

# Turkey



Nesrine fled from Eastern Ghouta to a collective shelter for internally displaced families; WFP/Dina Elkassaby

## Contents

### Field Articles

- 141** DRC experiences of cash assistance to non-camp refugees in Turkey and Lebanon
- 145** Experiences of the e-Food card programme in the Turkish refugee camps

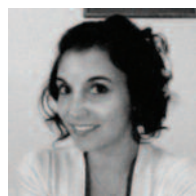
### Views

- 148** A day in the life of a WFP field monitor working in the Syrian refugee camps in south-eastern Turkey

## DRC experiences of cash assistance to non-camp refugees in Turkey and Lebanon

**DRC** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL

By Louisa Seferis



Louisa is the MENA Regional Livelihoods & Cash Advisor for the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). She has worked for three years with the DRC for the Syrian crisis on livelihoods, cash and emergency programming in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Prior to 2011, she worked for four years in Africa on conflict and displacement through

protection, livelihood, and reconciliation initiatives with international NGOs. She holds a master's degree in humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution from Tufts University.

The author would like to thank the DRC teams for their continued work with Syrians across the region, in particular the DRC Turkey and DRC Lebanon teams for their dedication to beneficiary-focused, evidence-based programming. Thank you also to DFID for its

innovative approach to funding DRC in Turkey, and to ECHO and UNHCR for their regional partnerships with DRC on the Syrian crisis.

The abstract was submitted for the ENN Technical Meeting on nutrition at Oxford (7-9 October 2014), and DRC presented the concept during the marketplace presentations. The box on benefits and risks of cash transfer programming was also published in a DRC Evaluation and Learning Brief.

Cash programming has been used on an unprecedented scale in the Syrian crisis, largely due to the urbanised nature of the Syrian refugee caseload in affected countries and the well-developed markets and banking systems. This article outlines the main contexts in which urban Syrian refugees find themselves and their specific vulnerabilities, especially with regards to access to labour markets, credit and assistance. Unusually, we have found a need to understand and respond to the psychosocial needs of men, given how the crisis has undermined their provider role in the family. Until now, the humanitarian response has failed to address this issue adequately. The article will also review, from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)'s perspective, how humanitarian programming for non-camp refugees in Lebanon and Turkey has evolved in order more holistically to meet refugees' changing needs in the face of protracted displacement, incorporating more traditional humanitarian responses with innovative and large-scale cash programming. Finally, the article will explore DRC's experiences and share observations around conditional versus unconditional cash.

### Programming context

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Syria's neighbouring countries have dealt with

the refugee influx in various ways – building numerous and well-equipped camps in Turkey, providing blanket assistance to all registered refugees in Lebanon, and establishing massive camps and processing centres at the Syrian border in Jordan. Regardless of the initial approach, by 2012, Syria's neighbours all hosted a significant number of non-camp refugees, many of whom settled in urban areas in the hopes of accessing income opportunities. In 2014, Syrians outside of camps constitute the majority of Syrian refugees in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

DRC has been present in the Middle East, and in particular in Syria and Lebanon, since 2007. While programmes in Syria focused on mainly Iraqi and Somali refugees in urban areas, in Lebanon, DRC started a small programme to support Palestinian youth vis-à-vis livelihoods and self-reliance. The onset of the Syrian crisis shifted DRC Lebanon's focus to provide emergency assistance to Syrian refugees, later expanding the intervention to a holistic approach involving protection, community services and livelihood initiatives. DRC began its operations in Turkey in early 2013, modelling its response after successful interventions in Lebanon and elsewhere that concentrated on non-camp refugee populations. Given the scale of needs and the urban displacement context, DRC considered cash transfers a

relevant and cost-efficient way to provide assistance. In late 2013, DRC Lebanon embarked on a large-scale unconditional cash assistance programme to support families during the winter,<sup>2</sup> and in 2014, DRC Turkey initiated cash assistance through a DFID two-year grant aimed at providing assistance to vulnerable families and transitioning to livelihoods support in 2015 (project on-going).

### The situation in Turkey

Turkey is the host country with the largest network of camps for Syrian refugees (civilians and combatants). While the number of refugees within camps in Turkey peaked by the end of March 2014 at just over 224,000 people, according to UNHCR, the number of non-camp refugees has steadily increased to over 564,000 by mid June 2014 – a 61.1% increase since the end of 2013. The majority of non-camp refugees live in southern Turkey in provinces along the border, with the largest concentrations in Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Hatay and Kilis provinces. There are over 166,262 non-camp refugees in Gaziantep,

<sup>1</sup> <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, please see [http://www.cashlearning.org/resources/library/417-unconditional-cash-assistance-via-e-transfer-implementation-lessonslearned?keywords=danish+refugee+council&country=all&sector=all&modality=all&language=all&payment\\_method=all&document\\_type=all&searched=1&x=58&y=15](http://www.cashlearning.org/resources/library/417-unconditional-cash-assistance-via-e-transfer-implementation-lessonslearned?keywords=danish+refugee+council&country=all&sector=all&modality=all&language=all&payment_method=all&document_type=all&searched=1&x=58&y=15).

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR SitRep, 7 July 2014



DRC/IMPR Community Centre in Urfa province, Turkey



108,349 in Sanliurfa, 134,275 in Hatay, and 45,200 in Kilis<sup>3</sup>. There are probably more non-camp refugees in these provinces who have not registered with AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey) and are therefore not reported by UNHCR. The majority of non-camp Syrian refugees in Turkey live in urban or peri-urban areas, renting and sharing accommodation with an average of 1-4 other families and surviving through temporary employment (mainly daily/monthly labour) and minimal assistance. Since May 2014, DRC Turkey has assessed 2,100 Syrian families in Hatay province, southern Turkey. Their main concerns, challenges, income and rental costs are shared in Box 1.

The majority of households assessed (75%) share all expenses between the households and individuals sharing a dwelling, which includes food and heating.

## Box 1

### Assessment results of 2,100 Syrian families in Hatay province, southern Turkey

#### Refugees' main concerns and challenges (households could report more than one concern):

- 86% reported a lack of job or self-employment opportunities
- 66% reported they had an insufficient food supply
- 60% faced discrimination by the host community
- 77% reported difficult access to humanitarian assistance

#### Income per month:

- 16% of households assessed earn 800 TL or more (approx. 400 USD)
- 34% earn between 500 and 800 TL (approx. 250-400 USD)
- 22% between 300 and 500 TL (150-250 USD)
- 9% earn between 100 and 300 TL (50-150 USD)
- 1% earn between 1 and 100 TL (up to 50 USD)
- 18% reported zero income

70% of households reporting a monthly income said the main source of income was labour.

10% indicated that their main source of income was selling assets and/or using savings.

#### Rent:

- 43% pay rent between 100-300 TL (50-250 USD)
- 41.5% between 300-500 TL (150-250 USD)
- 11% pay rent of 500 TL or more (250 USD)
- 1.5% pay up to 100 TL (50 USD), and 3% do not pay rent (hosted by other families)

#### Number of people per dwelling:

- 45% of households live in dwellings with 6-10 people
- 34% of households live with 1-5 people
- 21% live with over 10 people in a dwelling

The majority of households assessed (75%) share all expenses between the households and individuals sharing a dwelling, which includes food and heating.

In Turkey, refugees outside of camps face integration challenges such as language barriers<sup>4</sup> and very few social ties, resulting in higher tensions with local communities and difficulty finding employment. Syrians in Turkey have very few opportunities to access credit with shops, and landlords generally demand rent/utility payments every month without exception or flexibility. Syrian men who do manage to find temporary jobs (daily, weekly, or sometimes monthly) often complain that they are not paid at the end of the work, and they cannot pursue any legal recourse because they have no right to work in Turkey.<sup>5</sup> They say the Turkish employer will just find another Syrian to replace him, and generally not pay him either. Refugees say that working more in Syria means improving your quality of life; "in Turkey, working more means just trying to survive."

Syrian Kurds are the notable exception, as they can integrate into Kurdish areas of southern Turkey (e.g. Urfa Province) and enjoy better access to social networks and community support. This is also consistent with findings from DRC's livelihood programming in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, where Syrian Kurds who receive business grants have a high success rate due to their social networks and therefore access to credit, resources, connections and a customer base.

### The situation in Lebanon

Lebanon hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees in the region, both in terms of absolute numbers (over 1,138,000 refugees) and as the greatest proportion of its population (over one-fifth of the total population currently in Lebanon is now Syrian).<sup>6</sup> Given the initial small number of refugees and significant humanitarian presence, agencies provided assistance to all registered refugees (with some organisations focusing on the smaller number of unregistered refugees). Between 2012 and 2013, the refugee population grew exponentially and the humanitarian community struggled to maintain the same level of assistance. At the same time, the government did not change its 'no camp' policy, which meant refugees sought shelter through any means possible – renting with other families, inhabiting unfinished buildings, living in informal tented settlements, etc. Hosting "fatigue" and reduction in humanitarian assistance compounded refugees' difficult situations; since the end of 2013, the humanitarian community has drastically reduced its assistance, from providing cash and in-kind assistance to 70% of registered refugees to now planning cash assistance to 5-10% of refugees.

Finally, the cost of living in Lebanon is also extremely high and meeting basic needs is difficult, especially for Syrians used to the same standard of living for much less. The cost of living in Syria remains significantly lower than in Lebanon. Despite inflation within Syria due to the conflict, many basic goods (food/non-food) are still subsidised by the Syrian government or produced locally – albeit in a much more limited capacity than before the conflict. Moreover, the devaluation of the Syrian pound offsets

the increased prices in the black market, which is still cheaper than Lebanese markets.

### Lebanon v Turkey context

In both Lebanon and Turkey, Syrians face challenges to generate stable income, which in turn affects their ability to meet basic needs as assistance wanes. Oversaturated labour markets, particularly for unskilled workers, either mean that there are fewer job opportunities or the jobs available put Syrian refugees in competition with the host community labour force. Syrians, generally willing to work for less pay than the host community, often crowd out local labour. This is particularly true for sectors such as construction, agricultural work, daily or temporary work and the service industry. For example, restaurants in some parts of southern Turkey often now employ young Syrian boys, starting from around 10 years old, to clear tables, wash dishes and translate for Arabic-speaking customers.

While many programme elements are similar between Turkey and Lebanon because non-camp refugees in both countries face similar challenges (lack of employment, high cost of living, especially rent/food, etc.), there are also marked differences. In Lebanon, there are no camps so all refugees are essentially 'non-camp.' The ties that existed between Syria and Lebanon prior to the conflict have eased refugees' integration – notably the language and exchange of goods and services (approximately 500,000 Syrians worked in Lebanon prior to the conflict, many of them seasonally). Syrians in Lebanon also have access to credit in local shops to buy foods and goods, or with landlords to delay rent payment when families have no income. However, the existing ties and similarities between Syria and Lebanon have also given rise to tensions based on communities' affiliations, many of which are exacerbated by humanitarian assistance to Syrians only. Syrians were perceived to receive huge amounts of assistance, while the Lebanese received nothing, and Syrians were "stealing" jobs from local communities because they were willing to work for much less. In Turkey, the social ties between refugees and local communities are minimal (Kurds being the exception), which means Syrians faced integration issues from the beginning. They also have limited to no access to credit, so they rely more on assistance, income and selling assets to make ends meet per month – landlords and shop owners rarely give refugees a 'grace period' to pay bills.

### The psychological effects of the Syrian crisis

The majority of humanitarian protection and social responses concentrate on services to

<sup>4</sup> In Hatay Province, 66% of Syrian families assessed by DRC reported that the language barrier was a main problem they faced in Turkey.

<sup>5</sup> In order to apply for a work permit, Syrians must have residency papers – these are difficult to obtain in general, and the most vulnerable families do not have valid passports (required for the residency application). In 2014, Turkish authorities may loosen restrictions on applying for work permits through bylaws (exemptions for certain sectors/occupations or geographic areas).

<sup>6</sup> Source: UNHCR, 2014. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

women and children, who are perceived as the most marginalised groups. However, in this crisis, men also need support. The psychological impact of the crisis on Syrian men across the region is quite specific, as many feel that they cannot assume their traditional role as breadwinners and providers to the family. “Just give me a job, let me work. The rest, I can take care of myself.” DRC staff observed many physical disputes and instances of domestic violence, not just with project beneficiaries, but also in everyday life. With the prioritisation of services provision to women and children, there is little space for men to socialise outside of the house in settings where they feel comfortable sharing their stories. In DRC’s community centres in Turkey, which serve mainly non-camp Syrian refugees, there was a marked difference when activities and facilities were designed taking into account both men and women’s interests (including mixed-gender activities). In particular, DRC introduced story-telling activities for adult men, as staff found this group to be the ones struggling the most to deal with trauma and displacement. Men expressed gratitude in having the space to come together outside of the pressure of everyday life to find a job or act in a certain way.

### Use of cash assistance by urban refugees

Syrian refugees outside of camps live in urban environments and engage with markets every day. Countries such as Lebanon and Turkey, particularly in the urban areas, enjoy relatively free and generally informal markets – businesses can start (and close) easily, and there are few regulations on small and ad-hoc enterprises such as grocers, coffee shops, barbers, etc. Moreover, refugees need cash to meet basic needs, which across the region they identify as mainly food, shelter, and health (education, hygiene items, etc. are generally less prioritised). In these areas, cash programming makes sense. However, many humanitarian agencies prefer either to give items in kind or provide conditional assistance (e.g. cash for training) or restricted through vouchers (paper or electronic), such as food vouchers. Many agencies are concerned that refugees will not spend the cash as organisations intend. This is because there is still a perception that in-kind or restricted cash will better meet needs, because “we don’t know what they will buy with cash.” This is despite extensive research worldwide on displaced populations and the use of cash in humanitarian assistance, demonstrating that the vast majority of recipients do spend responsibly.<sup>7</sup> Research shows that the amount of cash or voucher transfers, proportional to a family’s estimated minimum expenditures, determines how much food the family can purchase, which is “obviously critical to the effectiveness of the transfer in improving consumption (amount of food able to be purchased, dietary diversity, negative coping mechanisms, etc.)<sup>8</sup>.” Anticipated expenditure is an aspect of household consumption that is not considered in most assessments or evaluations – it is already quite difficult for refugee households to estimate their actual expenditures. The main response we hear

about planning expenditures is that there is no planning – when an emergency comes up (usually medical), refugees will borrow money or drastically reduce other expenditures (delay rent payment, eat only basics or rely on family/friends for food, etc.).

Refugees across the region have reported household priorities and the fact that they cannot meet all of their basic necessities.<sup>9</sup> Although needs vary in each refugee context and for different groups, the majority of Syrian refugees cite their main needs as food and shelter. Thus far, agencies in Turkey have not had a precise understanding of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) of a Syrian family. Indeed, transfer values appear extremely low compared to prices of food. The Turkish non-governmental organisation (NGO) Support to Life estimates that a family of six people needs about 470 TL (approx. 235 USD) per month to eat a balanced diet, including fresh food. Most agencies are providing around 25% of this in food assistance via e-cards that must be redeemed in specific shops, whose prices are generally fair but often above bazaar or street vendor prices, particularly for fresh food.

DRC therefore has shifted much of its in-kind direct assistance for refugees to cash modalities and in particular, unconditional cash. DRC considered unconditional cash the best option given the vulnerability of families eligible for monthly assistance (as compared to all households assessed), and their necessity for flexibility and choice to meet needs monthly. The monthly cash assistance will not be able to cover 100% of a family’s monthly needs, so maximising purchasing power is essential. Moreover, establishing and maintaining conditional or restricted cash assistance programmes is extremely labour-intensive and counter-productive in such flexible and developed urban markets – artificially restricting markets (by selecting and only working with certain vendors) can encourage discrimination against voucher holders, including potentially influencing price inflation. Instead, DRC prefers to emphasise the beneficiary selection process, in order to identify and assist the most vulnerable families, and to focus on the monitoring process to track how the money is spent and its impact on households’ situations.

### Impact of coping on food diversity, quantity and quality

In any displacement situation where refugees do not have access to reliable income or sufficient assistance, families will restrict the quantity, quality and diversity of food consumption. Syrian refugees are no exception. However, prior to the crisis, even poor Syrian families enjoyed varied and plentiful diets, due to the low cost of living in Syria – largely because of the vast array of locally produced goods and subsidised staple foods (flour, milk, even fuel and cooking gas). This means that any change in food consumption will be experienced more dramatically and is a stark reminder of their displacement. DRC assessments show that Syrian refugees almost immediately sacrificed food quality to meet basic needs. In addition to this, families assessed in Hatay Province in Turkey adopted a number of coping strategies, in order to meet food needs (see Table 1).

Anecdotal evidence and monitoring data suggest that Syrian refugees in the Middle East are restricting dietary diversity due to high prices, even when receiving electronic vouchers for food.<sup>10</sup> They are mainly purchasing and consuming cereals/grains, pulses, oil, and limited quantities of cheese, while they forgo meat and other dairy products such as milk. It is unclear if this will have a lasting negative impact on health and nutrition, since refugees do manage occasionally to buy small quantities of fresh foods and protein; it is also unclear how humanitarian assistance could address dietary di-

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Bailey 2013

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Bailey, 2013

<sup>9</sup> In Lebanon, qualitative (focus group discussions) and quantitative (household surveys by phone) in 2014 indicate that refugees’ main needs are food, shelter and healthcare. In Turkey, focus group discussions revealed the main needs as food and shelter; refugees have very little access to credit/debt sources, and therefore have limited time to accumulate enough money to buy food and meet rent/utility obligations.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Household monitoring visits with non-camp refugees in Turkey and Lebanon, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> See Longley et al, 2012. As summarised by Bailey (2013): “The use of the transfer changes according to changing needs, seasonality, livelihoods and the objective of the programme. In this case, the first transfer had the highest proportion spent on food, and transfers towards the end of the intervention were more geared toward supporting recovery.”

**Table 1: Coping strategies to meet food needs adopted by Syrian refugees, Hatay province, Turkey (2,100 households)**

Coping mechanism (Families could list more than one)	% of total
Consumed less preferred or less expensive foods	84%
Reduced the number of meals per day	73%
Reduced spending on non-food items	72%
Limited portion size	49%
Spent savings on food	30%
Restricted adult consumption (so children could eat)	16%
Purchased food on credit or borrowed money to buy food	16%
Had school aged children working	13%
Asked for food (including begging)	12%
Skipped entire days without eating	4%
Not applicable	5%



## Box 2

### Considering cash: benefits and risks

#### Benefits

**Dignity:** Cash recipients do not queue visibly to receive assistance, the content of which is determined by external actors in the “best interest” of beneficiaries.

**Empowerment:** In any conflict or displacement context, vulnerable families have to prioritise certain needs over others, regardless of the levels of assistance they receive. With cash, families can choose directly which needs to prioritise; even with conditional cash (e.g. food vouchers), recipients can select what is most important to them. Cash can also improve certain members’ decision making within the household in a positive manner.

**Cost efficiency:** Cash reduces operational costs and provides more “cash in hand” to beneficiaries (although it is important to note that this is not always the case). Because recipients meet self-identified needs, there is generally a lower rate of aid diversion or sale.

**Multiplier effects:** Cash transfer programming can directly benefit local markets more than providing in-kind assistance, and can revitalise/strengthen local economies as well as benefit host communities.

#### Improved monitoring and evaluation:

Strong cash programming emphasizes monitoring and evaluation as the core activity to determine how cash is spent and its impact on households, markets and communities. Cash programmes can therefore provide more comprehensive feedback on people’s needs, vulnerabilities and coping strategies, in addition to the humanitarian impact on local contexts and communities.

#### Risks

**Markets:** If improperly assessed beforehand, some cash modalities can negatively affect markets by causing inflation or supply shortages.

**People (households, individuals):** Cash can exacerbate existing household tensions or negatively impact dynamics between household members (e.g. the head of household chooses not to spend money on food for the children). In extreme cases, cash given to a woman could increase her exposure to domestic violence, for example. In addition, cash programmes without end points/exit strategies and complementary assistance (counselling, training, etc.) run the risk of creating dependency rather than meet needs; although this is also the case for in-kind assistance programmes, it is especially concerning for cash because the assistance is another form of income and families can become reliant on it (like remittances or other external support).

**Community dynamics:** Depending on how beneficiaries are selected and existing community dynamics, cash can worsen relations between recipient and non-recipient groups (although the same can be argued for in-kind assistance). This is especially pertinent between refugee and host communities, particularly in countries where governments may not have the means to provide social safety nets / cash assistance to its economically vulnerable citizens.

versity concerns, given the fact that delivering fresh food in-kind is not feasible. One suggestion is to increase the cash transfer value provided to each family, but given evidence from other contexts and the huge needs, many households have gone so long without assistance that given additional cash, they might prioritise other expenditures such as rent, health, education, etc.

Moreover, evidence from other contexts demonstrates that consumption patterns change over time<sup>11</sup> and also with regards to the type of shocks, i.e. families required to move may prioritise shelter over food, while household level shocks, as when someone falls ill, may require expenditure on health care. Therefore, while refugees will nearly always spend a large portion of cash assistance on food, further research is needed to understand to what extent they are sacrificing dietary diversity, quality or quantity of food consumption to meet other equally pressing and basic needs.

### Discussion

Most of DRC’s direct assistance to refugees has followed the general trend of humanitarian aid in the region – starting as in-kind support (food parcels and non-food items) and gradually moving towards cash-based responses, such as food vouchers or conditional cash for rent. The acceptance of unconditional cash, both by host governments and the international humanitarian community, only came about in full force by mid-2013. This shift to cash is part of DRC’s overall strategy to respond as holistically as possible to Syrian refugees’ needs outside of camps, with a dual protection and livelihoods approach. The need to create safe spaces, such as community centres, where refugees and host communities can access information and services and socialise is essential. At the same time, vulnerable individuals and families want support to meet self-defined needs, to decrease dependence on hu-

manitarian assistance, and plan for the future. The first step is to assist directly those most in need, which DRC believes is often done most efficiently through cash, as well as move towards more sustainable support such as skills development, job placement and facilitating business development, when feasible. It is much more difficult to influence or support sustainable livelihood solutions for refugees in urban contexts where labour market or supply trends have a greater effect on people’s ability to earn a reliable income; moreover, many vulnerable refugee households may not be able or willing to generate income. Cash is therefore a key tool in providing direct assistance to vulnerable families to meet self-identified needs and provide temporary income to alleviate economic vulnerability. The question remains how to transition from cash to more sustainable support in urban environments.

Cash allows families to meet self-identified priorities, as well as giving choice and dignity. There are both benefits and risks to this programming approach (see Box 2). Conditional cash, which seems to offer a more straightforward transition from traditional sector-based humanitarian responses, has drawbacks in terms of stigma, discrimination by vendors, and pricing issues (taxation and artificial control of market dynamics). At the same time, unconditional cash raises concerns about agencies’ loss of control / diversion of assistance, compromising nutrition, and creating dependency. There has been a lack of technical nutrition rigour in informing cash programming design and evaluation and implications of this on urban refugees in the Syria crisis response. This will require renewed focus in future responses.

For more information, contact Louisa Seferis, email:

Louisa.Seferis@drclebanon.dk or LMSeferis@gmail.com



The Danish Refugee Council distributes food, hygiene kits, baby kits, blankets and cooking sets to refugees from Syria

Danish Refugee Council

# Experiences of the e-Food card programme in the Turkish refugee camps

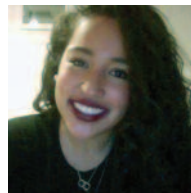


WFP/Jane Howard, Hatay Region, Turkey, 2013

By Kathleen Inglis and Jennifer Vargas



Kathleen Inglis currently works with the WFP as the Programme Communications Officer. She has worked in humanitarian aid in various capacities from communications to logistics and information management in protracted emergencies including Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and DRC.



Jennifer Vargas currently works with the WFP in Turkey as the Information Management/ Reports Officer. She has studied the region and refugee crises extensively and this marks her first foray into the humanitarian community.

## Overview

The Government of Turkey has generally maintained an open-border policy with Syria since the first Syrian refugees began crossing the border in April 2011. Three years later, Turkey hosts more than 900,000 Syrian 'guests' - 220,000 live in 22 camps and approximately 700,000 in urban centres. These estimates are considered conservative as registration continues and by the end of 2014, the Government expects the total number of Syrians refugees will reach 1.5 million. Prominent news sources, such as the New York Times, Reuters-Huffington Post, have expressed concerns about the livelihood of Syrians residing outside of camps; food security, shelter and education were among the most basic unmet necessities mentioned. Thus far, provision of food assistance to off camp populations is limited to small scale interventions within non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) area of operations. In the coming months, WFP plans to offer technical assistance to the Government to conduct a needs assessment and

develop an appropriate modality for the sustainable provision of food assistance to most vulnerable populations outside of camps.

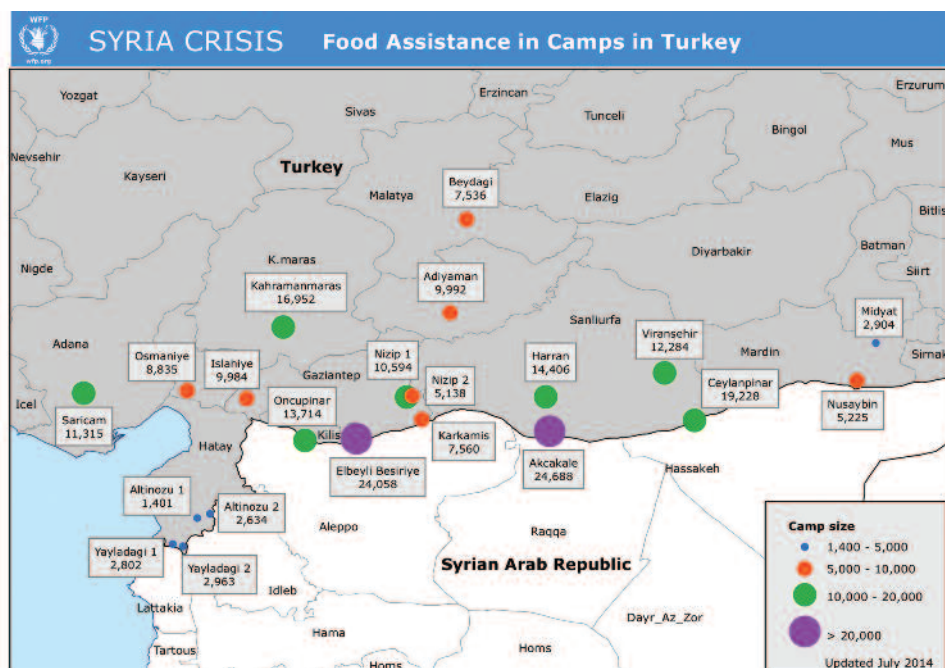
The international community has often lauded the Turkish Government for its generous response to the crisis. The Government of Turkey estimates that its provision of aid has surpassed US\$3.5 billion, while the international community has thus far provided some US\$150 million in assistance for Syrian refugees in Turkey. The camps, moreover, have received considerable recognition for the quality of shelter and service provision for the refugees. The Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) is responsible for the management of all camps across ten governorates. The World Food Programme (WFP), in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC, known as KIZILAY), has worked extensively with AFAD to provide food assistance to all civilian camp populations.

## Electronic food card programme: how it works

The WFP/KIZILAY Electronic Food (e-Food) Card Programme was officially launched in October 2012 to provide food assistance to 12,000 beneficiaries in Kilis camp. The programme was envisioned as an efficient and innovative way of supporting families in camps to purchase diverse and nutritious food items of their own choosing with an e-card. The total amount of assistance for the household is electronically loaded onto the e-Food Card in two separate instalments per month. At the end of the month, the balance remaining on the card, if any, is cleared and returned to the WFP/KIZILAY e-Food Card Programme account. An updated list of family members still residing in the camp is provided by AFAD on a monthly basis and the amount uploaded to the card for the month is adjusted accordingly. To use the card, the persons undertaking the shopping must present their camp ID card at participating markets and the container or tent number/family number must match that printed on the e-Food Card. The e-Food Card only works in the terminals of shops selected by WFP, KIZILAY and the Government; this allows for oversight and monitoring, ensuring that sufficient quantities of various nutritious and fresh food products are available for purchase by households at competitive market prices. The entitlement can be redeemed in camp shops or shops located in nearby urban centres. All shops are under contract with KIZILAY and monitored to ensure compliance with programme regulations and highest standards of quality.

## Moving from in-kind food assistance to a market-based approach

Prior to the introduction of the WFP/KIZILAY e-Food Card Programme, the government authorities were the sole entities responsible for providing food assistance and the modality varied from camp to camp. In the last week of July 2012 (when WFP and AFAD conducted the initial voucher feasibility assessment), half





### First home-cooked meal since arriving in Turkey: Nazari household

On the first day of launching the e-Food Card Programme in Nizip II camp in April, 2013, WFP staff spoke with the Nazari household to learn what the family's first fresh cooked meal would be since fleeing their home in Syria several months before. The father was preparing a Syrian dish, "Sinyat Khidhar", made from fresh eggplant, tomatoes and onions with a mix of spices to serve to his mother, his wife (who had recently given birth in the camp) and their three young children. He told WFP staff, "I enjoy making the food for my family with my own

hands. The children can taste the things we used to eat in our homeland thanks to the e-Food Card Programme." Families enjoy the social norms of shopping and cooking for themselves and the camp managers have reported less food waste compared to the days of hot meal provision, as well as less stress for camp staff and the beneficiary families. The e-Food Card has also encouraged gardening and establishment of bread-baking facilities where infrastructure and resources permit.



of the registered population (43,679) received daily cooked meals and the other half received parcels of dry food every two weeks and fresh food on a weekly basis. The composition of meals and food parcels was highly diversified and often exceeded the internationally agreed standards on daily dietary intake of 2,100 kilocalories, which is sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of disaster affected populations. As an example, the daily caloric content of cooked meals in one of the camps in Hatay ranged between 3,000 and 5,000 kilocalories per person per day and the content of dry and fresh food parcels ranged between 26 to 45 items. Likewise, the cost of assistance greatly differed across the camps, with the monthly cost for cooked meals ranging from US\$147 to US\$170 per person. These figures reflect the generous and first-rate response by the Government and local authorities, while at the same time raise questions regarding the sustainability of the services provided. At the time, it was expected that Syrians would return to their respective homes within a reasonable period of time. More than three years after the onset of the crisis that shows no signs of abating, demands, duration and scale of programming have increased, as well as the need for innovative and effective responses.

By April 2012, as the crisis continued to worsen and unanticipated numbers of Syrians kept crossing over the border, the Government of Turkey agreed to a 'burden-sharing' proposal with the international community. In August 2012, at the behest of the Turkish Government, WFP met with AFAD to discuss the possibility of providing complementary food assistance using voucher-based transfers, an approach recommended by WFP's voucher feasibility study. This proposal was well received by the government and was included in the United Nations Regional Response Plan. In consultation with AFAD, the Deputy Directorate General for International Political Organisations within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KIZILAY, it was agreed to implement a gradual strategy to transition from in-kind food assistance to a market-based approach with the provision of vouchers.

### Finding the best solution based on context

Within the context of Turkey, that of a middle-income, emerging market economy with strong national capacity and pre-existing emergency-

response mechanisms, the role of international organisations shifted from solely providing humanitarian assistance (monetary or otherwise) to providing innovative programming that works in conjunction with existing national resources and capabilities. The launch of the WFP/KIZILAY e-Food Card Programme in Turkey was the first instance of an electronic voucher system being used at the outset of an emergency response. Simply put, it was the right tool, at the right time, in the right place and was only possible because of existing infrastructure and context:

- Interactions between international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the Government of Turkey were more synergistic than would normally take place in less developed nations; the government supported and facilitated the programme and transition process.
- AFAD-established and managed camps and provided beneficiaries with cooking facilities, electricity and commercial food markets located within the camps.
- The agriculture and the commercial food-sector in Turkey is strong; the country is among the world's leading producers of agricultural products and Turkey has been self-sufficient in food production since the 1980s.
- The electronic banking system in-country is established and robust.
- The use of vouchers both as a national welfare and safety-net mechanisms for vulnerable Turkish populations, and by commercial entities providing meals for employees, existed in Turkey prior to the Syrian crisis.
- KIZILAY's 150 years of experience in emergency response offered WFP a reputable and highly capable partner with a field presence in all of the camps. (KIZILAY is the largest humanitarian organisation in Turkey and is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The organisation was founded under the Ottoman Empire on 11 June, 1868).
- Donors recognised the added value of the tri-partite partnership between WFP, KIZILAY and AFAD, which enabled significant contributions to be channelled through a UN agency to ease the burden of the Syrian crisis response on the Turkish Government and people.

The comparative advantage of the WFP/KIZILAY programme rests in the level of expertise both WFP offers in e-voucher programming and KIZILAY offers in emergency response, in Turkey and abroad. WFP's vast experience with cash and voucher programmes (C&V) and food security ensures that standard operating procedures were established at the onset of the Syrian response in Turkey, which facilitated programme transparency, beneficiary participation and donor confidence. KIZILAY had a wealth of experience in emergency and development work at home and abroad.

For instance, KIZILAY had developed its electronic card in mid-2012 for a pilot programme to assist social vulnerable groups in Turkey, which made it the tool of choice. It was further adapted and used in the e-food Card Programme, thereby greatly reducing lead time required for establishing agreements with financial institutions and designing and testing the practical functioning of a market based welfare system.

### Merits of the market based approach

The programme has proven highly successful in terms of beneficiary satisfaction, effective use of limited resources and investment in the local economy. Over 90 percent of interviewed beneficiaries prefer the e-Food Card to hot meal provision. With regard to efficiency, the programme allows for over 70 percent savings when compared to the provision of hot meals, also eliminating food waste that inevitably occurs at distributions. The programme directly impacts local communities as beneficiaries use the entirety of their food entitlement at shops that are owned, managed and supplied by local retailers. AFAD was responsible for the establishment of commercial markets located inside camps. However, in the Hatay region where camps are located close to urban centres, WFP and KIZILAY identified, assessed and contracted existing commercial food markets located outside of camps to participate in the programme. The e-Food Card Programme served as a model for WFP's rollout of electronic vouchers in Jordan and Lebanon and for the AFAD card which is operational in all camps in Turkey.

### Step by step expansion

By July 2013, the programme had rapidly expanded to cover 115,000 beneficiaries living in camps in ten provinces. At this stage, owing to WFP funding constraints, expansion plans were

Photo: WFP/Jane Howard

This family bakery began baking Arabic flat bread to cater to the taste of the Syrian refugees, and they now also deliver to the camps.

arrested and the programme capped to serving only fourteen of the 22 existing camps. Each beneficiary received 80 Turkish liras per month (approximately US\$40) loaded onto their family's e-Food Card that could be used in participating markets. AFAD continued to deliver food assistance in the eight remaining camps not covered by WFP and KIZILAY, either through provision of hot meals or in late 2013, through the newly launched AFAD E-Card programme – based on the WFP/KIZILAY programme model – that was also being utilised in some camps.

In response to the primary challenge of inadequate funding which constrained programme expansion throughout 2013, the Government of Turkey proposed to WFP a cost-sharing arrangement for the provision of the food ration for Syrians in all camps. Here, the WFP/KIZILAY contribution to food assistance would reduce from 80 to 60 Turkish liras (US\$30) and AFAD would supplement this with an amount of 20 Turkish liras (US\$10) per beneficiary per month onto the AFAD e-Card for food purchases and 5TL for non-food items also complemented by in-kind donations. By June, 2014, this tripartite arrangement has been implemented in all 21 camps where the Government requested WFP assistance, accounting for food security to over 217,000 beneficiaries in 45,000 households, who shop at a total of 58 shops. The monthly transfer

to beneficiaries is US\$6.6 million which is directly spent in markets and, therefore, directly invested into the local economy.

### Monitoring and evaluation activities

WFP has a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting programme in place; field monitoring staff (FMS) work in coordination with KIZILAY field staff to ensure markets have a wide variety of quality products for sale at market-value prices in hygienic and secure locations. Monitoring tools include: a post distribution monitoring questionnaire (PDM) to be applied at the household level, an onsite monitoring checklist (OSM) to be filled by monitors when visiting participating shops, and a beneficiary contact monitoring questionnaire (BCM) applied to beneficiaries coming out of these shops. Additionally, Price Market Monitoring (PMM) is conducted on a monthly basis in the contracted shops where e-Food Card Programme beneficiaries redeem their e-vouchers, as well as in non-participating city shops.

WFP monitoring findings indicate that the majority of programme beneficiaries have been living in camps for a relatively long period: 51 percent arrived over a year ago, another 42 percent arrived 7 to 12 months ago, and recent arrivals (less than 6 months) only represent 7 percent of the total in-camp population. The average size of a household is six members. Beneficiary heads of households in Turkey are, in 90 percent of cases, married and ten percent are single or widowed. Thirty-five percent of households are headed by females while only seven percent of households are headed by the elderly. Most of the interviewed families have children under five years of age and interviews revealed that for every working-age person who has the physical possibility of generating income, there are two dependents, which demonstrates a high level of socio-economic vulnerability.

Despite the constant monitoring activities of WFP and KIZILAY, and in almost all camps by market monitoring committees, high prices in contracted shops continue to pose challenges. WFP and KIZILAY monitors continue to advocate with all stakeholders for fair market prices in all participating markets. Rampant drought has been one contributing factor to price in-

creases. Turkey has been dealing with a drought that began at the end of 2013 and is causing major difficulties for agricultural producers. The drought, in conjunction with high temperatures, has severely decreased the yield of various nuts, fruits, vegetables and grains. The wheat harvest has decreased by at least 21 percent from 2013 and Turkey will be required to import wheat to meet demand. Economists predict that the drought will continue to raise the prices of food and keep affecting consumers throughout 2014. The drought has decreased water reserves and affected energy production, thus increasing the price of electricity throughout the country as well. Other compounding factors include fluctuations in the value of the Turkish lira, decreased food supply as well as the creation of monopolies in camps with very few participating shops. As a response to the monopoly issue in particular, WFP and KIZILAY with the encouragement of AFAD are now actively looking to contract more shops outside the camps to foster greater market competition and to encourage the provision of high quality commodities and services at lower prices to beneficiaries. Beneficiaries generally attain high levels of dietary diversity; they can purchase basic items for the nutritious diet established in the food basket. The high cost of infant formula, however, has been a continuing challenge, compounded by the fact that a large majority of mothers do not breastfeed past six months.

### Sustainability of operation – funding and shortfalls

Looking forward, the mid-year review of the Regional Response Plan 6 (July- December 2014) stipulates that around 250,000-300,000 people will need food assistance in the next six months and WFP will require US\$58 million. Currently, WFP Turkey reaches 225,000 people per month and requires US\$8 million to do so; the operation faces a pipeline break approximately every six weeks. WFP is funded entirely by voluntary contributions and remains vigilant and engaged with donors in order to secure the funds.

### Emmanuel Safari – staff profile

WFP is the largest humanitarian agency in the world and as such, draws personnel and expertise from all corners of the globe. The first Cash & Voucher programme officer sent to Gaziantep in south-eastern Turkey is a tall man from Rwanda named Emmanuel Safari. Emmanuel has extensive experience with the implementation of C&V programming in many countries including in Rwanda, Haiti, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and Mali. Inquisitive residents of Gaziantep constantly stopped this unusual and friendly visitor to exchange a few words with him and, when bold, to request a photo with him! Safari's first impressions of the government assistance to its Syrian guests were about how much was being done and the incredible hospitality and generosity of the Turkish people.

For more information, contact: Kathleen Inglis, email: [kathleen.inglis@wfp.org](mailto:kathleen.inglis@wfp.org) and Jennifer Vargas, email: [jennifer.vargas@wfp.org](mailto:jennifer.vargas@wfp.org)

### Emmanuel Safari – staff profile

WFP is the largest humanitarian agency in the world and as such, draws personnel and expertise from all corners of the globe. The first Cash & Voucher (C&V) programme officer sent to Gaziantep in south-eastern Turkey is a tall man from Rwanda named Emmanuel Safari. Emmanuel has extensive experience with the implementation of C&V programming in many countries including in Rwanda, Haiti, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and Mali. Inquisitive residents of Gaziantep constantly stopped this unusual and friendly visitor to exchange a few words with him and, when bold, to request a photo with him! Safari's first impressions of the government assistance to its Syrian guests were about how much was being done and the incredible hospitality and generosity of the Turkish people.



## A day in the life of a WFP field monitor working in the Syrian refugee camps in south-eastern Turkey

By Afaf Shasha



Afaf Shasha is Field Monitor Assistant at the World Food Programme (WFP). She holds an MA from the Department of International Relations at Bilkent University, Turkey. She has a strong continuing interest in human rights and conflict resolution and an equally strong desire to see progress towards a sustainable global peace.



Women doing their own shopping using WFP/TRC electronic food vouchers

As a WFP field monitor, my job is to assess the food security situation in the camps for Syrian refugees specifically in the Hatay region. We need to know if they are getting the food they need and if their children are receiving the appropriate nutrition and how we can improve their access to food. That requires me to spend many hours in these camps mixing with refugees in their tents, which greatly contrasts to what I have done in my previous jobs. For years, I worked in a luxurious office with a multinational company but today as I stand in the camps, with displaced people forced out of their homes and living in tents waiting to hear of any news from home, I cannot help but draw comparisons between the two lives. In contrast to business meetings in fancy conference rooms in comfortable surroundings, I am now in the field inside the refugee camps, working with the most vulnerable displaced people and I do feel that I have lived two lives, which represent two different realities that are difficult to imagine existing in the same era of history.

At the camps, officially designated in Turkey as “guest tent cities,” the first scene is the crowd of children, who make up almost half of the camp’s population, playing on the ground, looking after their younger siblings or just out of their classes and running to us to practice the new Turkish words they have learnt. I speak with newly arrived 12-year old twins, Hasan & Hussain, one tall with fair skin and the other short with darker skin. They are sitting in their tent with their parents, eating oil and zaatar for breakfast. A 10-year old girl with beautiful grey eyes, Razan, wants to become an architect so she can build her own house. She does not enjoy living in tents and she is an orphan. I have also spoken with several 18 year old young

men who ran away from Syria, fleeing military service so they could continue their education.

Many of the girls and women, from under the age of 18 to over 40, are pregnant. Some of the mothers have a dozen or more children and even in their mid-thirties, some are grandmothers. Of course, health care and nutrition are their main needs.

Chatting with women carrying their babies while shopping, I check on how they breastfeed and how many times the baby receives milk per day. Some women mention how keen they are on breastfeeding at least until the sixth month. Others say that due to the stress and lack of sufficient food, they lack breastmilk and totally depend on infant formula and complain of its prohibitively high price.

The most gratifying scene, in my opinion, is seeing women doing their own shopping using WFP/TRC electronic food vouchers. WFP often uses vouchers to provide assistance in all camps in Turkey. It provides people with more choice and they can buy fresh food such as fruit, vegetables and milk that are not normally included in conventional food rations.

Vouchers also inject money into the local economies of host countries and help refugees develop financial awareness and planning. It encourages better management of the food budget.

Some of my tasks such as monitoring the families after they have received and redeemed their food vouchers are not easy. It requires special effort with the people who may not feel relaxed or confident enough to answer questionnaires because some of the refugees feel that any candid response could have negative impacts on the assistance that they receive. We, as field monitors, have to explain the purpose of providing

feedback on food availability in the market and if the family members are receiving the nutritious food that their bodies need.

The most challenging question that we ask Syrian refugees is what is the list of the foods they ate in the previous week, but the answers are crucial data for WFP evaluations of the nutritional status in the camp.

When asking them if they are eating differently from what they used to eat in Syria, the ‘guests’ often mention that can rarely eat their favorite foods. The vast majority – if not all – are very satisfied with the e-food card which allows them to buy the type of food of their own choosing. While grateful, beneficiaries do not like the provision of hot meals (used at the beginning of the crisis), since the food, did not for the most part, suit their taste. Bread is important in their diet. Large extended families with many adults consume lots of bread and as this item is not so cheap, it can be hard to meet their demands but the families are thankful to whoever supports them.

Refugees in many cases are just happy to chat with an Arabic speaker to share their feelings and worries; some get very homesick, while others seem to have adapted to camp life. Every number that makes up the statistics on Syrian refugees is actually a life story for a WFP monitor, for someone whom we might meet and talk to on a daily basis. As WFP field monitors, our role is to check on how balanced their diet and nutrition consumption is, while at the contracted market, we inspect the prices, and the proper quality, variety and validity of sold items to ensure equal accessibility for all the Syrian beneficiaries.

Being a displaced person is painful but we do the best we can to make life more comfortable for Turkey’s Syrian ‘guests’.