

# TURKEY

February 2020

Key Figures (as of 27 February 2020)

## 4 million

**Refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey** including almost 3.6 million Syrian nationals and close to 330,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities. Over 98% of Syrian refugees live across Turkey in 81 provinces

## 11,342

**Vulnerable individuals** provided with financial assistance through UNHCR's cash for protection interventions

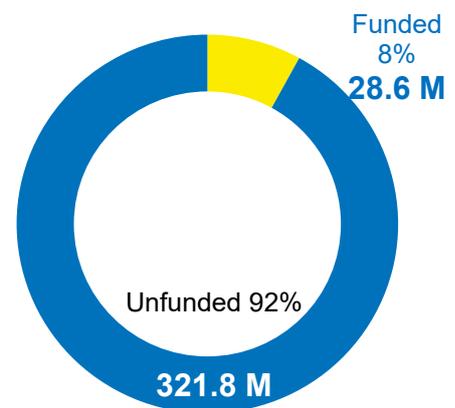
## 47,000

**Followers/likes** to UNHCR's Communication with Communities (CWC) Facebook Page

Funding (as of 06 March 2020)

## USD 350.4 million

requested for UNHCR operations in Turkey



## Key Developments in February

The **Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) 2020-21 Turkey Country Chapter** was launched on 21 February 2020. Over 100 representatives of government institutions, donors, UN agencies, international and national NGOs participated. Opening remarks by UNHCR and UNDP Representatives, were followed by remarks by the Deputy Director General of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Director General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior, recognizing the importance over the years of contribution through the 3RP and calling for larger, sustained international support. The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved and to present needs and priority interventions under the 3RP for the coming year.

In view of the movements to the western borders, UNHCR **deployed teams to the border areas**, mainly in Edirne bordering Greece as well as mobile teams along Turkey's coast. Both at the land and sea borders, UNHCR teams have been in close contact with local authorities, border officials, other UN agencies on the ground and NGO partners for needs assessment and coordination of humanitarian support.

An **Engaged Conversations** event was held in Diyarbakir on 19-20 February which comprised of focus group discussions on social cohesion with refugees, host community members and service providers as well as a public event. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Governor of Diyarbakir referred to the efforts of the Governorate to coordinate both access to services and to language courses to foster social cohesion between refugees and the host community. DGMM's Head of Harmonization and Communications Department stressed the importance of communication channels for a healthy society, mentioning that DGMM was working on strengthening inter-communal dialogue and understanding. Over 460 people attended the event over the two days.

## Promoting Access to and Provision of Protection

### Support to registration and development of the national asylum system

UNHCR continues to cooperate with DGMM in strengthening international protection status determination procedures, supporting **International Protection Bureaux (Decision Centres) and the Mobile Decision Teams** established by DGMM. In February, support included conducting interviews and drafting recommendations to support case-processing at the Ankara Decision Centre; and a mobile decision team mission to Konya arranged by UNHCR in coordination with DGMM supported interviews and drafting of recommendations relating to applicants from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

In order to support DGMM and enhance the efficiency of RSD procedures, a **child-friendly space** was set up with related equipment provided by UNHCR in the waiting area of the Ankara Decision Center.

UNHCR conducted its 13th **induction training on continuous registration** on 18-21 February. Some 29 support personnel were trained on continuous registration support, national legislation, specific needs, interviewing techniques, functions of protection desks, and standards and principles in registration procedures. The trained personnel will be assigned to work with Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) to support them with continuous registration.

In a workshop organised jointly with DGMM, UNHCR delivered a **specific training on decision drafting** on 11-12 February for 15 DGMM and PDMM staff. The training focused on how to conduct legal analysis in determining refugee status, and was centred on credibility, well-founded fear, persecution, convention grounds and exclusion. During the training, facilitators made use of case studies of different nationalities and profiles to conduct necessary research and analysis and eventually draft decision recommendations.

The eleventh **Quality Assurance Board** meeting was held on 13 February with DGMM and UNHCR. Revised registration forms were finalized. Training modules and modalities for staff engaged in international protection procedures as well as observations and recommendations from on-the-job visits were reviewed.

### Strengthening access to justice by refugees

The Şanlıurfa Legal Clinic provided **legal assistance** to 84 individuals in February regarding international and temporary protection procedures (including registration and documentation), access to services, civil law matters (such as marriage, divorce, custody and guardianship), deportation, exit and re-entry procedures, family reunification and citizenship procedures. Similarly, 162 individuals benefitted from legal assistance provided by the Gaziantep Legal Clinic, while the Hatay Legal Clinic provided legal assistance to 139 individuals. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Eyyubiye Social Service Center and the Free Syrian Lawyers Association, the Sanliurfa Legal clinic organized two information sessions for 35 refugees focusing on labour law and protection against violence under the Law No. 6284.

### Strengthening Protection and Access to Quality Services of Refugees with Specific Needs

The **UNHCR Counselling Line** answered 17,747 calls in February and provided counselling on services, procedures, referrals and existing support mechanisms. The answer rate for queued calls was 94 per cent. In South East Turkey, the **Refugee Call Centre** in Sanliurfa received 256 calls in February. The call operators resolved most queries, mainly concerning financial assistance and legal issues such as work permits and documentation. UNHCR also counselled 74 refugees through the **UNHCR Gaziantep hotline number**. Queries were mainly related to resettlement, assistance for persons with specific needs, medical assistance, registration, LGBTI and ESSN assistance.

General health insurance has been deactivated in significant numbers across the country for international protection applicants and status holders, who are over 18 years old and have been registered in Turkey for more than one year, following the recent amendment to Article 89(3) of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Persons with specific needs and those over 18 but without

means to cover health services as well as categories determined by the Ministry of Interior are exempted from the de-activation. Based on an announcement made by DGMM on 7 February, those categories defined for exemption were called upon to approach PDMMs to present supporting documents for their continued coverage under the health insurance.

### Child protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and response, identification of and social support to refugees with specific needs

UNHCR identified and assessed **521 individuals with specific needs** in February who were referred to UNHCR’s partners and service providers. Persons of Afghan and Syrian nationality with specific needs were prioritized for assessment and resettlement consideration. Over 106 SGBV survivors were provided with necessary counselling by UNHCR or partners on sexually transmitted diseases, medical treatments and psychological assistance.

In order to identify protection responses and solutions, 40 **best interests assessments** (BIAs) were concluded and 31 **best interests determination** (BID) decisions were determined by two interagency panels consisting of participants from UNICEF, UNHCR and ASAM. Forty-six children were newly identified as survivors of SGBV and were referred to partners and relevant protection mechanisms.

As part of the UNHCR’s **cash for protection** interventions, 11,342 individuals were provided with financial assistance. The payments were made to vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers of different profiles, including transgender, intersex, adolescents discharged from child-care institutions as well as those attending various educational courses.

### Communication with communities (CwC)



Through its main digital CwC platforms, Help and Services Advisor, UNHCR continues to share information about rights, obligations and available services with persons of concern. In February, **Help** reached approximately 673,933 unique visitors since its launch in August 2017. UNHCR’s followers continue to grow on the **CwC Facebook** page with approximately 47,000 followers and likes. In February the posts on the Facebook page covered a range of themes, including an introductory video prepared in Arabic and Farsi on ‘How to navigate the UNHCR Help website’, Q&A cards prepared with FAQs for the UNHCR Counselling Line which covered resettlement, education, livelihoods and fraud. Coronavirus-related awareness posters and videos from the World Health Organisation were shared on a regular basis in Arabic and Farsi. In February, the CwC team designed, printed and distributed posters on ‘reporting fraud, corruption and sexual exploitation and abuse’ to UNHCR offices in Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul to be disseminated to partners and refugees.

Awareness page from UNHCR’s CwC facebook page displaying a poster in Arabic of The World Health Organisation Guidance for prevention of Covid-19.

In Izmir, in order to strengthen two-way communication with communities and accountability to affected populations, UNHCR organized two feedback sessions with refugees from Iran, Afghanistan and Syria in Manisa (10 February) and Kutahya (18 February). Participants shared their observations and suggestions concerning ongoing challenges that affect them while provincial and local authorities, and NGO representatives provided answers and information on the matters raised by refugees. Furthermore, on 17 February, UNHCR organized a focus-group discussion with 10 female Iranian refugees in Usak where participants discussed SGBV and physical violence, registration of newcomers, the deactivation of general health insurance, lack of access to formal employment and social assistance.

In Istanbul, UNHCR met Afghan refugee associations on 15 February to discuss the situation of Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers in Istanbul and the Marmara region. Questions and information related to access to registration, access to education and health services, access to legal aids, social cohesion, access to social services and the labour market were addressed during the meeting.

## Promoting Social Cohesion and Harmonization

As part of the cooperation with DGMM on harmonization, an **Engaged Conversations** event was held in Diyarbakir on 19-20 February. The event included focus group discussions on social cohesion with refugees, host community members and service providers as well as a public event. Over 460 people were reached. In addition to the opening remarks of the Deputy Governor of Diyarbakir and the Head of DGMM's Harmonization and Communications Department which emphasised the importance of coordination and communication, DGMM's Head of Department for International Protection and the Head of Diyarbakir's PDMM both noted that strengthening social cohesion between refugees and the host community needed to involve stakeholders other than the state, including civil society, municipalities and universities. The event which took place with the participation of all groups of society, primarily of local and refugee community leaders, featured conversations on local efforts in social cohesion and challenges, as well as recommendations which would further social cohesion initiatives in Diyarbakir.



Refuge woman actively participates in Engaged Conversation in Diyarbakir in February ©DGMM

Two regional **Social Cohesion Workshops with Academics and International Students** took place in February. The first was in Samsun from 11 to 12 February with 59 academics from the Black Sea Region and 217 international students. The second in Mersin from 24 to 25 February 2020 with 113 academics from the Mediterranean Region and 224 international students. In the opening remarks of the first workshop, the Deputy Governor of Samsun indicated that migrants in Samsun, as in Turkey, have access to protection, health, education and employment and that it is a duty of public institutions to uphold the rights of migrants in Turkey as laid out by national and international legislation. The Deputy Head of DGMM's Harmonization and Communications Department noted that as of 2019, Turkey had been increasingly focusing on social cohesion efforts. During the event in Mersin, the Governor of Mersin emphasized the humanitarian perspective with which Turkey was managing migration, while the Deputy Director General of DGMM indicated that Turkey had evolved from a transit country to a country of destination within the context of migration. The events were covered on government websites and in the news.



Social Cohesion workshop with academics and international students in Mersin (24-25 February 2020) ©DGMM

## Engaging at the local level

In Isparta, UNHCR organized a **social cohesion workshop for refugees** on 20-21 February in cooperation with the Isparta Social Service Association and Suleyman Demirel University. Over 400 students attended the workshop along with academics, local and civil society actors from across the country including Izmir, Istanbul and Ankara. Discussions focused on forced displacement,



Social cohesion workshop for refugees in Isparta ©Suleyman Demirel University

environmental migration, social cohesion and interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies in migration research. UNHCR's community support project with the social service association called "Hand to Hand for Them" was completed in February; however, project partners, local officials, Isparta Metropolitan Municipality and Suleyman Demirel University indicated that they would continue their cooperation for an additional five years. The continued effort would help to promote social cohesion among refugee and host communities and enhance the integration of refugees into national systems.

## Working towards Durable Solutions

### Self-reliance and livelihoods support

UNHCR continues to cooperate with the **Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR)**. On 24-26 February, 30 İŞKUR Provincial Directorate staff in Istanbul on project management. The training is part of an ongoing activity focusing on the skills development of İŞKUR personnel.

UNHCR participated in the graduation ceremony of the **Ankara Metropolitan Municipality** vocational training course on 20 February. Overall, 115 beneficiaries, including 54 Syrian, 45 Iraqi, 13 Turkish nationals, graduated from the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality International Vocational Training Centre in this cohort.

Together with the **İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services**, UNHCR organized a seminar entitled "Access to Labour Market of Foreigners under International and Temporary Protection and Private Sector Partnership" on 26 February 2020 in İstanbul. The aim of the seminar was to exchange information and discuss challenges and opportunities for both the private sector and refugees as well as provide information on UNHCR role in assisting refugees with access to the labour market. A total of 243 participants took part in the seminar.

### Resettlement and complementary pathways

As of end of February, UNHCR provided **2,506 submissions** (2,319 Syrians and 187 refugees of other nationalities), and **1,653 refugees departed for resettlement** (1,240 Syrians and 413 refugees of other nationalities). DGMM referred 281 Syrians and 154 individuals of other nationalities to UNHCR for resettlement consideration in February and UNHCR conducted four resettlement interview missions across Turkey.

## Increasing Multi-Stakeholder Support to the Refugee Response

### Interagency coordination

The **Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) 2020-21 Turkey Country Chapter** was launched on 21 February 2020. The plan was presented to all relevant partners including Turkish government institutions; the UN, civil society and International Financial Institutions; as well as representatives from selected embassies and donors supporting the 3RP. The event was an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved under the 2019-20 3RP and to present the needs and priority interventions for the coming year. The **3RP Country Chapter** can be accessed online through the UNHCR Data Portal.

### Public information and communications

In February, UNHCR Turkey's Facebook page reached over 37,200 followers and the Twitter account 10,200 followers. Following the **Model United Nations Refugee Challenge** which was launched in January to encourage young people to pave the way for debate on refugee matters, UNHCR participated in the Model United Nations Conference organized by ODTU College in Denizli on 6 February, delivering a presentation on its work and mandate at the opening ceremony. The event, which focused on improving access to education and supporting economic inclusion of refugees, was attended by around 190 students from various schools as well as school teachers and administrators. UNHCR also participated in two further Model United Nations Challenges conferences as guest speaker in Istanbul; one at the SOBILMUN on 20 February, and the other at Future Leaders MUN on 21 February.



Model United Nations Refugee Challenge with Future Leaders MUN ©Emrah Gürel

### Thanks to donors for their support to UNHCR Turkey in 2020 as of 6 March 2020

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### LINKS

[Regional Portal - Syria Regional Refugee Response](#) | [Regional Portal - Mediterranean](#) | [UNHCR Turkey website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Services Advisor](#) | [UNHCR Help](#)