



## Istanbul – Key Refugee Groups Thematic Coordination Group Meeting

Location & Time	7 March 2024 – 13:30 – 16:30 – UNHCR Istanbul Field Office / Microsoft Teams
Co-chairs	UNHCR and UNFPA
Minutes prepared by	UNFPA
Participants	<b>NGOs:</b> Positive Living Association, HRDF, YSYD, SGDD - ASAM, Doctors of the World, HEVI LGBTI+, MUDEM, International Migrant Women Solidarity Association, Refugees Association, Support to Life, Young Lives Foundation
	<b>UN Agencies:</b> UNHCR, UNFPA, IOM
Meeting Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Welcome and Introduction</li><li>2. 2023 Review</li><li>3. 2024 Program Updates and Capacity Building Activities and Needs</li><li>4. 2024 ToR and Work Plan</li><li>5. Updates from the Field</li></ol>

Agenda Point	Discussion
1. Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co-chairs welcomed the participants and made their opening remarks. Participants introduced themselves.</li></ul>
2. 2023 Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>UNFPA:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ There have been changes in protection needs following the earthquakes in February and efforts have been made in this regard. Work has been conducted for refugees coming here from the earthquake zone and difficulties have been encountered.</li><li>○ In 2024, the group members are expected to support the activities more actively. Co-chairs will continue to facilitate and provide support; however, member organizations are expected to proactively provide information regarding needs in both capacity building activities and thematic areas as well as proactively involve in activities to contribute to sustainability.</li></ul></li></ul>



- Funding of the protection sector has been decreasing since 2023. Member organizations are having their offices closed down and some of their projects concluded. The number of protection-based personnel is decreasing. There are budget cuts in all organizations including UN agencies. Therefore, there is a need to be cost-effective and receive logistics support for activities from member organizations. There is a chance that the funding for the protection sector will decrease even further.

- SGDD – ASAM:

- The 2023 earthquake had grave impacts. Being able to extend travel permits has been a positive highlight.
- Key refugee groups, who have been affected by the earthquake and moved to the Marmara region, have encountered difficulties in accessing support mechanisms. While heterosexual beneficiaries have been able to benefit from hotel accommodations, this has not been the case for LGBTI beneficiaries. They constantly face discrimination and stigmatization. There is a need for more advocacy in this regard.
- A shelter by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has been opened in Istanbul and LGBTI beneficiaries have been prioritized. In 2024, there is a grave need to solve the shelter problem. It is predicted that homophobia and transphobia will heighten. With the increase in rents, LGBTIs will continue to be the most affected group regarding the shelter problem.
- It is predicted that repatriation cases will continue to increase in 2024 and legal support mechanisms should be focused on in this regard.

- MUDEM:

- 2023 has been year of shelter crisis and 2024 will be even more difficult and the economic crisis will be felt even more deeply in the second half of the year. Therefore, different criteria could be considered regarding current budgets and more collaboration is needed.

- Positive Living Association:

- Most refugees are involved in informal employment fields; however, in the second half of 2023, beneficiaries with work permits have seen their permit extensions rejected as well. This pushes beneficiaries to work in informal fields, which have extensive exploitation and no access to rights, and working informally is a cause for deportation.
- The issue regarding closed neighborhoods for registration has been ongoing since 2022. Thus, the shelter problems have become even more difficult to cope with.
- Registration processes are almost completely halted, and it is predicted that repatriation cases and legal protection risks will increase even further in 2024.

- HEVI LGBTI+:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Beneficiaries, who have been living in Eskisehir for many years, have been transferred to Bolu.</li><li>○ It has been observed that beneficiaries are having difficulties in accessing healthcare services, HIV medicine, and hormones even though they are registered and have active provisions.</li><li>● <u>HRDF:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ There are beneficiaries whose residence permits have been revoked at the end of 2023 even though they were registered and university students. These beneficiaries have not been taken into administrative detention. Their lawsuit processes are ongoing.</li></ul></li></ul>
<p><b>3. 2024 Program Updates and Capacity Building Activities and Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <u>UNHCR:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ It would be beneficial to prioritize community-based activities and protection programs. These have positive impacts especially on key refugee groups.</li></ul></li><li>● <u>SGDD – ASAM:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ T&amp;Talk activities began in Bursa in January 2024. They will also begin in Istanbul this month. Areas of socialization for LGBTIs have also been limited due to being unregistered and mobile migration checkpoints. In Bursa, activities are conducted with the same beneficiary group but there will be new participants added.</li></ul></li><li>● <u>Positive Living Association:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Share &amp; Care activities are semi-structured sessions conducted by outreach workers. Several sessions are organized within a time frame based on a specific subject. After the completion of sessions, it can be conducted with a different group of beneficiaries, or a different subject can be handled with the same group.</li></ul></li><li>● <u>International Migrant Women Solidarity Association:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ A campaign called solidarity bridge will be initiated in 2024. Support will be provided so that survivors can get in contact with support mechanisms and solidarity networks throughout migration routes. Coordination will be facilitated through online meetings with the support mechanisms. SRH kits will be distributed.</li><li>○ A new association called the Refugee Council of Turkey is establishing a platform. The platform will include NGOs and INGOs working with refugees.</li><li>○ Information regarding the projects involved and focal points will be shared with the members via email.</li></ul></li></ul>



#### 4. 2024 ToR and Work Plan

- UNFPA:
  - The 2024 terms of reference and work plan have been shared via email. It was aimed to be in line with the work of the GBV Sub-working Group and the Protection Sector Coordination.
  - The terms of reference provide a general framework regarding the activities of the group and are updated each year. This thematic coordination group is an extension of the GBV Sub-working Group. Key refugee groups are among the most under risk groups in terms of GBV.
  - Key refugee groups mostly include LGBTIs, sex workers, and people living with HIV.
  - UNFPA and UNHCR co-chair the group as part of the activities conducted since 2018. The main responsibility of the co-chairs is to facilitate the group's activities.
  - Among the objectives are capacity building, mainstreaming key refugee groups among other sectors, and improving national and provincial coordination.
  - Members are expected to proactively participate. They are expected to attend at least three fourths of the meetings organized throughout the year. When unable to participate, it is recommended that they contact the co-chairs beforehand and provide information regarding the updates or delegate participation to someone else in their organization.
  - Partner organizations are expected to contribute to capacity building activities organized by the thematic coordination group. It would be beneficial to integrate issues regarding key refugee groups to capacity building and advocacy activities organized internally by the partner organizations. Co-chairs can provide support in planning these activities and regarding sessions related to key refugee groups. It is suggested that requests regarding support for capacity building and advocacy activities organized by the partner organizations to be sent to the co-chair organizations by the next meeting.
  - The working language of the group is Turkish.
  - The terms of reference have been endorsed by the members.
  - There are three main targeted outputs in the work plan. There are activities related to each output.
  - One of the outputs is regarding the improvement of coordination among partner organizations. In this regard, there are activities such as updating the terms of reference, updating the email listing, endorsement of the work plan by the members, organizing quarterly meetings, and sharing meeting minutes with the members.
  - Suggestions can be made regarding organizations whose participation in the meetings may be beneficial. Among the conditions of participation are being a registered NGO, working in the protection sector or aiming to establish a program regarding key refugee groups.
  - The second output is regarding the capacity building of member organizations and, when necessary, external organizations. Each year, at least one comprehensive training is organized. The training is planned to be organized during the last quarter of the year where participants of the last year's training will work specifically on cases. This will also contribute to strengthening the service mapping.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ During the second quarter of the year, a training regarding the legal protection needs of key refugee groups is planned to be organized with the participation of certain commissions of the Istanbul Bar Association.</li><li>○ A capacity building activity regarding working with LGBTI children will be conducted.</li><li>○ The need regarding establishing a service mapping platform specific to KRG or to integrate it into the Service Advisor platform will be considered. A workshop can be organized to receive feedback in this regard.</li><li>○ The National GBV Sub-working Group has the subject of human trafficking in their work plan. Key refugee groups must be included when discussing human trafficking with a focus on sexual exploitation. Consultations with the National GBV Sub-working Group in this regard will continue and a capacity building activity with the support of the co-chairs is planned to be organized.</li><li>○ A resource hub where training and advocacy resources regarding key refugee groups will be present is intended to be developed.</li><li>○ The last output is regarding mainstreaming. Within this scope, there have been seven national protection needs assessments conducted as part of the efforts of the National Protection Working Group. During the second half of this year, an eighth assessment will be initiated. After the technical details are decided upon, the members of the thematic coordination group who would like to contribute to this work will support data collection by conducting surveys with their beneficiaries. The related organizations will receive training in this regard.</li><li>○ A briefing note will be prepared regarding the needs before and after the earthquakes.</li><li>○ The work plan has been endorsed by the members.</li></ul>
<b>5. Updates from the Field</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <u>Positive Living Association:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Last month, Syrian beneficiaries in RCs were deported within 24 - 48 hours.</li><li>○ It is known that the Arnavutköy RC is operating as a transfer center and the Tuzla RC is operating as a full capacity repatriation center. Everyone including families, single persons, and LGBTIs under any legal status can be taken into the Arnavutköy RC. An IP status holder beneficiary living with HIV has been detained for three days, mistreated, and released.</li><li>○ Beneficiaries from Tunisia, Iran, and Sudan have been identified at a mobile migration checkpoint and sent to the Arnavutköy RC due to being unregistered. They have been released to conduct their identification processes. These beneficiaries are transferred to other provinces with obligation of signature and applications for registration are made.</li><li>○ Applications for identification are made through the directorates and not the TACs. Registered beneficiaries within TACs are given cash assistance of 6500 TRY by the PDMM if they decide to move out into the city. Beneficiaries who have been identified at mobile migration checkpoints and taken into the Harran TAC have been able to receive a pre-registration document following a special needs evaluation. They have received identification from the Şanlıurfa PDMM after finding an</li></ul></li></ul>



address. A beneficiary in the Kilis TAC left there with the cash assistance and sent to Mersin. There are no closed neighborhood criteria for beneficiaries who leave TACs by receiving cash assistance.

- Beneficiaries living with HIV whose SSI provisions are active are unable to access their HIV medicine for free after receiving work permits.

- HEVI LGBTI+:

- Recently, there have been many beneficiaries who arrived in Istanbul with travel permits and taken under administrative detention after being identified at the mobile migration checkpoints.
- An IP status holder beneficiary has spent two days at the Arnavutköy RC and is prohibited from accessing HIV medicine. They are then released and sent back to their registered province.

- UNHCR:

- Especially Syrian beneficiaries taken into RCs are quickly deported. The process is not as quick for beneficiaries under IP.
- Irregular migration operations in Istanbul are ongoing. There are currently 92 mobile migration checkpoints. Syrians are quickly deported following administrative detention if they are identified to be residing irregularly. There are different implementations for other beneficiaries who are registered and have travel permits. It has been observed that people with sensitivities can be released without having their identification revoked.
- International protection registrations have become difficult. Documents such as the land register and lease contract are requested.
- People whose identification revoked due to address registration are invited to PDMMs for interviews and their IP registrations are being canceled. People with active identification may have their identification revoked.
- The Arnavutköy RC is not operating at full capacity and currently operates as a transfer center. Three units operate side by side in Arnavutköy. There is a police unit, a temporary accommodation center, and a repatriation center. Mostly male refugees are taken in and there have been no observations regarding families being there. The TAC has a high capacity but has a low number of residents. People with shelter issues cannot be referred to the TACs. Mostly unregistered and Syrian people are taken in here.
- There is a migration specialist and a police officer located at the mobile migration checkpoints. Processes are done through the fingerprints of the people.
- The SSI verdict regarding access to medicine for refugees will be shared with the members.
- Drafting a simplified version of the interagency referral form can be considered.

- Young Lives Foundation:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ In Sakarya, there are issues regarding mostly IP rejections. There have been no observations that people are taken into RCs and quickly deported. When applicants go to PDMMs for updates, they are reviewed and quickly receive rejections. Therefore, beneficiaries are hesitant to go to the PDMMs. Mostly the deportation verdict is not served to the beneficiaries. They are unable to object to the verdict since they do not have any documents regarding the process.</li><li>● <u>SGDD – ASAM:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Neighbors of some beneficiaries file complaints against them and law enforcement launches raids and detains the unregistered refugees.</li><li>○ A beneficiary has been transferred to a police station from the Beyoğlu mobile migration checkpoint and deported to Syria within two days.</li></ul></li><li>● <u>International Migrant Women Solidarity Association:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Support is received from mukhtars regarding food assistance.</li><li>○ The Food Rescue Association has food distribution points. They sign contracts with organizations and give the responsibility of food distribution points to those organizations.</li></ul></li></ul>
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#### Action Points

#	Action Point	Focal
1	Information regarding the projects and focal points regarding the International Migrant Women Solidarity Association and a briefing note regarding the Refugee Council of Turkey will be shared.	International Migrant Women Solidarity Association
2	Requests regarding support for capacity building and advocacy activities organized by the partner organizations will be sent to the co-chairs by the next meeting.	All members
3	The need regarding establishing a service mapping platform specific to KRG or to integrate it to the Service Advisor platform will be considered.	UNFPA, UNHCR
4	The SSI verdict regarding access to medicine for refugees will be shared with the members.	UNHCR
5	A briefing note will be prepared regarding the needs before and after the earthquakes.	UNFPA, UNHCR