

## Making Learning Fun!

*The European Union is one of UNHCR's most generous donors in Turkey. Targetted for the out-of-camp Syrian population, part of its 10 million Euro support over two years is for procuring teaching materials for 130 urban Temporary Education Centres (TECs) for Syrian refugees in Turkey. The bulk of the EU contribution goes towards building capacity for government institutions, improving co-ordination, registration and assistance for Syrian refugees in Turkey.*

HATAY, Turkey. 9 June (UNHCR): Its boxes filled with exciting material. Bright, colourful alphabet cards in Turkish and Arabic, charts with Turkish vocabulary, abacuses, demonstration items for teaching basic mathematics concepts, maps of Turkey and the region, bilingual dictionaries and science and biology charts for older learners that make learning simple and fun.

“When the boxes first arrived and we opened them, the children were so happy,” says Huda (27) a young Syrian teacher at the Temporary Education Centre (TEC) in Narlica, a district of Hatay that hosts a large number of Syrians. “Why didn’t you put them up before, they asked,” she says with a smile.

Huda is one of 16 teachers at the Ibad-al-Rahman school (TEC). They have about 260 students, through Grades 1 to 6. As in all other officially recognized TECs, the children are taught in Arabic using a modified form of the Syrian curriculum; Turkish classes are also offered.

Huda teaches Grade 1 (six to eight year olds). She studied in Damascus and managed to complete her degree, despite the bombs, the violence, and the war. Along with her mother and brother and two sisters, they fled a year and a half ago. Her father chose to stay back –he could not bear to leave Syria. “He knows we are safe here,” she says.

Her eyes light up when she talks of the education material, developed in close consultation with the

Ministry of National Education, received by the TEC from UNHCR, with the funding support of the European Union (EU). “It is essential for children to have visual material to learn –without this, it is difficult to hold their attention. First-graders are hungry to learn –these materials are very welcome. They find it easier to follow lessons and it stays in their minds longer, when they are able to see what I am talking about.”

Farida (51) teaches Turkish at the school. “Our students are talented and they learn Turkish easily,” she says. Grateful for the material received, she adds that all of it is very useful. “We use everything you sent us. Specially the charts on the sciences: physics,



*Huda, using one of the charts in her class at the Ibad-al-Rahman school in Narlica, Hatay. ©UNHCR/N.Bose*



*The Alphabet cards make learning fun!*  
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the human body, biology are the most useful. These are expensive to find and buy – other things, we can manage. But these charts are excellent.”

In another school, the Baraem-al-Shuhada TEC in Hatay, which prides itself on being the first school for children who were orphaned by the war in Syria, children wait impatiently to open the alphabet cards. The school has 250 students and 19 teachers. Latifa (35) is the English teacher at the school. In Hatay with her husband who is unemployed and her three children, she is the bread winner of the family. “We were wealthy,” she says wistfully, thinking of her life in Damascus. “Here, I try to provide enough for my children so that they don’t feel inferior.”

She looks at the material with pride. “The material is very good—printed beautifully. We need the flash cards (alphabet cards) and colour cards. I am teaching the children how to make words and sentences with flash cards.”

About 10% of the generous 10 million Euro provided by the EU through its project for “*Protection and Provision of Basic Services to out-of-camp Syrian Refugees*” to be used over a span of 24 months, goes towards providing education material to a 130 schools (TECs) in urban areas all over Turkey. In Hatay, an area that borders Syria, there are about 33,000 Syrian refugee children enrolled in schools (TECs), with another 16,000 who are of school going age. As of May 2015, only 36% of school-aged Syrian refugee children were enrolled in formal education programmes, with 99,112 enrolled in TECs in urban areas across Turkey. Although school enrolment rates are high in camps, they reduce sharply in urban areas.

The EU has been a traditional donor to UNHCR Turkey in the past decades. Since the Syrian crisis, EU has scaled up its support to UNHCR to strengthen the capacity of national institutions through extensive training activities, reinforce the national registration, health and education infrastructures to cope with additional needs brought by the large presence of Syrians, support a mass information campaign for refugees and host communities, provide core relief items to non-camp refugees and enhance UNHCR’s coordination role among humanitarian agencies.

Increased support to UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies in the coming years is currently being discussed.

The funding by the EU through this project reaches out to all levels---government officials who are capable of making policy changes so that refugees benefit, communities, even refugee children and their teachers. It impacts people like Huda who are touched by the project in simple ways, making a difference in everyday life. “I used to make charts for children to learn. Now, I don’t have to,” she laughs.

UNHCR remains grateful to all its donors for the impact their generous contributions continue to make for a population so desperately in need.

By: Nayana Bose, in Hatay

Next month: Focus on the contribution from Japan to UNHCR, Turkey



Boys wait to open the packets of flash cards at the Bareem-al-Shuhada school. ©UNHCR/N.Bose

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