

Localization Strategy for the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) – Turkiye

Background

Turkiye hosts one of the world's largest refugee populations, with over 2.45 million refugees and asylum seekers with the majority from Syria under temporary protection.¹ Approximately 1 million are school aged children of which 85.4% are enrolled in school, placing ongoing pressure on the national education system. However, 150,520 children, nearly 15% and almost 45% girls, remain out of school.² These figures underscore the need for coordinated, inclusive and localized efforts to address the educational needs of out-of-school and at risk children to ensure their full inclusion in education.

Within this context, the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) focuses on supporting improved access and quality of education, promoting refugee inclusion in education and strengthening resilience and self-reliance in line with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and national priorities. Established in 2013 through consultations with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), UNHCR, and NGOs, the ESWG serves as a central coordination platform for education in refugee and crisis-affected contexts.

The ESWG operates through a national and sub-national coordination model. The national Education Sector Working Group, led by UNICEF in close collaboration with MoNE, provides strategic guidance, policy alignment, development of standards and tools, capacity development and engagement with inter-agency and inter-sectoral bodies. Sub-national ESWG groups in Gaziantep, Istanbul, and Izmir translate national strategies into localized action, ensuring context-specific responses while maintaining alignment with national frameworks. This structure has enhanced coherence, reduced duplication, and supported shared accountability across diverse operational environments.

Through this collaborative model, the ESWG supports joint planning, information management, needs assessments, advocacy, resource mobilization, and monitoring under the 3RP framework. And in the aftermath of the 2023 earthquakes the ESWG played a critical role in coordinating humanitarian education interventions while supporting a gradual shift toward recovery, systems strengthening, and longer-term inclusion.

Purpose (Why Localisation)

Given the protracted nature of the refugee response and the growing capacity of national and local actors, there is increasing need to advance a more localized coordination model which responds to diverse local education needs and the growing capacity of government institutions and local civil society. In response, a localisation strategy is proposed which aims to enable more agile, context specific coordination, and expand the role of national and local NGOs as key implementers and community connectors building on existing roles, responsibilities, and coordination structures under the current Terms of Reference of the ESWG.

¹ Including over 2.3 million Syrians under temporary protection and around 148,000 individuals under international protection
<https://www.goc.gov.tr/goc-ve-aile-temali-4-uluslararası-goc-konferansı-goc-ıdaresi-baskani-huseyin-kokun-katılımiyla-gercekleştirild-merkezicerik>

² MoNE 2025-2026

The approach shifts greater leadership in coordination over the coming year, empowering local organizations, and ensuring coordination remains sustainable, context-responsive, and accountable to affected populations. The localization aligns with the ESWG's current operational realities while preparing the sector to address Türkiye's long-term education priorities. The ESWG's localization process is designed as a phased, collaborative transition toward a more nationally led, locally responsive, and sustainable coordination model.

Scope of Localisation

The ESWG Localisation Strategy applies at both national and sub-national/regional levels³ and aims to strengthen education sector working group coordination through shared leadership, meaningful participation, and phased delegation of responsibilities.

At the national level, UNICEF will continue to serve as sector lead, supported by a national or local NGO as co-lead. Functions requiring national coherence, authority, and consistency will remain centralized, including education policy engagement, inter-agency and donor representation, overall 3RP strategy development, consolidated reporting, sector-wide standards and tools, and politically sensitive advocacy. These functions will be informed by structured inputs from sub-national platforms and supported by the national co-lead.

At the sub-national level, regional platforms will be co-led by locally based organisations, with UNICEF serving as lead, to strengthen operational coordination and contextual leadership. This includes convening coordination meetings, identifying region-specific priorities and risks, consolidating partner inputs, and supporting follow-up on agreed actions in close coordination with national ESWG leadership.

The national–sub-national interface will be structured and two-way. Sub-national ESWG platforms will provide standardized inputs—such as needs, access constraints, operational bottlenecks, problem logs, and community feedback—to inform national analysis, planning, and 3RP processes, while national-level guidance, tools, and standards will be cascaded to regional platforms to ensure coherence and quality.

Proposed Actions

The ESWG Localisation Strategy promotes a phased move toward locally led coordination at national and sub-national levels by strengthening shared leadership and meaningful participation of national and local actors. It adapts coordination structures to progressively delegate leadership and accountability to local partners, while UNICEF retains overall leadership and ensures coherence with government systems and inter-agency coordination frameworks.

Actionable Localisation Framework: National and Sub-National Leadership (HOW)

i. Identification and Endorsement of National and Local ESWG Co-Leads

A transparent and consultative process will identify and endorse national and local ESWG co-leads at both national and sub-national levels. The identification of co-leads will be undertaken in consultation

³ Regional coordination structures refer to structures located in 3 regions: Southeast, Marmara, and Aegean, established based on operational realities, displacement patterns, and partner presence rather than formal administrative divisions.

with ESWG sector members, drawing on agreed criteria such as institutional credibility, technical capacity, representativeness, and demonstrated ability to engage constructively with government counterparts.

This approach formalises shared coordination leadership, ensuring that national and local actors play an active role in guiding coordination mechanisms. It also enables a progressive and structured transition towards strengthened national NGO leadership at national-sub-national levels over time, in line with ESWG localisation.

ii. ESWG Co-Leadership Roles, and Responsibilities,

Under the ESWG Türkiye localisation framework, education sector coordination will transition from a UNICEF-only leadership arrangement to a structured co-leadership model at both national and sub-national levels, with national and local NGOs defined education coordination roles. UNICEF will retain overall leadership and oversight of the ESWG, ensuring alignment with national education policies, standards, and MoNE priorities through ongoing government engagement, while providing strategic and technical leadership, leading sector advocacy and inter-agency representation, and safeguarding the quality, accountability, information management, and reporting of education sector coordination.

National and local NGO co-leads will support the facilitation of agreed coordination functions, contributing contextual expertise, strengthening sub-national education coordination, and reinforcing linkages between national-level planning and sub-national implementation realities.

Through structured engagement with sub-national platforms and the consistent use of Activity Info and sector-wide assessment tools, co-leads will strengthen partner reporting, data collection, and joint analysis, ensuring that field-level evidence informs national planning, coordination, and advocacy. This approach will progressively move ESWG coordination from a largely centralised model toward a shared, nationally anchored, and locally driven system that enhances sustainability, accountability, and contextual relevance across Türkiye.

At sub-national level, co-lead roles are planned to be gradually introduced, with responsibility for supporting coordination of Education Working Groups in collaboration with relevant local authorities. These roles would include facilitating partner participation, supporting activity mapping, identifying local education needs and gaps, and contributing to ESWG assessments, data collection, monitoring, and back-to-school or emergency response initiatives. Sub-national co-leads would play a key role in ensuring that local priorities, challenges, and recommendations are systematically channelled into national ESWG discussions and planning processes.

Operationally, the proposed delegation framework is intended to guide a gradual shift from a centralised, UNICEF-led coordination model toward a more shared and distributed system over time. This approach is expected to strengthen national NGO leadership and ownership of coordination processes, reduce operational pressures at the national level through phased delegation, and enable timely and context-responsive coordination at sub-national levels, while maintaining alignment with nationally agreed standards and frameworks. Clear and transparent coordination linkages between national and sub-national platforms will be established to support information-sharing, mutual accountability, and

coherent action, while preserving a collaborative sector coordination approach rather than hierarchical reporting lines.

The ESWG Terms of Reference will be revised to institutionalise the co-leadership model, embedding localisation principles, such as equitable participation, transparency, mentoring and peer learning, progressive delegation, alignment with national systems, inclusion and diversity as core operating standards.

Following agreement on the revised ToRs and the consultative identification of national NGO co-lead(s), UNICEF led ESWG Türkiye will gradually introduce local co-chairing of national and sub-national ESWG meetings. UNICEF will continue to serve as sector lead, with national and local co-leads jointly supporting coordination to strengthen local ownership and contextual responsiveness. Coordination across 3RP, non-3RP, and earthquake contexts will be enabled through inclusive coordination mechanisms, joint planning, hybrid national meetings, and sub-national meetings convened through PDoNE platforms.

iii. Capacity Strengthening of Co-Leads and Local Actors:

Under UNICEF's leadership as sector lead, and in close collaboration with national and sub-national co-leads, UNICEF will strengthen co-lead(s) capacities at national and sub national levels through mentoring and practical support to enable effective coordination and delivery of quality education responses. Through active co-lead engagement in coordination mechanisms, including those related to out-of-school children, education in emergencies, data and information management, and advocacy—will be systematically identified and addressed through partner engagement, coordination feedback, and regular review of reporting and participation.

Annex

Localisation Action Matrix – ESWG Türkiye (WHAT / WHERE / WHO / WHY / WHEN)

WHAT changes	WHERE (Level)	WHO leads / co-leads	WHY (Localisation value)	WHEN
Introduce shared leadership and co-steering of ESWG	National & Sub-National	UNICEF as National with Local ESWG Co-Leads	Builds national and local ownership while keeping coordination aligned and consistent across the sector.	0–6 months (design and implement);
Transition from UNICEF-only leadership to a co-leadership model	National & Sub-National	UNICEF (Sector Lead) with National & Local NGO Co-Leads	Strengthens national and local leadership and ownership within sector coordination, while maintaining coherence, alignment, and accountability.	0–9 months
Revise ESWG ToRs to formalize co-leadership	National	UNICEF, ESWG Members	Embeds localisation principles as core operating standards	0–3 months
Initiate local co-chairing of ESWG meetings	Sub-National	Local ESWG Co-Leads, PDoNEs	Normalizes local leadership and increases relevance of coordination discussions	0–9 months
Strengthen coordination capacity through mentorship and peer learning	National & Sub-National	UNICEF/ESWG	Builds sustainable national and local coordination capacity over time	0–12 months (continuous)
Ensures inclusive coordination across 3RP, non-3RP, and earthquake responses while aligning sector coordination processes with national systems.	National & Sub-National	UNICEF, ESWG and MoNE	Promotes coherent, inclusive, and continuous coordination across response modalities while strengthening MoNE/PDoNEs overall leadership and long-term sustainability.	0–12 months /continuous
Strengthens information management and sector-wide assessments by integrating localised data and promoting evidence-based coordination and decision-making.	National & Sub-National	ESWG IM Focal Points	Improves responsiveness, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making	0–12 months/ continuous

Timeline indicates phased implementation over 24 months, with early design and piloting in the first year and consolidation and scale-up in the second year.

Contact us

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