

Meeting Minutes: 3RP Economic Empowerment Sector Coordination Meeting for the South-East Turkey (SET) Region

Date: Thursday, December 26th, 2024

Time: 14:00-15:30 (Virtual Meeting)

Meeting Participants	
Name	Email
1. Semiha Bal	semiha.bal@undp.org
2. Bekir Halhallı	b.halhalli@sened.ngo
3. Usame Colakoglu	usame.colakoglu@kizilay.org.tr
4. Abdullah Hakmi	hakmi@buildingmarkets.org
5. Liudmyla Yildirim	mila@gto.org.tr
6. Gonca Doğan	JEN – Japan Emergency NGO
7. Nazli Avsaroglu	nazli.avsaroglu@undp.org
8. Anas Alkhatib	anas@sycac.org
9. Sena Sever	sena.sever@humanappeal.org.uk
10. Abdullah Sultan	abdullah@sycac.org
11. Osman Albarri	Osman.Albarri@islamicrelief.org.tr
12. Dutta, Anindya (External)	duttaa@ilo.org

The minutes prepared by Semiha Bal – UNDP (semiha.bal@undp.org). Please contact her in case you identify an issue on the notes.

Agenda:

1. General Updates and Recent Situation of Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) and Figures on Returns to Syria
2. 3RP Economic Empowerment Sector Updates
3. Sector Partners Updates for 2024 and Plans for 2025
4. Q&A and Action Points

1. General Updates and Recent Situation of SuTP and Figures on Returns to Syria¹²³

Ministry of Interior's Recent Statements on Voluntary Returns (24 Dec. 2024)

- Syrians can send one family member as a pioneer for return, with 3 re-entry opportunities between January and July 2025.
- Between December 9-23, 2024, 23,440 people voluntarily returned to Syria, with a marked increase in daily returns.

¹ YouTube, "O3fxUCuIFRQ," available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3fxUCuIFRQ>.

² Anadolu Agency, "İçişleri Bakanı Yerlikaya: Son 15 Günde Suriye'ye Dönenlerin Sayısı 25 Bini Geçti," available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/icisleri-bakani-yerlikaya-son-15-gunde-suriyeye-donenlerin-sayisi-25-bini-gecti/3432689#>.

³ Instagram, "DD9SWygNkUX," available at: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DD9SWygNkUX/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D.

- Primary return destinations: Aleppo (48.6%) and Idlib (31.4%).
- Highest return numbers are from Gaziantep, Hatay, and Istanbul.

Foreigners with Legal Stay in Turkey

- 4.16 million foreigners reside legally in Turkey, including 2.92 million Syrians under temporary protection.

2. 3RP Economic Empowerment Sector Updates

Reporting Updates

- Partners are reminded to report their 2024 achievements to the Activity Info platform by early January 2025. The same indicators from 2024 will continue into 2025, though minor modifications are expected.

3RP 2025 Appeal Overview

- 62 agencies have submitted appeals totaling \$660 million, with the Economic Empowerment (EE) sector's appeal amounting to \$166 million.
- Mandatory questions have been added to the 2025 appeal portal, and partners are encouraged to complete them.

Work Permit (WP) Policy Update

- The ILO has provided updates on a simplified work permit process in national EE meeting and more details expected soon.

Partner Survey Results (Dec 2024)

- **Support and Information Sharing:** Capacity building, networking, and financial support are key priorities.
- **Challenges:** Coordination issues, lack of skilled personnel, market access, and funding discrepancies.
- **Benefits:** Improved skills, better market access, and enhanced refugee inclusion.

3. Sector Partners Updates for 2024 and Plans for 2025

Sector Overview & Achievements (As of Oct. 2024)

- **Goal:** Improve food security for Syrians under temporary protection.
- **Beneficiaries:** 3,404 total beneficiaries, with a gender distribution of 62% female and 38% male.
- **Agricultural Support:** 1,094 individuals benefited from greenhouse or backyard farming; 579 received training on food safety and nutrition.
- **Job Creation & Economic Empowerment:**
 - 159 individuals placed in decent jobs

- 839 individuals received self-employment support
- 247 individuals assisted with work permits (15% female)

Sector Partner's Updates

➤ SENED Association Updates

Capacity Building

- SENED has been focused on training local organizations to support earthquake recovery. They conducted training sessions for 28 local organizations in Hatay, with more planned for 2025. These sessions emphasize inclusivity, particularly for people with disabilities and marginalized groups.
- [***Comprehensive Study on Civil Society Organizations in Hatay: Post-Earthquake Mapping and Capacity Assessment" Report***](#) : [Comprehensive Study on CSOs in Hatay HCG N.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Multipurpose Cash Assistance

- The first round of cash assistance has been distributed, with a second round planned for January 2025 to support 300 vulnerable households affected by the earthquake.

Governmental Support Access

- SENED is helping earthquake-affected families navigate and access government assistance programs, including social safety nets and the Integrated Social Assistance System (ISAS).

Project Overview

- SENED's €1.3 million earthquake response project focuses on restoring living conditions in Turkey, continuing until August 2025.

➤ Japan Emergency NGO (JEN) Updates

Vocational and Language Training

- JEN, working with local partners like Orange NGO, offers Turkish language courses and vocational training in hairdressing, culinary skills, and sewing. They plan to expand to agriculture and economic empowerment in southeastern Turkey in 2025, leveraging their expertise from Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- JEN will continue working with local partners and is awaiting registration in Turkey to formalize operations.

➤ **Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce (GCC) Updates**

Support for Women Entrepreneurs

- GCC is collaborating with UNHCR to enhance the economic capacities of Syrian and Turkish women entrepreneurs, creating the "Gaga Store" to sell women's goods and partnering with Hepsiburada for online sales (<https://gagastore.com.tr/>)

Capacity Building and Social Cohesion

- GCC is working to build the capacity of cooperatives to include Syrian women, enhancing social cohesion between Turkish and Syrian entrepreneurs.

Future Directions

- In 2025, GCC plans to focus on digital tools, e-commerce, and foreign trade, based on feedback from women entrepreneurs.

➤ **Human Appeal Updates**

Need Analysis

- Human Appeal is conducting a multi-sector needs analysis in Gaziantep, Hatay, and Kilis to identify gaps in services for Syrian refugees, particularly in economic empowerment and related sectors like physical therapy and mental health support. The report is expected soon.

Future Plans

- New projects for 2025 are being considered, based on the findings of this needs assessment.

➤ **Building Markets Updates**

Business Development for SMEs

- Building Markets is focusing on supporting small businesses, particularly in southern Turkey, with capacity building and cash support. They have a project supporting women-owned businesses with training and funding and are also working on a recycling initiative.

Research Plans

- A report is in development regarding the readiness of businesses to return to Syria, with a focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

➤ SYCAC Organization Updates

Capacity Development and Support for Women Entrepreneurs

- SYCAC Organization has conducted capacity-building workshops for refugee women entrepreneurs and supported a world exhibition targeting refugee women in Gaziantep. They've also raised awareness about the importance of legal business registration for refugees in Turkey.

Plans for 2025

- SYCAC Organization plans to continue supporting refugee SMEs and is exploring new initiatives in response to the changing situation in Syria.

* * *