuals in Trabzon, Mersin, Zonguldak, Afyonkarahisar and Samsun participated in social events and information sessions on women's rights, the protection of women in Turkey and prevention of gender-based violence to children and adults.

In order to identify protection responses and solutions, *best interests procedures* were undertaken for 1,393 children by an inter-agency best interest determinations panel consisting of UN and non-governmental organisations, and resulting in 1,231 best interests assessments and 162 best interests determinations.

In 2019, UNHCR and partners identified and assessed over 15,350 individuals with specific needs (protection, medical, disability, SGBV and specific legal needs), and where necessary provided counselling and made referrals to partners and public service providers such as PDMMs, social service centres and public education centres. Furthermore, over 18,700 refugees and asylum seekers were provided with psychiatric, medical, transportation and accommodation assistance.

Over 13,886 refugees benefited from UNHCR’s *cash for protection support*, aimed at providing multi-purpose cash assistance to refugees with specific needs including transgender, intersex, adolescents discharged from child care institutions as well as those attending various educational courses. To facilitate access to information within safe spaces, some 6,000 *You are Safe Here* posters and leaflets, addressing LGBTIQ individuals were produced and distributed at PDMMs and Protection Desks.

In July, UNHCR took over the direct management of its counselling line for refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey. The UNHCR Counselling Line answered 110,463 unique calls from 1 July to 31 December 2019, and currently employs 34 multi-lingual operators. The UNHCR Counselling Line provides counselling on registration procedures, referrals and existing support mechanisms, specifically resettlement, financial assistance and assistance for persons with specific needs. Through the counselling line, 10,779 persons with specific needs were identified and referred for further intervention and support by UNHCR and its partners. The answer rate for unique calls increased from 61 per cent in July to 95 per cent in December. In the south-east region, the Sanliurfa Call Centre answered 11,427 calls in 2019. UNHCR also counselled 930 individuals through the Gaziantep hotline number.

### Alternatives to Camps

In 2019, UNHCR supported DGMM in the closure of six temporary accommodation centres (TACs) and the decongestion of four additional ones. Refugees residing in the TACs were given the option to move to a community in a province of their choice, to another TAC identified by DGMM if theirs was to be closed, or to stay in their own TAC if it was decongested. UNHCR supported the voluntary relocation of refugees who opted to settle in the host community. A one-off cash relocation assistance package to cover transportation, rent and immediate needs was provided to over 77,800 refugees (15,400 families) choosing to move out of the TACs. Refugees opting to move to another TAC received transportation assistance.

### Promoting Social Cohesion and Harmonization

Following the adoption of the Government of Turkey’s harmonization strategy and action plan in 2018, a Joint Harmonization Initiative between UNHCR and DGMM was implemented in 2019 to foster social cohesion between host and refugee communities. In 2019, DGMM and UNHCR organized 48 events in 31 provinces, reaching 5,123 refugees and 8,740 members of the host community and service providers. The aim of these events was to strengthen communication and interaction between refugee and host communities in Turkey and increase public awareness on social cohesion, to mitigate social tensions between host and refugee communities, to develop the
capacity of PDMM personnel and local authorities at the provincial level on social cohesion, and to support the implementation of the harmonization strategy at the local level.

Engagement at the local level

Efforts to work closely with local authorities remained an important component of UNHCR’s work. UNHCR engages with municipalities, local community actors such as mukhtars and imams across the country, who often serve as the first point of reference for refugees, to raise awareness on a variety of topics related to refugees, to facilitate the identification of persons with specific needs and support their inclusion in government services, and to foster social cohesion between refugees and the host community. Over 128 mukhtars in the Black Sea and Anatolian region and over 90 mukhtars from 83 neighbourhoods in the Aegean region, provincial directorates and district municipalities participated in sessions co-organised with UNHCR. Municipal staff also benefitted from training sessions on international protection and referral mechanisms. In Istanbul, UNHCR cooperates with metropolitan and district municipalities in the Marmara Region, which assume a significant role in the refugee response.

Joint DGMM-UNHCR Harmonization Activities in 2019

One social cohesion training in April to 132 staff of DGMM’s Harmonization and Communications Department and harmonization focal points working at PDMMs to strengthen DGMM’s institutional capacity on social cohesion. The workshop was the first training for PDMM harmonization focal points in the provinces.

Engaged Conversations consisting of two-day events composed of focus-group discussions served to identify social cohesion trends, challenges and proposals through structured consultations and a cultural event. In 12 provinces, 48 focus-group discussions were organized with 258 refugees and 301 host community leaders; while 3,185 refugees and 1,564 host community members and service providers were reached through cultural events.

Seventeen Neighborhood Gatherings in 15 provinces reaching 1,438 refugees and 1,690 host community members and service providers. The neighbourhood-level activity serves to exemplify the significance of localized interventions on social cohesion.

Thirteen targeted Social Cohesion Workshops with the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) and the Ministry of National Education reaching 3,675 religious officials, teachers and school administrators recognizing their central role as interlocuters between refugee and host communities and as shapers of future policies on social cohesion.

Three Migration, Security and Social Cohesion Regional High-Level Workshops covering the Black Sea, Mediterranean, and Aegean Regions were organized. The Minister of Interior, Deputy Ministers of Interior, governors and high-level law, border and security officials participated. The workshops served to sensitize the officials on national policies and practices in Turkey and encourage local policies on social cohesion. About 770 high-level public officials were reached.

The first international academic and student social cohesion meeting took place in Izmir reaching 93 academics and 317 international students from diverse backgrounds aiming to increase the interest and involvement of academia in social cohesion and foster links between academics, policy makers and practitioners.
Working towards Durable Solutions

Collaboration with the Ministry of National Education

The education response in Turkey is led and coordinated by the Ministry of National Education. The numbers of Syrian children enrolled in formal education continues to increase. At the start of the 2019/20 school year, 684,253 Syrian children under temporary protection were enrolled in Turkish public schools and temporary education centres, representing 63 per cent of school-aged Syrian children.

Turkish Language Education

In 2019, more than 2,500 refugee children and almost 3,400 adults were able to attend basic Turkish language courses in various Public Education Centres (PECs) with the support of UNHCR. About 245,000 Turkish language textbooks were procured to be printed and distributed in early 2020 to the Ministry of National Education for use in Turkish public schools for adaptation classes for refugee education. UNHCR supported eight PECs in four provinces where large numbers of refugees reside to increase access to language and skills training for youth and adult Syrians under temporary protection. Teachers were recruited and trained while the PECs were furnished and provided with equipment and stationery.

Access to Higher Education

Since 2013, the Government of Turkey has covered academic tuition fees for Syrian students enrolled at state universities. As a result, 33,000 Syrians are enrolled in universities in the 2019/20 academic year according to the Council of Higher Education. UNHCR works closely with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) to provide university scholarships for refugee students as well as institutional capacity support.
In 2019, UNHCR continues to provide full university scholarships to 1,022 youth (including DAFI scholars) and a further 1,051 students under international protection with cash-based assistance to help offset the cost of university tuition fees. UNHCR also supports the institutional capacity development of YTB by supporting 14 scholarship management staff and 40 academic advisers to in turn advise Syrian students in public universities.

Working with YTB, UNHCR supported the enrolment of 2,500 Syrian students in Turkish language courses as part of the higher education preparation programme for admission to higher education. Of the 2018-2019 cohort, 80 per cent successfully obtained B2 proficiency certificates enabling them to enroll in university. Between 2017 and 2019, an overall combined total of 8,510 students were supported for university preparation courses with 6,700 successfully obtaining a B2 or higher certificate of language proficiency.

Self-Reliance and Livelihoods

Support to refugees to contribute to their economic inclusion in Turkey was provided in a number of ways by UNHCR in close collaboration with the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). UNHCR supported 10 İŞKUR service centres with training and capacity development of staff, institutional support, and interpreters who in turn were able to provide counselling on access to jobs and register job seekers in the İŞKUR database. UNHCR also focused on partnerships with public sector institutions and municipalities.

In 2019, the number of work permits issued by the Directorate General for International Labour Force to refugees under temporary protection exceeded 100,000 individuals, with UNHCR facilitating the employment process of over 5,300 beneficiaries. Additionally, over 31,000 individuals were registered in the İŞKUR database as job seekers and some 32,000 individuals received counselling services on access to jobs.

Through its partners, UNHCR facilitated access to employment for over 1,500 individuals and provided direct counselling on access to the labour market and entrepreneurship to over 1,800 individuals. More than 3,370 individuals were also supported with livelihoods stipends.

Over 80,000 booklets featuring Frequently Asked Questions on Work Permits, were jointly developed by the Directorate General of International Labour Force of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, İŞKUR and UNHCR and distributed to job seekers and business owners; as were over 35,000 İŞKUR Guide to Employment Booklets; and over 700,000 brochures with step-by-step information on the work permit application process.

Refugees were also assisted with vocational development. In 2019, a total of 2,888 persons were reached through vocational, language and skills-building training targeting existing labour market gaps delivered by UNHCR’s partners.

Through its collaboration with the Vocational Qualifications Authority, UNHCR translated the National Vocational Qualifications and Vocational Qualification Standards of 13 industry sectors into Arabic to facilitate the certification of refugees. These include standards on information and

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1 According to data received from the Directorate General for International Labour Force (DGoILF)
communications technologies (ICT), electric-electronics, energy, construction, business and business management, chemistry, plastics, media, communications and publishing.

In collaboration with the Ministry of National Education, UNHCR supports PECs to increase the access of refugees under temporary protection to vocational training. In 2019, about 1,000 individuals benefitted from vocational training, while eight PECs in Ankara, Bursa, Kayseri and Konya received equipment for technical vocational training.

UNHCR’s cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in its Agricultural Livelihoods Programme continued for its third year in collaboration with the provincial directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Vocational training on bakery, cattle care, harvesting fruit crops, food processing, greenhouse production, fruit seedling reached 1,078 beneficiaries in 2019 in Adana, Bursa, Gaziantep, İzmir, Manisa, Kilis, Mersin and Şanlıurfa.

The Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce and UNHCR teamed up for awareness-raising activities and organized a job fair to bridge the gap between Syrian job seekers and the Turkish private sector. Such activities contribute to knowledge-sharing and networking for job seekers enabling them to make connections with potential employers, mentors, and peers. Gaziantep hosts the majority of Syrian entrepreneurs in Turkey.

Refugee entrepreneurship and social cohesion

In 2019, UNHCR supported 84 beneficiaries with business development, entrepreneurship, and business registration. Close to 1,330 individuals benefitted from UNHCR’s Entrepreneurship Support Programme in 11 cities across Turkey; the main goal of which is to provide knowledge and necessary tools for existing and potential entrepreneurs to start, develop or register their businesses. The trainings cover information on legal procedures for establishing a business or license, access to finance, cash and in-kind grants, and business start-up support.

In cooperation with its partner, World Academy for Local Government and Democracy (WALD), UNHCR works with Syrian refugees who have established their own small businesses and are in need of licenses. Businesses are visited and their owners supported in the preparation of documents, submission of applications and follow up of registration procedures. In 2019, over 40 businesses were registered. They were small to medium-sized, with the majority engaged in retail.

Resettlement and complementary pathways

A total of 17,552 refugees were submitted to 18 different resettlement countries in 2019. Close to 67 per cent of these refugees were Syrians while 33 per cent were of other nationalities. Of the cases submitted, 22 per cent were either women and girls at risk or children and adolescents at risk while 13 per cent were survivors of violence and torture. DGMM referred 13,229 vulnerable refugees to UNHCR for resettlement consideration due to protection concerns for these refugees. UNHCR and protection partners referred an additional 14,421 refugees for resettlement consideration.
After submission, 10,558 refugees departed to start new lives in resettlement countries; 78 per cent of them were Syrian refugees and 22 per cent were refugees of other nationalities. Resettlement is an integral part of responsibility sharing among the international community, providing vulnerable refugees with new opportunities to restart their lives in resettlement countries.

Monitoring the voluntary nature of spontaneous returns

UNHCR observed the voluntary return interviews of over 34,300 families in 2019 in nine provinces across South East Turkey as well as Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Manisa, and conducted on-the-job visits with DGMM to observe the voluntary return procedures put in place by the provincial directorates, to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation and to provide support and strengthen the capacity of the provincial directorate staff.

Some key findings of the monitoring have shown that the most preferred destination of return in 2019 was found to be Aleppo with 49 per cent of the returnees interviewed followed by Idlib for 17 per cent. Some 54 per cent of returnees expressed that the main reason for their return was ‘to join family members’ and the second reason with eight per cent of returnees was the ‘lack of financial/humanitarian support/assistance in Turkey’. For 77 per cent of refugees, it was their first time to return to Syria since they had been forced to flee.

Enhancing Partnerships and Communication

Interagency coordination

Together with UNDP, UNHCR led the planning process of the 3RP for 2020 and 2021 and conducted consultations across Turkey, involving UN agencies, NGOs and government representatives, from the national, provincial and local level.

Communication with communities

Through its main digital communication platforms, Help and Services Advisor, UNHCR shares information about rights, obligations and available services with refugees and asylum seekers. By the end of 2019, Help had received over 630,000 unique visitors, having crossed the milestone of 500,000 unique visitors in June, and the Services Advisor close to 213,000 unique visitors. In 2019 alone, Help received 254,129, and Services Advisor 73,521 unique visitors.

UNHCR also published posts with information relevant to refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey on its specific Communication with Communities Facebook page, the UNHCR Turkey Information Board. Launched on 31 December 2018, the page now has almost 44,000 followers.
UNHCR Funding:
USD 124.8 million

Funding received for UNHCR operations in Turkey, out of USD 390.6 million requested

UNHCR Turkey budget per strategic priorities

- 38% Promoting access to and the provision of protection
- 11% Working towards durable solutions
- 11% Promoting social cohesion and harmonization
- 2% Enhancing partnerships and communication
- 38% Strengthening protection and access to quality services of refugees with specific needs

UNHCR thanks donors for their support to UNHCR Turkey in 2019
United States of America | European Union | Germany | Japan | Norway | Republic of Korea | France | H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB | Switzerland | Miscellaneous private donors

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LINKS
Regional Portal - Syria Regional Refugee Response | Regional Portal - Mediterranean | UNHCR Turkey website | Facebook | Services Advisor | UNHCR Help