



# Basic Needs Working Group

## Meeting Notes

<b>Date &amp; Venue</b>	13 Mart 2025, Çevrimiçi Toplantı
<b>Chair</b>	Ahmet Ünver (UNHCR)
<b>Minutes prepared by</b>	Umay Atik (UNHCR)
<b>Participating Agencies</b>	
ACTED, GIZ, IFRC, IOM, Islamic Relief, SARD, Save the Children, SGDD-ASAM, STL, Türk Kızılay, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP	
<b>Meeting Agenda</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Welcome &amp; Introductions</li><li>2. Action Points &amp; Announcements</li><li>3. Sector Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General situation updates</li><li>• Sectoral summary of the 3RP return addendum appeal</li><li>• Overall programme updates from partners</li><li>• SSN programme updates, M&amp;E presentation</li></ul></li><li>4. Updates on WASH &amp; Shelter Situation</li><li>5. AOB</li></ol>	
<b>Sector Updates</b>	
<p><b>General Situation Updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spontaneous voluntary returns continue through Cilvegözü / Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı / Keseb, Öncüpınar / Bab al-Salama, Karkamış / Jarablus ve Akçakale / Tel Abyad border crossings.</li><li>• Çobanbey and Zeytindalı border crossings are open for authorised go-and-see visits for Syrians under temporary protection, those residing in Türkiye with residence permits, and Syrians who have acquired Turkish citizenship.</li><li>• On March 6, President Erdoğan announced that 133,000 Syrians have voluntarily and with dignity returned to their country since December 8, 2024.</li><li>• UNHCR Türkiye continues to monitor voluntary returns at the Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Keseb, Öncüpınar/Bab al-Salama and Karkamış/Jarablus border crossings, as well as at Istanbul International Airport.</li><li>• Return decisions continue to be shaped by factors such as political changes, improved security conditions, and family reunification.</li><li>• Many individuals have returned alone, either because they had no dependents in Türkiye or to assess the situation before relocating their family members.</li><li>• Female-headed households and unregistered individuals are among the notable groups recently returning.</li></ul> <p><b>Shelter &amp; Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many people in Syria have lost their houses and been displaced due to years of civil war and widespread destruction.</li><li>• Nearly half of the country's infrastructure has been damaged, and most basic services are non-functional.</li><li>• The electricity network has suffered severe damage, with many areas receiving only a few hours of power per day.</li><li>• Water supply is inconsistent, and many regions lack regular access.</li><li>• Returning families face significant challenges such as the lack of habitable housing, limited access to clean water, food, and electricity.</li><li>• Many returnees experience disappointment and remain dependent on international aid for their basic needs.</li></ul> <p><b>Access to Healthcare</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many hospitals and clinics are either damaged or non-operational due to staff and equipment shortages.</li><li>• At least half of public hospitals cannot operate at full capacity, while many primary healthcare centres are either closed or providing only limited services.</li><li>• The risk of disease outbreaks and inadequate healthcare infrastructure serve as major deterrents for those considering return.</li></ul> <p><b>Economic Situation &amp; Employment Opportunities</b></p>	



- According to a World Bank study, Syria's GDP shrank by half between 2010 and 2020, classifying the country as a low-income economy.
- UN data indicates that 16-17 million people in Syria require basic humanitarian assistance and protection support.
- Job opportunities are extremely limited, as both the public and private sectors have contracted, with production and investments nearly at a standstill.
- While returnees may bring resources that could contribute to the recovery process, the lack of infrastructure makes rapid economic revitalisation challenging.

#### Security & Risks

- Despite some improvements, security risks and instability remain as major concerns.
- Protection measures for women and girls are inadequate, with limited safeguards against domestic violence and early marriages.

#### Conclusion

- Voluntary return is a fundamental right for refugees, and spontaneous returns cannot be prevented, but only information for refugees' decisions and support can be provided. Individuals should not be pressured into premature or uninformed decisions, and a cautious approach must be maintained.
- The current conditions are not suitable for large-scale, promoted, or facilitated returns. Any interventions should be planned in line with this context and implemented in coordination with relevant actors.

#### Sectoral Summary of the 3RP Return Addendum Appeal

- The highest targets are under transportation support to border areas. However, guidance from the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) and other relevant public institutions is awaited, and there is currently no active implementation. The projects remain in the planning phase, and the current conditions are not suitable for large-scale transportation support.
- Food assistance is considered relevant, particularly in terms of immediate food support at border crossings.
- Distribution of hygiene kits, especially for menstrual hygiene, remains a key priority.
- In-kind assistance for various basic needs is being considered under core relief items (CRI) support.
- In the WASH/shelter sector, it has been emphasised that standards in border areas need improvement.
- The supplementary appeal targets were determined based on a projected 700,000 voluntary returns in 2025, which is a planning figure in progress, focusing on potential needs rather than the current situation.
- Multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) was excluded from the supplementary appeal, as it could adversely influence decision-making, be used for unintended purposes, or pose certain risks. Concerns regarding this were also raised in consultations with public institutions.
- Some partners have included activities in the 2025 funding appeal that they wished to implement but were not directly related to voluntary returns. For example, WFP's cash programme for individuals wishing to leave camps, though not directly linked to voluntary returns, was developed in consultation with public authorities and was therefore later incorporated into the 2025 appeal.

#### Overall Programme Updates from Partners

- UNFPA's menstrual hygiene voucher support, provided in collaboration with ASAM in Adiyaman and Hatay, is ongoing and open to referrals from partners.
- STL reallocated funds originally designated for operational expenses to cash assistance, enabling additional cash support for 34 households in Adiyaman in February.

#### SSN Programme Updates

- Updates on SSN and other programmes implemented under KızılayKart by the Turkish Red Crescent were shared. For further details, please refer to the relevant slides.
- Starting from the January 2025 payment period, age categories in the SSN and C-SSN projects have been revised to align with the national social assistance system: 18-64 years categorised as "working-age/adult" and 65 years and older categorised as "elderly".
- Under C-SSN, some households that were previously ineligible for support due to the "elderly and/or child only"



criterion are now excluded based on the update. A total of 16,116 individuals have been removed from the program.

- In SSN, male beneficiaries aged 60-64 are no longer eligible. Additionally, households that do not meet the revised dependency ratio criteria and some previously supported under the discretionary allowance have been excluded, affecting a total of 18,987 individuals.
- According to SSN eligibility criteria, if there is an adult male (18-64 years old) in the household, the dependency ratio must be at least 1.5 and if no adult male is present, the household can have a maximum of two adult women, and the total household size must not exceed six members.
- To assess the impact of voluntary returns to Syria on SSN beneficiaries, the Ministry of Family and Social Services, which co-implements SSN programmes with the Turkish Red Crescent, has officially requested data sharing from the Presidency of Migration Management.
- If a household member returns or opts for an authorised go-and-see visit, the number of individuals may decrease, but the household itself can remain eligible. KızılayKart remains active in such cases, as the general approach is to avoid deactivating cards immediately, considering that household eligibility may fluctuate monthly. If eligibility is not met, the card stays open, but payments are suspended.

### SSN Monitoring & Evaluation Findings

- The latest SSN post-distribution monitoring findings, conducted by the Turkish Red Crescent, were shared in comparison with the previous baseline assessment before assistance was provided. For further details, please refer to the relevant slides.
- While the median income levels of C-SSN, SSN, and ineligible households have increased, this reflects adjustments in minimum wages and SSN assistance amounts rather than an actual economic improvement. Similarly, the increase in expenditures is attributed to inflation.
- Approximately 75% of C-SSN and SSN households have taken on debt to cover expenses related to food, rent, and non-food essentials.

### MEB Updates

- The latest household-based February MEB details, prepared by the Turkish Red Crescent, were shared. For further details, please refer to the relevant slides.
- The largest expense for SSN and C-SSN households is rent, followed by food, utility bills, and non-food expenditures.
- Due to high inflation, SSN and C-SSN assistance currently covers only 10% and 11% of MEB, respectively, compared to the targeted 25% coverage.

## **Updates on WASH & Shelter Situation**

### WASH Sector Updates

- WASH sector coordinator shared updates and examples of activities conducted in the context of the earthquake response. For more details, please refer to the relevant slides.
- One of the most significant WASH activities in Hatay for 2024-25 is the extension of the water infrastructural network, expected to benefit around 75,000 people and be completed in the coming weeks. The project aims to better meet the water needs of Hilalkent and Narlıca, which received a high influx of displaced people after the earthquake.
- Key priorities for 2025 include maintenance of water tanks and purification systems, improvement of water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, distribution of hygiene and cleaning kits, and WASH improvements in schools.
- Field observations indicate that key needs at border crossing areas for voluntary returns include support for breastfeeding mothers, baby formula, and drinking water. Additionally, as returns continue, requests for shared toilet repairs are increasing.
- The WASH sector will begin field visits in the coming weeks to update the 2024 needs assessment report for container settlements hosting high numbers of refugees and migrants.
- The WASH sector is working on a comprehensive report, consolidating partners' WASH-related efforts over the past two years
- For inquiries, please contact Şirzat Ergin ([sirzat.ergin@acted.org](mailto:sirzat.ergin@acted.org)) or Zerrin Alkan Yelmen ([zalkan@unicef.org](mailto:zalkan@unicef.org)).



### Shelter Sector Updates

- In 2023, 54 shelter sector partners provided shelter support and non-food assistance to over one million households in earthquake-affected provinces. Support was also extended for container and temporary accommodation areas. These efforts continued in 2024, with cash assistance emerging as the most preferred support modality among beneficiaries.
- By the end of 2024, most official tent settlements were closed, and around 50,000 earthquake-affected individuals—including mostly Syrian refugees—relocated to 390 container settlements.
- In 2025, the sector will continue working on winterisation support.
- Instead of three separate hub meetings (Gaziantep, Hatay, and Adıyaman-Kahramanmaraş-Malatya), the sector will now hold a single meeting, generally in the third week of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for 27 March. Interested partners can contact Msallam Koujan ([koujan@unhcr.org](mailto:koujan@unhcr.org)) or Şirzat Ergin ([sirzat.ergin@acted.org](mailto:sirzat.ergin@acted.org)).
- Efforts are ongoing to better align sector indicators with 3RP indicators, and a training session on this will be organised soon.