

August 2018

Supporting Refugees through Strengthened Local Engagement

Based on the legal framework provided through the Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the Temporary Protection Regulation refugees and beneficiaries of temporary protection are increasingly included in services which are provided through state systems at the national and local levels. UNHCR and its partners remain committed to providing support, including through engagement at the local levels, with priority being child protection, women empowerment, support to persons with specific needs, and fostering social cohesion in particular focusing on locations with higher numbers of refugees.

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2018-9 (3RP) strategy on protection which frames the commonly shared direction of stakeholders is aimed at supporting national institutions to sustainably include refugees into existing state protection mechanisms and services. Some 94% per cent of refugees in Turkey live in urban, peri-urban and rural areas throughout the country's 81 provinces, requiring continued efforts to reach out to refugees and refer them to the appropriate government services.



The support is aimed to strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions and service providers to meet this increased demand in services as well as to strengthen and adapt their capacities to meet the specific needs of refugees. By working to alleviate some of the pressure on local services resulting from the significant increase in demand, UNHCR also aims to promote social cohesion by reducing the perceived competition for services in specific locations.

UNHCR's local engagement strategy focuses primarily on three inter-linked objectives, namely (1) strengthening referrals to national and public services, (2) supporting the capacities of local services, and (3) promoting social cohesion.

Strengthening engagement and identification through community centres

UNHCR has long supported community centres, including multi-service centres and similar urban centres, managed by various partners, to provide one-stop shop services to refugees in locations hosting large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers across Turkey. These community centres have proven effective in responding to the needs of refugees through outreach, information provision and psycho-social counselling activities. Social Service Centres operated under the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS), municipalities and other state institutions are increasingly including refugees into their services including cash assistance, institutional care,

support for women and children, education and family counselling. As a result, UNHCR is reorienting its interventions in community centres to support referrals to public services to strengthen the overall protection response. In particular, UNHCR focuses on:

- **Information provision and counselling** for refugees on their rights, obligations, national legislation and procedures and available services in the languages they speak.
- **Identification of persons with specific needs** in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, and **referral** to the most appropriate state service providers.
- Bolstering **community self-help** to protect and promote psychosocial well-being of refugee communities by offering a safe and conducive environment to engage in social and other activities.

Supporting the capacities of local services

As the services provided by the line Ministries, municipalities and other state institutions continue to expand to include refugees, UNHCR is focusing on increasing its support role to ensure a harmonised, sustainable response. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Security is a key governmental partner in providing services at the provincial and local levels to persons with specific needs (unaccompanied children, women-at-risk, elderly and persons with disabilities). Opportunities for further collaboration to enhance the infrastructural and technical capacity of Provincial Directorates of Family, Labour and Social Services (PDoFLSS) and municipalities are constantly being explored to best capitalize on the outreach, identification and response capacity of each institution.

43



Social Services Centres supported
in 8 provinces

data as of end of June 2018

Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS)

With a Cooperation Protocol signed in January 2018 with the MoFLSS, UNHCR works towards enhancing the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers into social support and assistance schemes and reinforcing technical capacities and infrastructures of its provincial directorates. MoFLSS is consolidating its service provision through a single-entry system at the local level through Social Service Centres (SSCs).

SSCs play a critical role in identification of persons with special needs and in ensuring prompt referral of these individuals to the relevant response mechanisms. The services delivered by SSCs include, inter alia, outreach to and identification of persons with special needs, mapping of risks and services at the local level, provision of socio-economic support (SED), undertaking procedures for referral of women-at-risk or survivors of gender-based violence to women shelters and taking the steps to provide protection to children at risk. Educational and psycho-social support activities may complement these protection activities at the centres.

In order to facilitate identification and access to services by vulnerable refugees, UNHCR's activities focus on supporting Social Services Centres through the provision of interpreters and social workers as well as technical advice and support. UNHCR is coordinating closely with 3RP partners, including UNFPA and UNICEF, in supporting and working with MoFLSS and its provincial directorates to ensure a harmonized, coordinated approach and common standards.

Public Education Centres (PEC)

UNHCR is similarly expanding its support to PEC, with interventions including support with additional teachers to meet increased needs, the proposed engagement of Syrian co-facilitators, the appointment of interpreters and the provision of teaching materials. The provision of Turkish language classes to refugees is expected to contribute positively to social cohesion and support access to services delivered through Turkish institutions.

Municipalities

Turkish legislation provides that municipalities can extend services, including social services and cash or in-kind assistance, livelihoods training, housing, food banks, health facilities and community activities, to refugees. However, implementation varies across the country according to the capacities of the municipalities. With their proximity to both refugee and host communities, municipalities are key stakeholders in supporting refugees and promoting social cohesion at the local level and as such UNHCR will continue to advocate for the extension of support and assistance to refugees by municipalities around Turkey.

Promotion of Social Cohesion

UNHCR works closely with public institutions, both at the national and local level as well as with key influencers, to strengthen social interaction between refugee and host communities, create and support platforms of dialogue, establish and promote mechanisms of communication between communities and public institutions, foster positive relations and a sense of belonging, acceptance and trust; support access to services by refugees through a conflict-sensitive approach to address disparities between and among refugees and host communities. These activities aim at alleviating causes of social tension and strengthen social cohesion between the refugee and host communities.

Key partners at the national level include the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of National Education, the Presidency for Religious Affairs (Diyanet), the Union of Turkish Bar Associations and the Turkish Journalists Association. At the local level, key partners are Governorates and provincial authorities, municipalities including city councils, muktars, imams, bar associations, NGOs, professional unions, universities, local media institutions and, essentially, refugees and local communities.

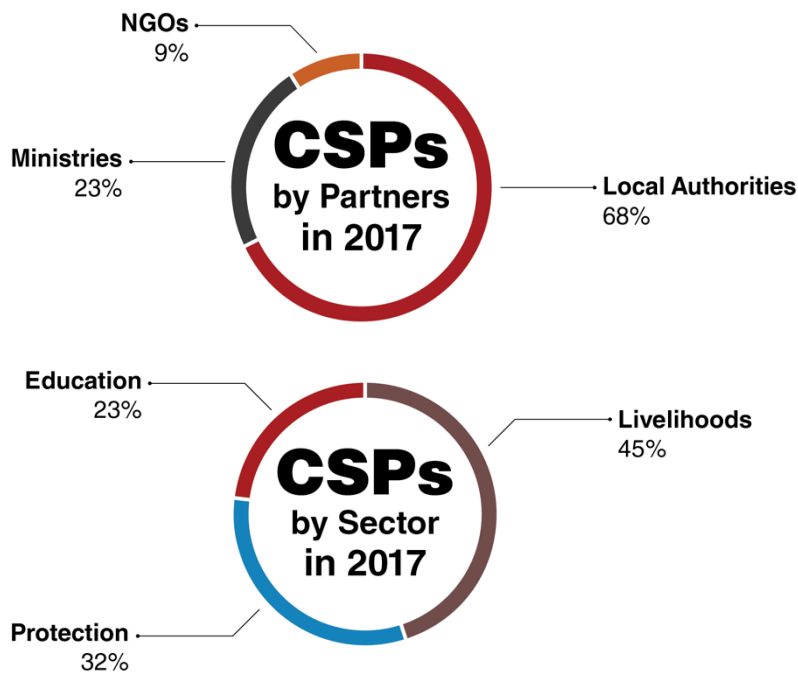
Support to Municipalities

UNHCR's engagement with municipalities strives to promote social cohesion and increase access of refugees to municipal services and local representation mechanisms. In order to promote social cohesion, UNHCR, in cooperation with municipalities, focuses on expanding socio-cultural interaction between refugee and host communities and increasing the presence of refugees in local representation structures. Participation of municipalities in established coordination mechanisms is promoted.

Community Support Projects

UNHCR's Community Support Projects (CSP) are investments in social cohesion which are catalytic to bolstering refugee and host community relations. CSPs seek to partner with local authorities, community-based organizations and refugee communities, to implement small-scale

projects enhancing the capacity of local authorities in service provision, fostering social cohesion and, promoting mutual understanding and interaction between refugee and host communities.



Over 90 per cent of UNHCR's CSPs in 2017 were conducted in partnership with state institutions.

Two thirds of UNHCR's CSPs aim for greater resilience and self-reliance of refugees through education and Livelihoods.

To date in 2018, a total of 17 CSPs are being pursued in 12 provinces in Turkey.

Outreach and Communication

UNHCR is widening its network of partners at the local level, to increase outreach and information dissemination to refugees and host communities. Government entities, such as municipalities, muktars and imams, are well-positioned to disseminate information widely, giving it further weight and credibility and ensuring effective targeting of host community members.

UNHCR is engaging in joint activities with these local partners and key influencers, with training sessions on the rights and obligations of refugees and joint awareness-raising activities. Given the influential position and outreach capacity of muktars and imams in society, UNHCR is partnering with them to strengthen its messaging to communities. It is also leveraging this collaboration to encourage inclusion of refugees in municipal assistance and distribution schemes.

Collaboration with respected local actors and partners facilitates an improved understanding of the sources of social tensions in specific locations, thus informing UNHCR's response and social cohesion interventions. UNHCR continues to work with all relevant institutions to counter incidents of social tension.

Achievements

Throughout 2018, UNHCR's CSP model has provided many essential achievements to improve the lives of refugees living in the host community:

UNHCR supported the establishment of volunteer networks in collaboration with a community-based organization in Kayseri composed of Iranian, Afghan, Syrian, Iraqi and Turkish community leaders.

Through UNHCR's support to Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, nearly 200 children-at-risk were identified and enrolled in public schools, while almost 100 women-at-risk were identified and referred to Turkish language courses after which, upon successful completion of A2 levels, they were referred to vocational training opportunities to achieve sustainable self-reliance.

UNHCR and Kecioren Municipality in Ankara have established a Refugee Council with 44 members representing different nationalities, and persons with specific needs, including those with disabilities. Through discussion with refugees, the Refugee Council identifies priority issues to raise to the District City Council.

In Samsun, UNHCR supported the establishment of peer support networks between refugee and host community families – aiming to promote positive communication and social cohesion through joint events, trainings and awareness-raising sessions. Over 1000 children and parents have been matched through this project so far with half being Turkish and half including Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, and Iranians refugees.

With support from the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, Family Support Centres have been opened with the aim of promoting social cohesion and integration between communities with a specific focus on vulnerable groups including women, elderly, persons with disabilities and children. In Eskisehir, UNHCR has provided capacity building support to the staff. UNHCR's support includes infrastructural and technical capacity building to ensure enhanced access and inclusion of refugees to the available FSC services, assistance and activities.



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