

ESSN Coordination Meeting, Hatay Minutes

Objective(s)	i) share an update on the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme with UN and NGO colleagues working in Hatay; and ii) discuss local barriers to ESSN access and NGO support to applicants, including use of IPA.
Time & Date	10 July, 11.00-13.00hrs
Location	Support to Life (STL) premises, Antakya

Introduction and welcome

- WFP and TRC welcomed participants, noting that this was the first provincial-level coordination meeting with NGOs in Antakya. WFP and TRC explained that the meeting had been organized to: i) share an update on the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme with UN agencies and NGOs working in Hatay; and ii) discuss local barriers to ESSN access and NGO support to applicants, including use of IPA.

Brief update on the ESSN

- WFP provided a brief presentation on the ESSN (or, in Turkish, Yabancılarla Yönelik Sosyal Uyum Yardım Programı (SUY) – Social Cohesion Assistance Programme for Foreigners), noting that the programme provides unrestricted cash assistance (120 TL per person per month, increased from 100 TL per person per month in June) through the Kizilay Card to allow vulnerable Syrian and non-Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey to meet their basic needs. It was noted that the Ministry of Family and Social Policies and the Turkish Red Crescent implement the ESSN in Turkey, with ECHO funding and WFP’s technical support, oversight, and accountability. The MoFSP’s Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASFs) manage the ESSN application, assessment, and verification process, with TRC Service Centres (SCs) established in the most populated district to supplement SASF capacity (in Hatay, it was noted, TRC has established service centres in Merkez, Reyhanli, and Kirikan). Since the programme commenced on 28 November, it was noted that it has reached 685,577 beneficiaries of an overall target of 1.3 million people.
- WFP and TRC noted that there are several prerequisites to accessing the ESSN. Specifically, in order to apply, the applicant/family must: (i) be living in Turkey under temporary protection or other form of international protection (living outside of camps); (ii) have completed their registration with DGMM and hold a Foreigner Identification Number starting with 99; (iii) have registered their residential address on the Central Registration Administration System (*Turkish*: Merkezi Nüfus İdaresi Sistemi, abbreviated as MERNİS) at the Population Department; and (iii) be aged 18 or over. Participants highlighted multiple challenges to fulfilling these pre-requisites in Hatay, as outlined below:
 - **DGGM registration:** Partners noted that refugees face significant delays in obtaining DGMM registration in Hatay. While a pre-registration certificate (i.e. a 98 ID number) can normally be obtained in one day (despite crowds), refugees then face a six to seven month wait before obtaining full registration (i.e. a 99 ID number). This is thought to be due, primarily, to the time required to complete the security check. Participants also expressed concern that there is no dedicated queue or counter to ensure people with disabilities are able to access registration services and that there is considerable confusion among refugees regarding the documents which need to be presented to obtain DGMM registration, with some PDMM offices requesting a letter from the muhtar. Partners requested further clarification on official requirements, and WFP agreed to follow up with UNHCR.

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While verification has commenced in Hatay, this exercise only targets those who obtained their DGMM registration prior to 01 January 2017. Participants also reported that, at present, refugees face a two month wait on verification appointments. Some concerns were raised that refugees who have travelled home to Syria between Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha will miss verification or other appointments.

- **MERNIS registration:** Challenges related to the civil registration process were also discussed. Specifically, partners reported that, in Hatay, refugees face a one month wait period on appointments with the Population Directorate/Nufus [WFP's field office in Hatay subsequently reported that there is no longer a waiting period for appointments]. Partners also reported multiple cases of Syrians living in commercial buildings and other types of accommodation which cannot be registered on MERNIS in a straightforward manner, and WFP and TRC reminded partners to share information on these settlements (using the attached matrix) to feed into discussion and advocacy at the Ankara level. It was also recognized that, in some cases, potential ESSN applicants may require support to move in view of the conditions of their shelter and the reluctance of the municipality to provide them with an official address. Some concern was raised that, in Hatay, Nufus is asking Syrians to provide a letter from their muhtar, costing TL 20, to prove their address. Some landlords then refuse to accompany their tenants to the muhtar. TRC emphasized that a household bill or similar in the applicant's name should be sufficient. In order to avoid issues later, TRC also emphasized that refugees, like Turkish citizens, need to inform MERNIS and the SASF when they move house.
- **Disability Health Report:** Partners noted that obtaining a Disability Health Report (DHRs) in Hatay can take up to one and a half months. While the service is free, due to language barriers, refugee applicants sometimes confuse the DHR with the medical ("fit-for-work") certificate, which costs TL 200 [WFP's field office subsequently reported that the Ministry of Health has directed State hospitals in Hatay to provide all such services to Syrians free-of-charge]. While some NGOs in Hatay are assisting beneficiaries to obtain DHRs under their case management programmes, this support tends to be limited to protection cases. With accompaniment, one NGO reported that the DHR could be issued in as few as three days. WFP agreed to re-circulate the list of State hospitals in Hatay which are authorized to issue DHRs feedback. Partners were encouraged to share updates on which hospitals are or are not following the MoH directive on an ongoing basis.
- Partners reported that some refugees are facing challenges during the application stage. Specifically, it was noted that some SASFs are not accepting applications from refugees who have updated their 98 ID number to a 99 number online (via Gocnet) when the applicant does not hold a new card. It was also noted that the SASFs are not always accepting more than one application from families living in the same premises. TRC clarified that, with 900 SASFs country-wide, there is some divergence in practices which is difficult to address – in particular, as some SASFs are adhering to the procedures which have been put in place for Turkish citizens but adapted for refugee applicants.
- Partners expressed concern that the ESSN is creating tensions with Turkish citizens and recommended continued sensitization activities targeting Turkish communities. TRC noted that the information materials are available in Turkish and again encouraged interested partners to reach out to request copies, which can then be shipped to their address. WFP and TRC also offered to deliver a sensitization session on the ESSN (and CCE, if possible) to NGO outreach workers, community centre staff, helpline operators, etc., in Arabic and Turkish, and partners confirmed their interest.
- Some concern was noted that, with the criteria soon to be published, refugees may seek to "cheat the system". WFP and TRC confirmed that, to address this possibility, checks and balances are in place (e.g. the integration of databases to enable SASFs to cross check household structure against DGMM records) and household verification visits will take place.

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- Partners asked how refugees which are not eligible to receive basic needs assistance under the ESSN can be identified, noting that, through coordination with muhtars, CARITAS is engaged in an e-voucher programme in Hatay which aims to provide ineligible households with 90 TL per person per month. WFP and TRC noted that this does create risks of duplication, and that partners engaged in such programming are therefore encouraged to cross-check their beneficiary lists with TRC on a monthly basis. An email outlining the process and template(s) in which to submit requests to TRC are now being developed, and will be circulated to NGO partners once finalized.
- NGO partners asked whether it would be possible to refer cases to TRC where they appear to meet the criteria but have nonetheless been found ineligible. TRC confirmed that it is open to receiving NGO referrals, which can be addressed to: suyiletisim@kizilay.org.tr. These cases will then be considered against the ESSN criteria.