



From Aid to Self-Reliance: Revisiting & Reviving Discussions on Transition to Livelihoods for 2024

Although discussions on transition from basic needs assistance to livelihoods and referrals have been progressing in Türkiye, significant increases in humanitarian assistance needs after the February 2023 earthquake have practically suspended targeted deliberations on sustainability and self-reliance via transition to livelihoods. Nevertheless, after immediate earthquake needs were addressed to a great degree, escalating resilience needs of both refugees and the affected host community have again come to the fore. By extension, transition to livelihoods have become as prominent as before in the agenda of the Basic Needs sector and stakeholders for 2024. In line with this refocusing, the objective of the following summary note is to re-open discussions on transition through briefly reminding previous discussions and suggesting possible areas of importance to focus on in 2024.

Context

In addition to providing access to basic needs and fundamental services to persons in need including refugees,ⁱ the Republic of Türkiye also provides refugees with the right to enter into the formal labour market. Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS) provides access to formal employment opportunities to refugees in Türkiye through **work permits**ⁱⁱ on the basis of the Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection, and the Regulation on the Work of International Protection Applicants and International Protection Status Holders. Public institutions also provide further employment support for both Turkish citizens and refugees through projects such as ISDEP (Employment Support Project for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens) by MoLSS and training and referral support by Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR).

According to the **Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment (IAPNA) Round 7** targeting vulnerable refugees and host community members affected by the earthquake, 28% of respondents are unemployed and **72%** are working (**59%** and **13%** working informally and formally, respectively).ⁱⁱⁱ Also, most respondents who are working are reported to be engaged in occasional, short-term and irregular employment (**57%**) and in seasonal jobs (**12%**).^{iv} The high levels of **unemployment** and **informal work** along with **insecure** and **unstable** nature of work undertaken by the most vulnerable individuals bring along a certain degree of **precariousness** hindering effective satisfaction of basic needs and curtailing resilience in addition to the possibility of exacerbating various **protection risks**.

Higher inflation rates in 2023 compared to same periods last year^v and resulting **cost of living increase** coupled with the abovementioned employment challenges lead to inadequate meeting of basic needs and hindered access to sustainable livelihoods opportunities. The majority of IAPNA respondents (**83%**) stated their financial standing have deteriorated in the last year and **90%** of respondents reported that they are not able to fully cover their monthly expenses and basic needs.^{vi} Thus, addressing basic needs as the first step to transition to livelihoods has become more salient in the current context.

Previous Discussions and Progress

In order to address the needs arising from the aforementioned context, there have been comprehensive and multidimensional discussions on transition to livelihoods and referrals with various outputs including relevant tools in Türkiye. Some key progress is briefly mentioned below:

Kızılaykart Cash Based Assistance Programmes Livelihoods Survey Findings^{vii}: The objective of the study was to undertake a livelihoods-related **profiling** of ESN beneficiaries with regards to their income levels, employment status focusing on informal work, and skills. According to the findings, the primary challenge when entering into the labour force was the **language barrier** and there is a positive correlation between **education level** and Turkish language proficiency, which may help with prioritisation of cases for transition. This study and its findings fed into the **Exit Strategy from the ESN Programme of FRIT** mentioned below.



Exit Strategy from the ESSN^{viii} Programme of FRIT^{ix}: The focus was on meeting basic needs of refugees in the first phase of the FRIT. However, with the refugee crisis becoming more protracted, the Republic of Türkiye has commendably been willing to provide more sustainable and **development-oriented** support in addition to basic needs assistance. In line with this objective, a **graduation strategy** was deemed essential to decrease aid dependency and facilitate transition to livelihoods of refugees by providing them with necessary skills. The strategy highlighted the need to overcome funding gaps and strengthen collaboration between public institutions and international and local organisations to support vulnerable individuals so that they can contribute to the developing economy of the country.

ESSN Programme Technical Analysis Report on Transition from Basic Need Assistance to Livelihood Opportunities^x: The aim of this analysis was to support processes for **referrals** of ESSN beneficiaries with relevant profiles to livelihood opportunities. Challenges were identified as **lack of livelihood opportunities** and inadequate provision of livelihood trainings and other support in some refugee-dense provinces such as those in **southeastern Türkiye**. **Data collection restrictions** affect **livelihoods-related profiling** of beneficiaries as well.

Livelihood Transition of the ESSN Capacity - Mapping and Understanding the Potential^{xi}: The objective of this mapping was to provide an overview of livelihoods profiling of ESSN beneficiaries. The findings included that the majority of the sample households had at least one working member (including those working **informally**) and there were significant **income irregularity** decreasing **sustainability** of employment.

Output Paper of the Task Team on Referral and Transition to Livelihoods Opportunities^{xiii}: The objective of this 3RP Task Team^{xiii} was to develop common strategies and suggest possible pathways to facilitate transition to livelihoods. The Task Team regularly convened in late 2020 and throughout 2021 to discuss key issues of transition processes. It was stressed that finding **policy solutions** to facilitate transition through addressing **structural barriers** into the labour market and supporting the **increase of employment opportunities** should be prioritised. The report also emphasised the need to provide **incentives for formal work** to social assistance recipients. The suggestions concerned firstly concentrating on the **supply side** of the referral and transition processes by supporting the employability of refugees and the host community.

Joint Protection & Livelihoods Workshop Report^{xiv}: In addition to transition from basic needs assistance to livelihood opportunities, transition and referral of persons with **protection needs** was also cited as a significant need by stakeholders, bringing about the possibility of enhancing utilisation of the extant **inter-agency referral mechanisms** such as IARF widely used under the 3RP Protection sector to be functionalised for protection-livelihoods referrals as well. In line with this, the 3RP Protection and Livelihoods^{xv} sectors organised a joint workshop in 2022 following several consolidated discussions to identify crucial needs, challenges and possible solutions related to issues including referrals and protection mainstreaming in livelihoods support among others. Resulting pathways focused on relevant areas of intersectionality between protection and livelihoods, envisaging ongoing cross-sectoral coordination and multi-stakeholder advocacy in this regard.

Inter-Agency Referral Form (IARF) Package^{xvi}: IARF was developed in 2018 by the National Protection Working Group as the **recommended tool** to be utilised by humanitarian actors in the refugee context of Türkiye when facilitating and documenting **case referrals** at the inter-agency level in accordance with the **minimum standards**. IARF and its package including relevant guidance and the consent form are regularly revised depending on referral needs. Its objectives include bolstering referral pathways, promoting minimum standards and harmonisation and preventing confidentiality breaches with regards to referrals between different organisations.

Livelihoods Profiling Form^{xvii}: In line with the need for enhancing processes for referrals to livelihood opportunities and developing a joint system for profiling of beneficiaries at the inter-agency level, a Livelihoods Sector Profiling Form was prepared in 2021. The form can be used by partners to profile beneficiaries in a harmonized way, facilitating a **profiling mapping** in practice, and may also be utilised as a **complementary tool** to the IARF.

Services Advisor^{xviii}: This is a platform developed in 2016 for mapping available services. It is accessible to both refugees and service providers. Its objective is to support operational coordination in the context of the refugee response, **prevent**



duplication and highlight geographic and sector-specific areas with unmet demand for services. It can also be utilised as a platform to facilitate inter-agency and cross-sectoral referrals. Service provider organisations can have access to the backend of the platform to update information on services they offer, and beneficiaries can find information on services available in all provinces and sectors.

ESSN Livelihoods Pathways Study^{xix}: According to this study, many refugees prefer jobs in line with their previous experiences and existing skill sets due to a **familiarity bias** which limits their awareness of other job opportunities. Many are also not aware of the **“usta” (master) system** in Türkiye through which they can have more sustainable earnings compared to informal work. In addition, most refugees focus more on being employed and having an **income** rather than specificities of trainings and jobs and many do not see trainings as a guaranteed channel to employment. Also, both refugees and vocational chambers may lack correct and up-to-date information due to **misconceptions** with regards to formal employment conditions, insurance issues, working conditions and salaries etc.

Way-forward & Advocacy

The protracted nature of the refugee response and the fact that Türkiye is an upper-middle income developing country^{xx} necessitates transitioning from humanitarian support to development assistance to enhance sustainability and self-reliance. However, the demand for basic needs support is still salient and has been increasing due to successive crises such as COVID-19 pandemic, February 2023 earthquake and macroeconomic challenges such as high inflation and unemployment rates, making it more difficult to continue the progress achieved so far regarding transition to livelihoods. In fact, decreasing funding trends negatively affect provision of both basic needs assistance and transition support. For example, 3RP Basic Needs sector partners have not been able to report significant progress against their 2024 targets for providing transition to livelihoods counselling to basic needs support beneficiaries due to the lack of funding.^{xxi}

In this context, coordination, implementation and advocacy efforts to address basic needs and showcase the importance transition support should be in the sectoral agenda with greater focus in 2024. Possible areas of focus for the Basic Needs Sector in 2024 may include:

- **Satisfaction of existing basic needs gaps** → The sector will coordinate and collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including relevant coordination bodies, to **firstly** address basic needs of the most vulnerable households to the extent possible in the given response capacity. Meeting the immediate basic needs remains as the first step before embarking upon transition to livelihoods.
- **Effective stakeholder engagement** → The sector will undertake advocacy efforts through effective engagement with stakeholders such as donors to emphasise the current challenges in basic needs, and transition support due to the **lack of funding** in humanitarian and development interventions; and to show the importance of addressing these needs to promote resilience and self-reliance.
- **Effective information sharing with stakeholders** → The sector will work towards facilitating the provision of **correct and up-to-date information** on work related procedures, rights and responsibilities to all basic needs beneficiaries, such as formal employment conditions, employers and vocational chambers to tackle current **information gaps** and **misconceptions**.
- **Development of a Standard Transition and Self-Reliance Referral Package** → Since recent assessments^{xxii} show that beneficiaries prefer employment support directing them to viable employment options compared to undertaking trainings. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the sector aims to prepare a **referral guidance for basic needs beneficiaries** focusing on self-reliance referrals^{xxiii} to provide information on how beneficiaries can learn about job opportunities without familiarity bias and legal rights and procedures and so on as soon as they receive a basic needs support.



- **Provision of Timely Service Updates to Streamline Referral Processes** → The sector will continue to strive towards **regular and timely** information updates on service and referral information platforms such as **Services Advisor**.

ⁱ For the purpose of this document, references to the term “refugee” should be read to include Syrians under temporary protection, international protection applicants and status holders in accordance with Türkiye’s legal and policy framework, notably the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, as well as the Temporary Protection Regulation.

ⁱⁱ The number of work permits given to foreigners in 2021 was 168,103, with 91,500 being provided to Syrians. (This number includes all permits given to residents and Syrians under temporary protection). ; Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS), Work Permits of Foreigners – 2021, <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/90062/yabanciizin2021.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment Round 7 Report (August 2023), (16/11/2023), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/104862>

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), (03/06/2024), Consumer Price Index, May 2024, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Tuketici-Fiyat-Endeksi-Mayis-2024-53615>

^{vi} Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment Round 7 Report (August 2023), (16/11/2023), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/104862>

^{vii} Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), (04/04/2019), Kızılaykart Cash Based Assistance Programmes Livelihoods Survey Findings, <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/kizilaykart-cash-based-assistance-programmes-livelihoods-survey-findings>

^{viii} The name of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme was changed as Social Safety Net (SSN) in 2023. Also, the role for the co-implementation of the SSN III programme phase was transferred from IFRC to the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) through an agreement signed with the European Union. In line with this agreement, Complementary-SSN (C-SSN) II and SSN IV phases were combined and started to be implemented by the MoFSS in cooperation with TRC.

^{ix} Facility for Refugees in Türkiye (FRIT) Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye & MoFSS, (20/12/2018) Exit Strategy from the ESSN Program, <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/3725/essn-exit-strategy-1.pdf>

^x TRC, (First Quarter of 2019), Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme Technical Analysis Report, Transition from Basic Need Assistance to Livelihood Opportunities, <https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/ESSN%20Programme%20Technical%20Analysis.pdf>

^{xi} TRC, (01/10/2020), Livelihood Transition of the ESSN Capacity Mapping and Understanding the Potential, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/79311>

^{xii} Task Team on Referral and Transition to Livelihoods Opportunities - Output Paper, December 2021, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109207>

^{xiii} Co-chaired by TRC and UNDP with technical support from IFRC.

^{xiv} Joint Protection & Livelihoods Workshop Report, (June 2022), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105722>

^{xv} Since late 2022 and 2023, and in line with the 2023-25 multi-year plan of the 3RP Türkiye, the Livelihoods sector and the Food Security and Agriculture sector have been merged into the Economic Empowerment Sector. ; 3RP Türkiye Country Chapter - 2023/2025, (16/03/2023), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99579>

^{xvi} Both the IARF Form Package (available in [English](#) and [Turkish](#)) and IARF ([English](#), [Turkish](#), [Arabic](#) and [Farsi](#)) can be accessed through the links.

^{xvii} Joint Protection & Livelihoods Workshop Report, (June 2022), <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105722>

^{xviii} <https://turkiye.servicesadvisor.net/en>

^{xix} TRC & IFRC, (April 2023), ESSN Livelihoods Pathways Study, https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/ESSN_Livelihoods_Pathways_Study.pdf

^{xx} Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of Official Development Assistance (ODA) Recipients | Effective for reporting on 2024 and 25 flows, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2024-25-flows.pdf>

^{xxi} Basic Needs Sector Response Capacity Overview for 2024

^{xxii} TRC & IFRC, (April 2023), ESSN Livelihoods Pathways Study, https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/ESSN_Livelihoods_Pathways_Study.pdf

^{xxiii} As most of the current projects of the sector partners targeting livelihoods assistance are on hold due to the lack of funding self-referrals may provide an opportunity for more efficient use of decreasing resources.