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Protection Sector Paper on Emergency Preparedness

November 2020

This Protection Sector Paper on Emergency Preparedness is developed based on outcomes of discussions of an ad hoc National Protection Working Group discussion held on 13 November 2020 related to Emergency Preparedness. All initiatives of the Protection Sector in relation to emergency preparedness is facilitated in full recognition that leadership of coordination in emergency response formally lies with AFAD. Sector Partners also recognize that the Emergency Response and Preparedness Working Group under the UN Country Team is responsible to lead liaison and coordination with AFAD and other public responders to natural disasters. However, Sector Partners also identify space to support preparedness efforts targeting refugees, as well as in mainstreaming refugees¹ in the response led by AFAD in emergency situations. This paper provides an overview of the impact of emergencies on refugees and their needs, capacities and added value of 3RP Protection Sector Partners in supporting response, as well as recommendations for way forward. As the discussion took place following the Izmir earthquake, some of the below findings are related specifically to Izmir.

Needs of Refugees in Emergency Situations

- In the context of emergencies, **most vulnerable groups** are identified as children, pregnant women, individuals with serious medical concerns, persons with disabilities (including those newly disabled due to the disaster), elderly, and those that face general difficulties in accessing public services (such as key refugee groups). These groups are identified as vulnerable by sector partners who were present on site, providing support in collaboration with AFAD.
- Refugee communities' **levels of awareness and information** related to emergency preparedness measures; risk mitigation efforts; and where to seek assistance in such situations remain unclear. Many partners observe an information gap that could be better identified and subsequently addressed in collaboration with relevant public institutions. Women and child-friendly messaging on emergencies should be prioritized as well.
- Certain service providers may be less likely to be familiar with the refugee context as well as their rights and services under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the Temporary Protection Regulation. Hence, timely and effective assistance to refugee communities may be hindered.

¹ The term 'refugees' used in this paper refers to International Protection Applicants and Status Holders, Syrians under Temporary Protection and persons pending registration and documentation with DGMM. The term 'refugees' is used for editorial purposes.



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- Registration under Temporary Protection or International Protection is a pre-requisite for accessing national services. Some refugees impacted by earthquakes may be **pending registration and documentation** with DGMM/PDMM, hence face difficulties in accessing services.
- **Social tension between refugee and host communities** impacted by Izmir earthquake is increasing and was observed in previous emergency situations as well. Increase in discriminatory speech and xenophobia are reported in natural disaster settings. Reportedly in Izmir, on one occasion, local authorities addressed the issue by physically separating service provision points. Fear of discrimination is identified as a barrier preventing refugees from accessing services.
- **Earthquakes have a dire impact on mental health and psychosocial support (PSS)**, particularly for refugees whose traumas may be triggered. In Izmir, women and children are specifically identified to be in need of PSS. PSS interventions are required at the individual, community and society levels. There is a need to provide specific PSS services in consideration of earthquake trauma and complement these efforts with information dissemination on how to seek these services during emergencies.
- **Some children who accessed education through the Educational Informatics Network (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı – EBA) in Izmir are unable to continue**, due to disruptions/damages to TV/TV connections, internet and laptops.
- **Poverty levels are reported to be on the rise** amongst refugee communities due to the impact of the disaster and can have a long-term impact on access to livelihoods.
- **Increasing vulnerabilities and protection risks** (such as domestic violence and other forms of GBV, child labour, child, early and forced marriage) **can intensify in the onset of an emergency** and specific access to services is needed to curb GBV and harmful practices.
- In addition to the above, **access to basic needs, hygiene items, food items, accommodation and transportation support** are identified as most common needs of refugee communities in earthquakes.
- In relation to lodging appeals for damage assessment report by the Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization, some refugees' residences were assessed however despite the results, they were unwilling to continue living in their residences due to fear. Furthermore, while referrals take place to public institutions upon identification of persons with specific needs, due to the high number of persons in need of assistance, refugees may be in a disadvantaged position when accessing various services.



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Gaps and Areas for Improvement in Response

- Currently, **3RP partner capacities to support emergency response remain largely un-mapped**. There is bilateral coordination with AFAD, and sector partners are not included in the existing formal coordination mechanisms. This increases the risk of duplication in assistance (particularly on rent and transportation assistance) and potential for ineffective use of resources.
- There is a **need to clarify the role of 3RP partners** both at the central and field levels, which should be identified and defined in collaboration with AFAD.
- **Language is identified as a key barrier in accessing services**. Most of the public institutions have limited capacity to provide services (including risk communication, information on assistance, and service delivery itself) in languages spoken by refugees. The importance of provision of interpretation support to public institutions is highlighted, especially in the needs assessment process and provision of PSS.
- Sector partners require **additional information on emergency coordination mechanisms**, including those led by AFAD and the dedicated UN coordination mechanism. There is a need to improve communication, collaboration and synergies between existing platforms.
- In emergency situations, **needs assessments** are carried out both by public institutions and I/NGOs. In Izmir, the needs assessment conducted by institutions did not include impacted refugees that reside outside of the main affected areas. On the I/NGO side, the assessments are not harmonized and due to absence of structured coordination, there is a potential for duplication of assessments and important gaps, for example in the absence of multi-sectoral needs assessments by relevant specialists. Furthermore, needs assessment and gender analysis with sex and age-disaggregated data is required to differentiate impacts of disaster on women and girls, to better inform the response and recovery.
- **Existing public coordination mechanisms focus on prioritization of basic needs**; however, protection concerns (including those particular to refugees) are not prioritized, especially in relation to child protection and GBV.
- **Emergency-specific cash for protection** (and/or for basic needs) schemes are limited and do not correspond to needs identified in emergency contexts.
- While refugee households are reported to be damaged (mostly on the low-medium scale), partners have observed that some **identification and rehabilitation of damaged buildings do not include refugee households widely**. Partners expect further difficulties in shelter/housing situations due to increasing rent prices and decreasing vacancy rates.



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- **Residence addresses of persons pending registration and documentation with DGMM remain unknown to institutions** (especially municipalities and local authorities). Therefore, they cannot be included in emergency preparedness and post-disaster management efforts, including identification of individuals residing in damaged or demolished buildings.
- **Registered individuals do not regularly update their addresses with PDMMs and Provincial Directorates of Population and Citizenship Affairs**, resulting in the same challenges on outreach and provision of assistance.

Capacities of Sector Partners and Added Value of 3RP

- **Partners are able to identify, assess and prioritize needs of refugees with a protection lens**, subsequent to which they can make referrals to available services.
- **Partners are able to swiftly adapt existing programmes and mobilize additional resources in coordination with AFAD**. In terms of human resources, many partners are able to mobilize social workers, psychologists and interpreters to the site of the emergency and also have material capacities that are/could be mobilized in such situations.
- **Civil society organizations have robust capacities in the field to support the response to emergency situations, even when international assistance is not required**. Inclusivity in coordination is deemed to be a priority. More nuanced analysis is needed on how to activate engagement of 3RP partners vis-à-vis public institutions. Improvements can be made in terms of collaboration between 3RP Working Groups and the ERP Working Group.
- **Many partners have prior experience in support of emergency responses** and have protection expertise to identify protection concerns and subsequently address them through dedicated programming or referrals.
- **One of the main added values of 3RP protection partners is their close communication with refugees**. Partners reach out to refugees through a variety of channels, including mobile teams and outreach efforts, social media accounts and case management databases.
- Considering the overstretched capacity of public institutions and high demand for services and assistance in emergency situations, **sector partners have a critical added value in identification of persons with specific needs and the general impact of emergencies on refugees**. Sector partners play a critical role in referral of persons with specific needs to public institutions, subsequent to which their needs are addressed.
- **Post-disaster outreach activities allows NGOs to identify medium- and long-term protection concerns, in addition to rapid needs**. The former includes GBV risk, child marriages, child labour and school drop-outs.



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Recommendations and Way Forward

- **Strengthening mainstreaming of refugees in emergency response by AFAD** should be supported and prioritized by ERP WG and 3RP sectors. Additionally, other service providers can also be sensitized on emergency response. This is especially important to facilitate timely and effective access of refugees to assistance and services, and to mitigate risks of social tension between communities.
- **Standardized messaging on emergency preparedness targeting refugee children and adults should be prioritized.** Basic AFAD messaging on earthquakes are currently being translated into different languages (Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish and French) and will be disseminated by Protection Sector Partners. Translated messages could be shared with AFAD for their further dissemination via their emergency preparedness efforts. Once information needs are substantiated, further efforts are required, including on development of child-friendly messaging.
- **Raising awareness activities on emergency preparedness** should be facilitated and prioritize the most vulnerable. Information dissemination and raising awareness activities should consider current COVID-19 limitations as well as refugees' preferred methods and channels of communication.
- **Focus group discussions and other modalities for two-way communication with communities** should be facilitated with persons impacted by the 2020 earthquakes to better identify needs and challenges they faced in accessing services.
- Mapping of material and human resources capacity in emergencies linked to population movements has been partially undertaken under the 3RP Contingency Plan. **More comprehensive mapping of support to emergencies, via reaching out to additional 3RP Partners and I/NGOs could be supported by 3RP sectors in coordination and consultation with the ERP WG.**
- While sector partners are aware of **AFAD's Accreditation Procedure** (initiated as of July 2020), the observation is that the accreditation system is not yet active. Partners require guidance on this procedure, especially considering that their coordination with AFAD is ad hoc. Considering its role, the ERP WG could liaise with AFAD on behalf of UN agencies as well as I/NGOs to clarify the requirements around this procedure as well as its outcomes, for which the PWG would advocate for **formal inclusion of certified I/NGOs in the existing AFAD-led coordination mechanisms.**
- **Advocacy with DGMM on registration and other PDMM procedures in emergency and exceptional circumstances** is suggested to allow for swift referrals to PDMMs to facilitate access to assistance and services for individuals pending registration.



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- **Interpretation support (including but not limited to Arabic and Farsi) should be prioritized** by partners providing support to response coordinated by AFAD, to facilitate access to assistance and services. To this end, it would be beneficial to support the coordination of provision of language support between 3RP partners and public institutions subsequent to an emergency. In that regard, sector members' capacity to extend interpretation support as well as the level of need within public institution could be mapped.
- **Advocacy with relevant public institutions, particularly MoFLSS, should be undertaken towards increasing access of refugees to PSS after emergencies.** Sector members' communication with MoFLSS and the PDoFLSSs should aim to establish referral mechanisms between I/NGOs and PDs for the identification and referral of most vulnerable community members.
- **Advocacy with AFAD to inquire whether the recently launched AFAD Volunteers Project could be expanded to include refugees as well,** which would be a great opportunity to mobilize community capacities, empower refugee communities in the immediate aftermath of disasters via outreach efforts within their own communities.
- **Advocacy with donors and funding institutions is required, particularly on cash for emergency programmes.** There is a recognition that this would require strong coordination, improved targeting and programming, which could be facilitated through the 3RP Cash-Based Interventions Technical Working Group.