EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET (ESSN) PROGRAMME

BACK AT ROCK BOTTOM: REFUGEES ESCAPING YET ANOTHER DISASTER

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ANALYSIS REPORT | JUNE 2023

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MAIN FINDINGS

> We came to Türkiye from Syria with nothing. This is the second time we do this. The first time was because of war, now because of this disaster and only God knows what the third time will be like and whether we will make it out alive. Rent is much more expensive here. We will have to cut back on food and our basic needs when we rent a house here.
>
> **Female, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

Dramatic changes in living conditions: Respondents' household compositions and living conditions dramatically changed since the earthquake. Earthquake survivors have taken shelter in their relatives' or friends' homes in provinces outside of the earthquake zone resulting in overcrowded homes with minimal privacy, excessive household chores, and increased expenditures for households that had already been struggling to make ends meet before the earthquake.

Increased vulnerabilities: Expenditures increased significantly after the earthquake further exacerbating the vulnerability of refugees [1]. Prices have increased across the country and with households now having more than doubled in size, meeting basic needs has become but a thing of the past. Participants have resorted to employing negative coping strategies such as borrowing money, prioritising expenses, and relying on cheaper food of low quality. Additionally, rent is seen as the most challenging financial burden.

Uncertainty and unemployment: Earthquake survivors are not able to find jobs easily in the new provinces mainly because they are either uncertain as to what will happen when their travel permits expire or because they cannot find jobs that match their sets of skills.

Children's fears and education: Some of the participants have not enrolled their children at school in the new provinces because of reasons pertaining to documentation and distance. However, one of the most important reasons mentioned was that the children were haunted by memories of the tremors and refused to be separated from their families in case an earthquake struck again when they were at school.

[1] In this study, refugee is referring to persons who are under international protection or temporary protection according to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Herein the term is used to refer to their legal status.

STUDY BACKGROUND

On 6 February 2023, the South-East Anatolian region of Türkiye experienced two significant earthquakes with more than 50,783 fatalities [2]. Following the earthquakes, many people left the affected provinces hoping to find a haven in other provinces. Approximately three million people have been relocated, resulting in high levels of internal movement within the country [3]. According to observations of field staff working in the ground, Ankara, Istanbul, and Mersin are among the cities that receive a high number of internal movement.

Along with the host community, earthquakes severely impacted the living conditions of refugees in Türkiye. More than 2 million refugees under international protection (IP) and temporary protection (TP) used to reside in the 11 provinces affected by the earthquakes [4]. Following the earthquakes, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) issued a circular on conditions and evacuations of refugees from the earthquake-hit provinces. With this circular, the travel permit document requirement was lifted for refugees residing in the affected provinces, indicating they can travel to a province outside the earthquake region, except for Istanbul, without a travel permit [5]. Refugees are also advised to travel to a different province only if they have social connections (e.g., relatives, friends, etc.) whom they can reside with, and/or if they are able to maintain their basic needs financially [6].

Altogether, earthquakes caused a great demographic movement within the country. Additionally, measures taken toward refugees movement might have resulted in them moving with their relatives and friends, affecting household compositions and the living conditions of earthquake survivors and families hosting them in their homes. Considering the increases in rent prices, ongoing economic problems, and loss of livelihood opportunities due to the earthquakes, it is necessary to understand how the internal movement of refugees affected the living conditions, household compositions, and perceptions of refugees and the families hosting them.

Aims and Objectives

The current FGD explored:

- Changes in the household compositions of refugees because of earthquakes and internal movements.
- Changes in the living conditions of refugees in terms of access to basic needs such as health and education services, household expenditure and livelihood opportunities.
- Observations of refugees on demographic changes in their neighbourhoods.
- Perspectives of refugees on the future of the situation.

[2] T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı. (2023). Bakanımız Sn. Soylu: 11 Bölgede 57 Bin Enkazın 50 Bini Bitti. Accessed 3 June 2023.
[3] OCHA. (2023). Türkiye: 2023 Earthquakes Situation Report No. 12, As of 30 March 2023. Accessed 3 June 2023.
[4] Göç Araştırmaları Derneği. (2023). Göç ve Deprem – Durum Tespit Raporu. Accessed 3 June 2023.
[5] Göç Araştırmaları Derneği. (2023). Göç ve Deprem – Durum Tespit Raporu. Accessed 3 June 2023.
[6] Göç Araştırmaları Derneği. (2023). Göç ve Deprem – Durum Tespit Raporu. Accessed 3 June 2023.

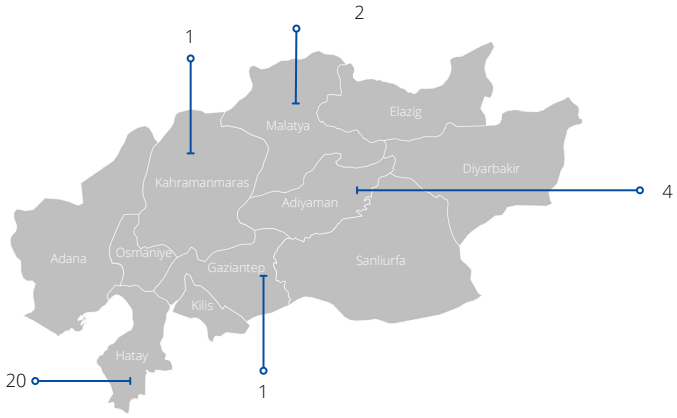
METHODOLOGY

Sample Demographic Characteristics

For the FGDs held in May 2023, respondents were selected among those who have been hosting a family from the earthquake region or who have left their homes because of the earthquake and currently residing with a family outside of the earthquake region. Of the 39 respondents, 24 were women, and 15 were men. The unique inclusion criteria for the current FGDs decreased the chances of reaching an equal number of women and men. Of the 39 respondents who participated in the FGDs, 36 of them were ESSN recipients. As for nationality, 36 participants were Syrians under TP, while three of them were Iraqis under IP. As for host/guest characteristics, 28 of the respondents were guests, while 11 of them were hosts. The average age for respondents was 37.

Respondents were randomly assigned to four subgroups based on gender and host/guest condition. In total, nine sessions were conducted, and FGDs took place in Ankara, Istanbul, and Mersin, the provinces that received a large portion of internal movement from the earthquake region and are densely populated by the target group. Considering the sample characteristics, the findings of the current FGD do not fully represent the overall refugees population in Türkiye.

Figure 1. Number of guests per province in which they experienced the earthquake.



Ankara	14
Istanbul	15
Mersin	10

Data Collection and Analysis

Monitoring and evaluation staff of IFRC and TRC developed the questions for the FGDs. Before data collection, IFRC organised a session to discuss questions with field staff who participated in the data collection. Considering the psychological consequences of experiencing the earthquake, field staff were provided with brief information on handling emotional reactions during the FGD, which was followed by role-play sessions to practice the information.

FGDs were held face-to-face, and expert moderators from IFRC carried out the discussions with observers from TRC at the TRC Community Centres and TRC Service Centres in Ankara, Istanbul, and Mersin. The discussions were carried out in Arabic, the native tongue of the respondents. Staff from IFRC and TRC transcribed the reports using the notes taken during the discussions. IFRC monitoring and evaluation staff then analysed and reported these transcriptions.

FINDINGS

Changes in household composition and living conditions

Earthquakes disrupt the lives of many people, causing them to move in with extended family

Refugees who experienced the earthquakes in the affected region left their homes, searching for a haven for themselves and their families. Most of them moved in with family members residing outside of the earthquake region, while some moved in with friends and acquaintances. The new living arrangements are characterised by overcrowding in regular two-to-three-bedroom flats. Further investigations indicated that the majority of participants are living with five-to-ten individuals in the same house, followed by some participants living with 11-to-15 people. Some participants mentioned having more than 20 individuals staying together in the same flat. Participants noted that since they lost everything in the earthquake and currently have no jobs, they have to live with other families, even if it is very uncomfortable for them.

> Immediately after the earthquake, I hosted five of my children and their families in my home. We had 31-32 people in the house for 20 days. My flat is a 3+1 flat, so it was pretty tight. Four of my children moved out; they are renting a place together now. My children have been terribly affected [by the earthquakes] mentally, emotionally and financially. They came to stay with us, and they were very upset by the whole situation, especially because there was not enough space. Now, there are 10 people in my home, including my wife and me.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> Together with my family and my mother-in-law, we moved in with my brother-in-law. There are 11 people in a 1+1 flat. It's very small, and we're looking for a flat to move to. My daughter and mother-in-law sleep in the kitchen, my brother-in-law sleeps in his room, and some of us sleep in the living room.
>
> **Female, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

The new living arrangements have deeply impacted the daily chores of participants, significantly increasing the amount of housework. Participants agreed that everyone tries to help each other with the chores, but cultural norms also play a role in the division of labour. For instance, women take on more responsibilities, and hosts feel obligated to assume the primary role as they believe that hosts should take care of everything for their guests. Participants also indicated that although everyone tries to help with the chores, women are primarily responsible for caring for their own kids.

> We all live as one family, and everyone helps around the house. Everyone tries to do what they can. The house is small, it's not like we live in a castle. It's a 2+1 flat, so we can all see what needs to be done in the house. Mothers take care of their own children.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> Even if sometimes chores are too much, we have to do them because, in our culture, the guests should feel like it is their home. I have not seen my guests for five years. When they came, I was very happy because we were reunited.
>
> **Female, Istanbul, non-recipient**

Although there are certain challenges, a few participants noted the silver lining and highlighted the new living arrangements as an opportunity to re-bond with family members whom they could not see for many years. They also mentioned that since the earthquake, their relationships with neighbours improved, as everyone tries to be more understanding toward each other.

> Many people are coming from earthquake area. In my building, I am the only Syrian. When my guests arrived, I felt very happy, as if I found my family, although we were living in the same country. The earthquake built a bond between us. Now we are much closer.
>
> **Female, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

Overall, discussions revealed that the circumstances created by the earthquakes have forced individuals to leave their homes and move in with their family and friends. The new living arrangements were characterized by overcrowding in regular two-to-three-bedroom flats, where, in some cases, more than 20 individuals lived together. The lack of privacy and inadequate living conditions further exacerbated the challenges caused by the earthquake and placed additional strain on the already vulnerable individuals, highlighting the urgent need for more sustainable and suitable housing solutions in the aftermath of the earthquake. Additionally, changes in household compositions could have negative implications for the ESSN status of participants, as individuals might be disqualified from the program due to household characteristics. This indicates a need for further investigation and close monitoring of the situation.

Changes in expenditures

Vulnerable refugee households are forced to host refugee earthquake survivors increasing the number of mouths to feed and the bills to pay.

Expenditures escalated significantly both inside and outside the earthquake region, further exacerbating the vulnerability of refugees, and leading them to use coping strategies. Respondents noted that while everything has become more expensive since the earthquake, rent is the primary expenditure item putting them in a difficult situation. refugees who left the earthquake region have observed that rental prices in Ankara, Istanbul, and Mersin are significantly higher than the prices they used to pay in the earthquake area where rent has also doubled since the disaster struck. Some of the respondents mentioned that despite the significant increase in rents in the earthquake area, they still continue to rent and pay for their old houses due to uncertainty regarding travel permits. Respondents also revealed that they would prefer to rent their own houses in the new provinces where they have moved, but they currently have to share houses with other families due to the high prices, commissions, and the 6-to-12-month advance payments demanded by property owners.

Participants expressed that because of the rapidly increasing expenses, they are employing many coping strategies, including debt, prioritisation of expenses, decreasing the quality of food, and sharing the expenses with other families. The majority of participants indicated debt to be the most common coping strategy used as they are relying solely on debt to cover their expenses. Additionally, the participants revealed that they usually borrow from acquaintances, Syrian relatives, or friends that are in a better financial situation, as well as from Syrian markets.

> After the earthquake, the rents became very high. The rents used to be TRY 2,000, now it is TRY 6,000. Landlords are asking for six months or 1-year rent in advance. I could not find a place to rent under these circumstances.
>
> **Female, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

> Rent has increased, and everything is so expensive. Our rent is TRY 2,000 now, but we had to pay six months in advance, so the landlord does not increase the rent even more. They do this on purpose as a way for them to move us out. If we can't pay, then we have to leave their house.
>
> **Female, Ankara, non-recipient**

The participants also revealed that prioritising basic needs and reducing the quality of food are amongst the other common coping strategies that they rely on to make ends meet. Both host and guest participants noted that they try to spend money only on urgent needs and buy smaller quantities than they used to. Participants also mentioned that they have to purchase low-quality food to meet their expenses. Additionally, guest participants mentioned that sharing expenses with the host family is another coping mechanism they employ. Guest participants emphasised their desire to contribute to the host families' expenses, as they also face financial struggles. However, since many of the guests lost all their capital in the earthquake and continue to pay rent for houses in the affected area, they are also in a dire situation.

> We depend on people's assistance, both Turkish and Iraqi. Some people found out we were from the earthquake zone and posted this on the social media to raise funds for us. They helped us with food and clothes... The ESSN is not enough for the rent, and we don't have any other source of income. We are borrowing money.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> I used to work in repairing furniture, and now I'm working in the industrial site. I have so much debt, and I can't repay it. I'm constantly borrowing from someone only to pay back someone else. Our current landlords are also becoming angry because the number of people in their homes has increased.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

The participants also revealed that prioritising basic needs and reducing the quality of food are amongst the other common coping strategies that they rely on to make ends meet. Both host and guest participants noted that they try to spend money only on urgent needs and buy smaller quantities than they used to. Participants also mentioned that they have to purchase low-quality food to meet their expenses. Additionally, guest participants mentioned that sharing expenses with the host family is another coping mechanism they employ. Guest participants emphasised their desire to contribute to the host families' expenses, as they also face financial struggles. However, since many of the guests lost all their capital in the earthquake and continue to pay rent for houses in the affected area due to uncertainty regarding the travel permits, they are also in a dire situation.

> We came to Türkiye from Syria with nothing. This is the second time we do this. The first time was because of war, now because of this disaster and only God knows what the third time will be like and whether we will make it out alive. Rent is much more expensive here. We will have to cut back on food and our basic needs when we rent a house here.
>
> **Female, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> I was living in Hatay. Currently, I am living with another family in Istanbul, and we share rent and bills, and we pay everything together. Before, we were in a difficult situation, but now the situation is even worse. None of my kids work. I take debts, and my father sends me money from Canada.
>
> **Male, Istanbul, ESSN recipient**

Overall, the FGDs revealed that expenses have significantly increased since the earthquake, with rent being the most challenging expenditure item. It was observed that both host and guest participants are in dire conditions, but the situation is even worse for guest participants as they lost everything under the rubble. It was also found that participants employ several coping mechanisms, such as relying on debt, prioritising some expenses over others, reducing the quality of food, and sharing expenses with other families in order to meet their financial obligations.

Changes in neighbourhood

Turkish people show compassion and understanding to earthquake survivors. Syrian refugees experience increased social cohesion. However, rent doubles in earthquake zone and increases across Türkiye.

Participants expressed that they have observed certain changes in their neighbourhoods, both negative and positive, including increases in rent prices, higher population density, and improved social understanding among residents. Regarding rent prices, host participants provided information on their current neighbourhood, while guest participants offered observations on their previous neighbourhoods in the affected area. Nevertheless, both groups confirmed that rent prices have increased in their neighbourhoods, with the rise being higher in the earthquake-affected area. Additionally, some host participants noted an increase in the population of their neighbourhood since the earthquake, but they did not mention any problems related to it. It is also important to highlight a unique finding specific to the sessions in Istanbul, where participants reported an increased social cohesion with their neighbours since the earthquake. They mentioned that both Syrian and Turkish neighbours are more understanding toward each other, and they demonstrate cooperation to help one another, which comes in the forms of offering financial aid, referring each other to institutions providing aid, and not complaining about noise caused by multiple families sharing the same apartment.

> Our Turkish neighbours who used to complain about the noise stopped complaining about it after learning that I have been hosting relatives from the earthquake area. Also, my landlord came thinking that I rented her home to other people, but when she knew that they are my family, she accepted the situation
>
> **Female, Istanbul, non-recipient**

> My neighbours referred the supporting organizations to us to help when they knew that I am having guests from the affected areas.
>
> **Female, Istanbul, non-recipient**

Altogether, participants observed specific changes in their neighbourhoods since the earthquake; both host and guests confirmed a significant increase in rent prices in earthquake-affected and non-affected provinces. Due to internal movements within the country, they confirmed an increase in population of neighbourhood. Additionally, some participants mentioned improved social cohesion between Syrian and Turkish populations, as during this unprecedented time, individuals try to be more supportive toward people from the earthquake area or families hosting affected individuals.

Availability of livelihood opportunities

Earthquake survivors are unemployed and rely on debt and their vulnerable hosts for financial support.

During the time of the FGDs, the majority of the participants were unemployed due to various reasons, such as lack of job opportunities, age and health-related issues, uncertainty, and lack of work permits. It is important to note that only guests, participants who moved to a new province after the earthquake, mentioned that they are unemployed. The lack of job opportunities was especially emphasised by participants in Mersin, where livelihood opportunities are scarce compared to Ankara and Istanbul. They mentioned that they are struggling to find jobs matching their expertise and sets of skills in Mersin.

> My husband used to work at a driving school in Antakya. We have been here for the last three months, and he still cannot find a job. Job opportunities are very few in Mersin.
>
> **Female, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

Age and health-related issues are identified as other common reasons that restrict individuals' employment opportunities. Participants with chronic health problems and older in age mentioned that their conditions prevent them from finding stable jobs. Furthermore, a few participants noted that even if they find a job, once their health problems arise, employers tend to terminate their employment.

> My husband used to work as a master plumber. He looked for a job for two months, and he found one only very recently.
>
> **Female, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

> My husband is not working right now because of his surgery. He used to work in construction in Malatya. Our hosting family has a shop, and they spend on us. My brother-in-law, who is staying with us too, is also not working. He used to be a teacher at a Syrian school in Adiyaman, but he could not find a job here.
>
> **Female, Ankara, non-recipient**

Regarding work permits, a few participants mentioned that employers ask to see their work permits and require that they pay the necessary fees if they do not have one. Participants stated that the costs exceed their financial capacity, so they are unable to obtain a work permit and, as a result, cannot secure formal employment. In addition, some participants expressed uncertainty around their current situation and mentioned it as one reason behind their current unemployment. One participant cited that they are in the middle of an unknown situation because they do not know whether their travel permits will be extended, which makes them feel trapped and discouraged from seeking a job.

For participants who were working at the time of the FGDs, discussions revealed that they were all engaged in informal jobs, characterised by long working hours with unfair and irregular payment. The most common sectors they engaged in the workforce were identified as shoemaking, industry, construction, unskilled labour, and textile. Nevertheless, regardless of the province and sector, participants mentioned that they were often required to work beyond the official working hours and were unable to receive sufficient and timely payment. Additionally, some participants noted that their employment terminated without receiving any payment before the end of the first month of their jobs.

> I used to run a restaurant with my brother in Hatay, but the restaurant was destroyed in the earthquake. I cannot find a job here because I do not know if I will be staying here. Everything is unknown
> **Female, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

> I have had problems at work where I wasn't paid my full wage. There is no guarantee for anything here. Nothing. We left our country because of the war leaving everything behind, and we had to start from nothing. Now, it is the same all over again. I cannot get a work permit here, there is no guarantee for anything, nothing. I had to leave my first job here and find another because they would not pay me.
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> I am currently retired. One of my sons who came from the earthquake area tried to work as an electrician but was not able to continue because he got sick. He is still sick because of the work he did. He left the house at 15:00 in the afternoon and returned at 10:00 in the morning the next day and only to receive TRY 680. They said they would pay him TRY 700, but they cut off TRY 20. His workplace was one-and-half-hour away from here. He is currently not working. The work hours can be very long and exhausting for some jobs.
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

Although unemployment is found to be a problem mainly experienced by individuals who moved to a new province after the earthquake, a limited number of host participants also expressed certain work-related issues caused by hosting other families. These participants mentioned that hosting families comes with additional responsibilities, such as assisting them in job and housing searches and accompanying them in their visits to health and other services. Since such efforts are primarily carried out during working hours, they experienced problems in the workplace, including conflicts with employers and deductions from payment.

In essence, the FGDs shed light on the complex dynamics surrounding unemployment and livelihood challenges faced by both guest participants and their hosting families. During the FGDs, most guest participants indicated that they were unemployed. While many said they were actively searching for jobs, they also said that their options were limited to informal employment, where they were compelled to work beyond official limits and received irregular and unfair payment. Additionally, age and health-related issues emerged as significant factors restricting participants' livelihood opportunities, alongside the lack of work permits. Although these problems were primarily expressed by the guest participants, the families hosting them also faced work-related challenges due to changes in their household compositions. Recognizing these multifaceted obstacles is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies to address the livelihood needs of the earthquake-affected individuals and families hosting them.

Access to health services

Earthquake survivors are able to access hospitals provided they disclose their travel permits.

In terms of access to health services, the vast majority of participants expressed that they did not encounter any difficulties in meeting their health-related needs in the new provinces they moved to. They said that they were able to receive the necessary services free of charge in public hospitals provided they show their travel permits.

> We did not have any problem in accessing health services. My children got sick when we arrived in Mersin, and I was able to take them to the hospital for treatment. Since we have valid travel permits, we do not experience any problem; however, if our permits aren't renewed, then we will have challenges.
>
> **Male, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

One participant expressed difficulty receiving medical treatment because of the language barrier. Additionally, a different participant was not able to receive the services because PDMM issued one travel permit for the whole family, which caused the hospital to decline the participants.

In summary, discussions clearly indicated that the majority of participants did not experience any problems in accessing health services. They were able to receive free healthcare with their travel permits. However, language barriers and errors in issuing travel permits were identified as some problems preventing participants from receiving necessary medical treatment.

Access to SASFs and PMMs

Earthquake survivors have not faced problems with SASF offices or PMMS, but were concerned about the status of their travel permits which were initially granted for a period of 60 days.

In terms of access to SASF and PMM, and the services provided by these institutions, the majority of the participants expressed that they visited the institutions after the earthquake but did not receive enough support during and after the visits, since those institutions were supporting the EQ response by dealing with the increased workload due to the newly arrived cases. Further, participants revealed that their discontent was primarily caused by problems with address registration, waiting duration for the official documentation, and uncertainty regarding the renewal of travel permits. Although the majority of participants expressed discontent, the second most common response indicated that others did not experience any problem related to these services; participants were able to reach out to these institutions and received the necessary support.

> We have applied for permission to move our IDs to Ankara because our travel permit has expired. We were told not to leave Ankara and not to go back to Adiyaman to sign so that our application can be processed. We do not know what to do.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

Overall, most of the participants were not satisfied with the services they received from SASFs and PMMs due to issues with address registration, long waiting times for official documentation, and uncertainty regarding the renewal of travel permits, while other participants did not encounter any problems related to these services.

Access to ESSN Support

Earthquake survivors continue to have access to the ESSN, but are finding it insufficient as their own source of income.

Guest participants did not express any problem with access to ESSN after the earthquake; they were able to use their ESSN cards in the new provinces they moved to. Despite participants noting that ESSN provides important support, especially during these unprecedented times, they think that the transfer value is not enough to provide them a proper living. During the discussions, it was also observed that some participants experience difficulty understanding the ESSN criteria. Overall, no earthquake-related problems emerged in participants' access to ESSN support.

Changes in Children's Education Life

Most earthquake survivors are sending their children to school, but some have been traumatised and are unable to attend school.

Regarding changes in children's education, the majority of guest participants mentioned that their school-aged children continue education in the new province without any problems. An equal number of responses, however, indicated that children are not attending school since the earthquake. For those who continue their education in the new province, participants said that they were able to register their children in schools using the travel permit. Discussions suggested that during this period, schools did not require families to purchase school uniforms for children, and provided students with textbooks, which are provided free of charge in public schools across the country. Participants were also satisfied with the quality of education in the new cities they moved to, as they believed it to be better than what their children received in the earthquake-affected area. The participants also frequently mentioned that teachers personally did their best to support students coming from the earthquake area. Some teachers provided families with cash and in-kind assistance, including clothes for kids and food for the families. It is important to note that participants did not report any communication issues between children and their new classmates.

> My three daughters are going to school, one is in the eighth grade, and one is going to nursing school. A Turkish person I met here told me about the nursing school, and I immediately went and enrolled her because it is also my daughter's area of specialisation. I enrolled them all at school within a week after we arrived here; they were also all going to school in Hatay. I want my daughters to complete their education.
>
> **Female, Ankara, Non-recipient**

Participants revealed several reasons for the discontinuation of children to their education since the earthquake, including issues with travel permits and address registration, lack of knowledge on how to register children for school, inability to afford transportation, schools rejecting registration, and children's unwillingness to attend school. The most common reason preventing children from continuing their education is identified as issues related to travel permits and address registration. In Türkiye, children are enrolled in public schools based on their address registration, which requires them to attend the closest school to their address [7]. Participants were unable to register their children in schools as many of them had not changed their address. Related to address registration, some participants mentioned uncertainty on the extension of travel permits as another reason for not registering the new addresses and consequently not sending their kids to school.

The second most common response indicated a lack of knowledge on how to register kids for school. Some participants mentioned that since they were unfamiliar with the registration procedure, they did not send their kids to school. Another reason for not sending children to school was the cost of transportation. Although children are required to register at the closest school to their address, some families live in distant areas where children need to use public transportation or private school buses to travel to school. This additional financial burden, on top of their already damaged family economy, led them to choose not to send their kids to school.

> There is a school close to our home, but there is no place for new students. They asked me to bring a document [address registration document] from the mukhtar. However, there is uncertainty regarding the extension of the travel permit and whether we will be able to change the address and residency of the province. I do not send my kids to school because of these reasons. They are working now.
>
> **Mersin, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

> My daughter used to go to school in Antakya; however, in Mersin, she could not continue her education as we do not know how to register her in the school.
>
> **Female, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

> I have six school-aged children. Two of my children's school is far away the home, and I cannot afford to pay for transportation.
>
> **Female, Mersin, ESSN recipient**

In addition to the aforementioned issues, some participants expressed that the children themselves are not willing to continue their education. Despite education being compulsory from the beginning of primary school to the end of high school in Türkiye, these participants noted that they do not send their kids to school, as their children have lost interest in pursuing their education. Furthermore, one participant mentioned that they tried to register their kids, but the school administration did not accept their request. Unfortunately, the reason behind the rejection was not elaborated upon, leaving it rather unanswered.

[7] Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (2022). "Ana sınıfı, ilkokul ve ortaokula başlayacak öğrencilerin kayıtları, adrese dayalı olarak yapıldı." Accessed 8 June 2023.

In summary, while the majority of guest participants mentioned that their school-aged children continue their education in the new province without any problems, an equal number of participants noted that their children are not attending school since the earthquake. This can be attributed to various reasons, including issues with travel permits and address registration, a lack of knowledge on how to register children for school, inability to afford transportation, schools rejecting registration, and children's unwillingness to attend school. Another important factor identified is the traumatic impact of the earthquake on children's psychological well-being, which further discourages their attendance at school. These factors collectively contribute to the varying experiences and challenges faced by families in ensuring their children's education following the earthquake.

Projections for Future

Most earthquake survivors wish to stay in their new province of residence. Their long-term plans include moving to Europe.

Participants provided a variety of projections concerning their future plans, including staying in the new province, going back to the earthquake area, applying for citizenship, moving to Europe, and inability to make any plans due to uncertainty. Most of the participants said that they would like to stay in the new province. They expressed a desire to find good jobs and settle in the new province, as they believe there is nothing left for them in the affected area. The second most common response was identified as going back to the affected area. Participants noted that they would consider returning to their old province if they were able to find an affordable house or be selected for a container home. However, it is important to note that some participants expressed their inability to make any projections for the future due to the ongoing uncertainty and the lingering shock of the earthquake. They stated that everything is ambiguous right now due to the lack of information on the renewal of travel permits, so they are just living day by day and waiting to see what the future holds.

> It is just better not to think. I can live here, but my future looks very dark. I cannot find a job, and I cannot do anything because I do not even know if I am going to stay here. What if they send me back? There are renewals for the travel permit, but even those are temporary.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> I prefer to stay here if I can move our IDs here. There's nothing left for us in Hatay anymore. The city is completely destroyed. I'm a tailor. I have nothing for me there. I would like to stay here.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

Furthermore, some participants expressed a desire to move to Europe, while others were considering for Turkish citizenship. Among those interested in moving to Europe, it was found that only a few participants had actually taken steps to engage in the resettlement procedure with UNHCR, while the majority had expressed their plans as mere desires without concrete actions. Participants considering Turkish citizenship expressed their desire based on the challenging living conditions faced by individuals under temporary and/or international protection. They believed that obtaining Turkish citizenship would provide them with the benefits and stability that citizens enjoy. It is worth mentioning that a few participants approached the idea of citizenship from the perspective of their children. They mentioned that since their children were born and raised in Türkiye, they feel more connected to Turkish culture and identity than they feel so for Syrian culture. Therefore, they expressed a desire to see their children obtain Turkish citizenship. In addition, only one participant mentioned that they would like to move back to Iraq, their homeland, if the situation there stabilizes in the future.

> If the travel permit is renewed, I can stay here. I lived in Gaziantep since 2012, it is my home. I am thinking of applying for citizenship. My children are more Turkish than Syrian now – they do not even speak Arabic properly.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

> When we first arrived in Türkiye, my eldest son was in the fourth grade. They [my children] tell me that if we go back to Syria, we can't do anything there. They don't want to go back to Syria.
>
> **Male, Ankara, ESSN recipient**

In essence, the majority of the participants expressed their intention to stay in the new city, seeking better job opportunities and a fresh start. Another significant response was the consideration of returning to the affected area, contingent upon finding affordable housing or container homes. Additionally, some participants expressed a desire to move to Europe, but it was found that only a few had taken concrete steps in the resettlement process with UNHCR. On the other hand, there were participants who were considering applying for Turkish citizenship, driven by the challenging living conditions faced by those under temporary or international protection. They believed citizenship would provide them with greater benefits and stability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Kahramanmaras earthquakes led to dramatic changes in the living conditions of the refugees in Türkiye. Displaced individuals have moved with relatives or friends in provinces outside the earthquake zone, leading to overcrowded living spaces lacking privacy and adequate conditions. New living arrangements resulted in many challenges, including increased household chores and financial burdens for households already struggling to meet their basic needs before the earthquake.

The vulnerabilities of the affected population have been further amplified due to significant increases in expenditures and overall prices since the earthquake. Negative coping strategies such as borrowing money, prioritization among expenses, and compromising on the quality of food are used by refugee families. In addition, particular challenges in livelihood opportunities were reported. The uncertainty surrounding travel permits, age, and health-related issues made it difficult for survivors to secure formal employment opportunities.

Furthermore, children's education life and well-being are affected by the earthquake. Some of the families were not able to enroll their children at school in the new provinces because of various reasons, including issues with travel permits and address registration, a lack of knowledge on how to register children for school, inability to afford transportation, schools rejecting registration, and children's unwillingness to attend school. One particular finding identified for children's discontinuation of education was the traumatic impact of the earthquake on children's psychological well-being.

All in all, the multifaceted challenges that earthquake survivors face require comprehensive support and interventions to address their unique needs and ensure their well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue identified	Suggestion
Increased expenditure	**Ad hoc top ups** to decrease the reliance on the negative coping strategies currently employed by host and guest refugee families, such as relying on borrowing money and food, buying less quantities of food, prioritising of expenses amongst others mentioned above.
Traumatised families	Providing **psychosocial support** to earthquake survivors, especially to children, or sensitising them about the services in the community centres.
Unemployment and reliance on debt	Referring these individuals to the community centres or to 168 so that they are referred to livelihood opportunities that match their skills.
Children's discontinuation of education	**Sensitising families** about the importance of education and encouraging them to support their children with education. Additionally, families willing to enrol their children but are financially unable to can be given a **financial stipend** dependent on their children's attendance at school.

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)

The world's largest humanitarian network

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 192 National Societies, including Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent), through the work of 13.7 million volunteers. Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. The IFRC has been leading large-scale cash programmes for decades in response to a broad spectrum of disasters around the globe, including its largest programme ever – the ESSN in Türkiye with Turkish Red Crescent.

TÜRK KIZILAY (TURKISH RED CRESCENT)

The largest humanitarian organization in Türkiye

The Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent) is the largest humanitarian organization in Türkiye, to help vulnerable people in and out of disasters for years, both in the country and abroad. Millions of people currently receive support through our programmes in cooperation with the Government of Türkiye. We are supporting vulnerable people impacted by disasters and other groups in need of humanitarian assistance.

THE "KIZILAYKART"

The Turkish Red Crescent is a humanitarian cash leader in Türkiye and has the well-established "Kizilaykart", which allows them to provide millions of people cash assistance through a debit card. The Kizilaykart initially provided cash assistance to Turkish citizens and has now transformed into a large-scale cash-based assistance platform that has integrated refugees into the existing national social assistance network, providing different programmes such as education, basic needs, vocational training and language courses in order to meet the needs of vulnerable people. The Kizilaykart implements the largest cash programme in the world and the largest in the European Union's history, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN).