

TURKEY 2020 Operational Highlights



- Turkey is home to the world's largest refugee population, 3.6 million of whom are Syrian under temporary protection and close to 330,000 are refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities.
- Over 98 per cent of refugees in Turkey live among the host community, and less than 2% in Temporary Accommodation Centres.
- Turkey's refugee response is based on a comprehensive legal framework, in particular the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2013) and the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014).
- Building on the comprehensive legal framework in place in Turkey, in line with the Refugee and Resilience Response Plan (3RP) strategic directions and in the spirit of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), UNHCR supports the inclusion of persons under temporary and international protection into national systems and, as part of the multi-stakeholder approach, has been prioritizing the provision of assistance and service delivery through national and local institutions.
- In 2020, UNHCR adapted its programming to stay and deliver during the COVID-19 pandemic providing direct assistance to vulnerable refugee and host community populations while maintaining its support to public institutions through the provision of human resources and material and technical support. UNHCR also worked closely with municipalities and local authorities to strengthen community mobilisation and promote social cohesion.

UNHCR Turkey COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to an already complex operation in Turkey. Additional needs and priorities emerged and operating modalities were adapted to the constantly evolving situation. In close cooperation with measures adopted by the Government of Turkey to respond to the pandemic, UNHCR Turkey focused on one-off COVID-19 emergency cash assistance, the provision and distribution of hygiene materials, on communicating with communities and supporting local small-scale community-based initiatives.

COVID-19 Emergency Cash Assistance

In close coordination with the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), UNHCR Turkey initiated an emergency cash assistance programme targeting the most vulnerable refugees that were adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The one-off cash-assistance of TRY 1,000 per household, an amount which corresponds to the one-off assistance scheme by Turkey for vulnerable citizens, was transferred through the Turkish Postal Service (PTT). Potential beneficiaries were identified across Turkey, with measures taken to avoid duplication with other assistance schemes and specific vulnerability criteria were applied in cooperation with DGMM. By the end of 2020, around **79,400 households** had received the cash payments. UNHCR is expected to complete the target of 85,000 households by March 2021.

 **79,400**
households reached **372,650**
individuals reached

Distribution of Materials

UNHCR provided hygiene kits and other in-kind assistance to local authorities and partners who distributed them to the population in need. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was also provided to authorities across the country to contribute to their protection while carrying out their duties. In 2020, UNHCR provided:



Over **159,000 refugee and host community households** received **hygiene kits** in **42 provinces** through **61 partners** including local authorities, municipalities and NGOs.



Around **14,000 PPE**, **80,500 latex gloves** and **20,600 masks** as well as goggles, thermometers and hand sanitizers to support officials at the provincial directorates and borders to carry out their duties and respond to basic needs of persons in a safe manner.



Over **250,000 core relief items** and PPEs to **six temporary accommodation centres** in South East Turkey.

Community Initiatives

UNHCR directly supported **12 community initiatives** to produce soap bars and masks as well as protective shields for their communities. The initiatives brought together persons under temporary or international protection and Turkish citizens in nine provinces in Central Anatolia to produce items ranging from masks to bars of soap, which were then distributed to refugees and host communities through 12 partners. Around **25,000 bars of soap**, **2,200 face shields** and **127,000 masks** were produced and distributed to local and refugee communities as well as to local state institutions and healthcare workers. In Şanlıurfa, **350,000 masks** were produced by Turkish and refugee women through a project undertaken with the Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality. In Hatay, sewing machines procured by UNHCR for a community support initiative were used to produce over **35,000 masks** and **2,000 pieces of children's clothes**. In Istanbul, **45,000 reusable face masks** were manufactured through a textile workshop refurbished by UNHCR. Masks were distributed to vulnerable households.

Protection

In 2020, UNHCR continued to **promote access to and the provision of protection**, advocating for the admission of persons in need of international protection, their access to fair and efficient national protection procedures and promoting procedural standards and safeguards by working in close partnership with DGMM, the Turkish Coast Guard and Land Forces, the Gendarmerie General Command (GGC), the Ministry of Justice and the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA). Cooperation with DGMM to support national registration and international protection procedures remained a priority.

UNHCR delivered over **100,000 humanitarian relief items** such as thermal clothing, hygiene kits, food and water to support the Turkish authorities in **responding to immediate humanitarian needs of persons rescued, intercepted and apprehended at border areas**. Reception conditions were also improved at the western border areas of Turkey by providing accommodation spaces, containers and water and sanitation facilities.

UNHCR supports **registration of persons in need of international protection** by working with DGMM and Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) with a surge capacity of bilingual support staff and ongoing technical assistance. In 2020, UNHCR also conducted **registration missions** in 16 provinces to observe registration practices and to provide feedback and recommendations for improvement. The missions allowed DGMM and UNHCR to observe the needs and challenges on the ground, while also strengthening the relationship between the two entities leading to a stronger rapport and higher level of trust.

In June, DGMM and UNHCR launched an **online appointment system** for persons under temporary protection and international protection applicants and status-holders to enable online booking for various procedures at PDMMs such as updating personal data, renewal of ID cards or requesting travel permits, in order to facilitate smooth processing and to increase compliance with COVID measures at PDMMs. Information on the online system was made available through UNHCR communication channels and DGMM's website in multiple languages.

DGMM and UNHCR conducted various **training sessions** for staff and officials. These included induction trainings for 85 newly recruited staff at PDMMs and DGMM, for 53 psychosocial support personnel at removal centres, for staff of International Protection Bureaux (Decision Centres in Ankara and Istanbul), country of origin information (COI) training on major risk profiles of specific countries for 47 personnel from DGMM and PDMMs as well as trainings for 12 newly recruited interpreters. The trainings helped to increase the technical expertise of officials and to strive towards greater compliance with international principles and the national legal framework

Virtual **workshops** were also held in support of the **national asylum system**. These included a workshop on voluntary repatriation procedures and challenges with participants from DGMM and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC); a meeting with asylum experts from Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands to discuss registration procedures, reception conditions, refugee status determination procedures, quality assurance and integration policies; and lastly, a workshop on statelessness determination procedures with UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe and staff from DGMM. Two **study visits** were also undertaken: one to Ireland on judicial systems related to asylum in March and a virtual exchange on COI fact finding with the Swedish Migration Agency in November.

Access to Legal Protection, Information and Legal Assistance



3,800

Refugees and asylum-seekers received legal assistance through legal clinics

In cooperation with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), the legal clinics in Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay and Kilis provided **legal assistance** to more than **3,800 refugees and asylum-seekers** and information on national procedures, rights and

obligations, appeal mechanisms, matters of civil law, and the protection of women and children. In cooperation with UTBA, UNHCR supported more than **2,000 legal aid** applications through bar associations in 18 provinces by covering attorney fees, notary expenses, and translation and transportation costs.

In cooperation with DGMM, UNHCR drafted **legal and guidance documents** for persons under temporary or international protection and for staff working at PDMMs at border areas and removal centres. Topics covered the national legal framework on gender-based violence, access to legal aid and legal assistance, and rights and obligations. The documents allow for a stronger understanding of and adoption of the legal framework as well as information sharing on the rights and obligations of persons intercepted and rescued at border areas.

Documents, reports and papers were also prepared in close collaboration with DGMM such as an evaluation of findings of **39 on-the-job visits** to PDMMs; a comparative overview of voluntary repatriation practices; a country of origin information (COI) method guide, and standard operating procedures on statelessness determination procedures, asylum procedures at border crossings, and on a humanitarian residence comparative review.

Joint DGMM-UNHCR Harmonization Initiative in 2020

In 2020, DGMM and UNHCR conducted **22 events**, virtually and in person, reaching **441 international students**, **802 refugees** and **2,775 host community members and service providers**. These included:

Engaged Conversations through 12 focus-group discussions on social cohesion and intercultural dialogue in three provinces with accompanying social events reaching 802 refugees and 251 host community members.

Six Regional NGO Meetings with 184 NGOs and representatives of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of Interior, the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent to encourage the cooperation between the public sector and civil society and promote the engagement of civil society in social cohesion.

Joint reporting on the DGMM-UNHCR Harmonization Initiative to inform relevant institutions and line ministries.

One Migration, Security and Social Cohesion Regional High-Level Workshop covering the Marmara Region to sensitize 350 senior officials on national policies and practices and encourage local policies on social cohesion.

Three Social Cohesion Workshops in Istanbul and Bursa with the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of National Education reaching 1,127 religious officials, teachers and school administrators as interlocutors between refugee and host communities.

Six regional social cohesion workshops for 341 academics and 441 international students from 99 universities to promote academic exchange on social cohesion.

Cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services

UNHCR continued to collaborate closely with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) in Turkey for the implementation of the national policy of inclusion of refugees in social protection mechanisms. UNHCR's cooperation with and support to the ministry is a critical aspect of its protection strategy. In 2020, UNHCR focused on strengthening the capacity of social service centres (SSCs), child institutions and violence prevention and monitoring centres to provide protective, preventive and supportive services, as well as counselling and rehabilitation.

Around **180 MoFLSS staff members** were trained on international protection, specifically, the protection of women and children, the legal framework and interviewing techniques. In 23 provinces, 74 SSCs, three provincial directorates of MoFLSS, four child support centres and one child home complex were supported with staff, vehicles and materials, comprising **200 social workers, interpreters, specialists, security staff and 92 vehicles**.

Because of rising needs during the pandemic, **56,000 hygiene materials (including surgical masks, latex gloves and bars of soap)** were provided to SSCs in all provinces and close to **63,700 bedsheets** were distributed to the 258 child protection institutions in 79 provinces. Additionally, 27 child support centres in Ankara and Istanbul, the ministry was supported with computers, and online meeting and cloud collaboration platforms.

Child protection, prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), and identification of and support to refugees with specific needs

Together with its partners, UNHCR identified and assessed over **9,300 individuals with specific needs**. They were counselled and referred to partners and service providers for further interventions. Some **10,400 individuals from 4,320 households** were assisted with multi-purpose cash for protection concerns including psychological, medical, transportation and accommodation assistance for refugees with specific needs, including GBV survivors. An additional **90 individuals from 25 households** were supported with relocation grants.

UNHCR launched a **GBV awareness-raising and mass information campaign** as an inter-agency effort focused on development of context-specific key GBV and the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) messages targeting refugee committees, a process which involved community engagement and feedback. The campaign helped to provide guidance in support of MHPSS needs and well-being of the refugee communities in Turkey, together with a corresponding need to raise awareness and knowledge on GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response mechanisms for the refugee communities in Turkey.

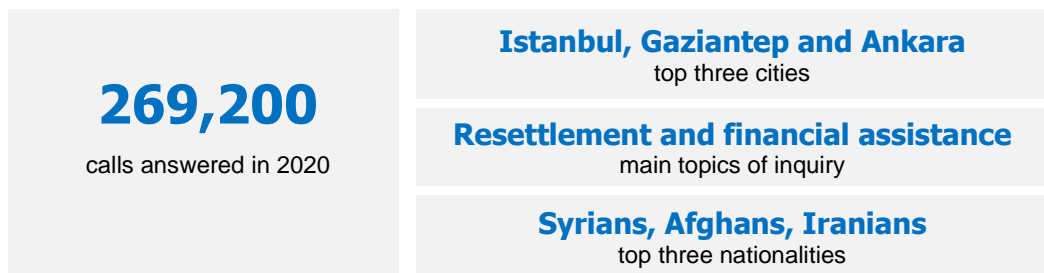
To identify protection responses and solutions for children at risk, **best interest procedures** were undertaken for **604 children**. UNHCR and partner NGO's conducted best interest assessments for 493 children. A UNHCR-led inter-agency best interest determination panel comprising of representatives from UN and NGOs convened monthly leading to 111 best interest determinations.

Communication with Communities

Communicating with communities was vital in reaching refugees and asylum-seekers with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. UNHCR's communication platforms became a critical means of conveying information about COVID-19 as well as precautionary measures, available services, government announcements and advisories, and how to reach out for help. Information was shared in Arabic, Farsi, English and Turkish.

UNHCR Counselling Line

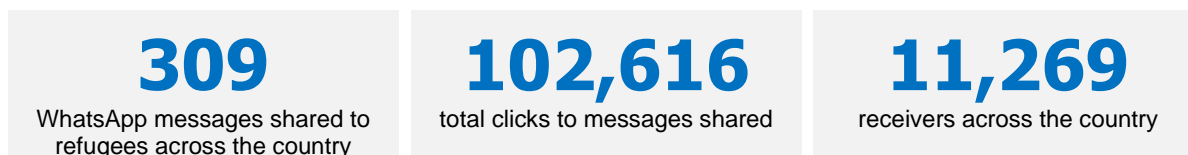
The UNHCR counselling line operated uninterrupted with its 34 operators which increased to 42 operators in June. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, financial assistance-related inquiries increased from a pre-COVID average of eight per cent of total inquiries to 25 per cent. In September, UNHCR implemented a specific **gender-based violence (GBV) line** for individuals at risk of, or survivors of, GBV, providing both a recorded message on reporting and supporting mechanisms and available support channels and services as well as GBV counselling through specialised operators. Between September and December, close to 4,000 calls were received and counselling was provided through the GBV counselling line.



UNHCR regularly published up-to-date information posts in Arabic, Farsi, Turkish and English, on the **UNHCR Turkey Information Board** on Facebook using posters, announcements, videos and Q&As. The Facebook information page reached approximately 79,500 new likes and 83,300 new followers in 2020. Some 330,000 COVID-19 related materials, produced by the Turkish Ministry of Health were printed and distributed to UNHCR field offices, partners, PDMM and the Ministry of Health premises across the country. UNHCR also supported DGMM with printed materials and videos in multiple languages on COVID-19 mitigation measures.

The **WhatsApp communication tree**, set up in March, facilitated rapid information-sharing between UNHCR and refugees. UNHCR Turkey also reached refugees through a **bulk SMS initiatives** and in total, 252,250 SMS were successfully sent in three months regarding various topics including an HES code video which was produced in Arabic and Farsi to assist refugee communities to access public institutions and services, as well as information about the Help webpage or dispelling of rumours and misinformation.

Through the **WhatsApp communication tree** in 2020, from March onwards:



Help Website

Help provides refugees with information from registration and documentation to education and livelihoods, in Arabic, Farsi, English and Turkish. Since its launch in August 2017 until the end of 2020, the Help website received approximately 1,050,660 unique visitors, of which **435,500 were in 2020** alone.

Services Advisor

Services Advisor is an inter-agency tool, operated by UNHCR, for persons under temporary or international protection in Turkey to search for service providers in their area. Partners updated their services in 2020 to reflect changing working modalities due to COVID-19. New services to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on refugees were also added, including awareness-raising, counselling, psychosocial support and referrals. In 2020, Services Advisor was visited by over **64,150 users**.

Durable Solutions

Access to Higher Education

**814**

Youth receive full university scholarships

**3,600**

Students under international protection receive cash to contribute to tuition fees

UNHCR continued to work closely with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) to provide university scholarships for refugee students as well as institutional capacity support. For the academic year 2020-2021, UNHCR contributed to the tertiary education of **744 students under temporary protection and 70 students of other nationalities** through higher education scholarship programmes in coordination with YTB. UNHCR also supported **475 university students** through semester cash grants to support students who cannot benefit from the fee waiver that exists for Syrian nationals. Meanwhile, UNHCR continued to advocate for

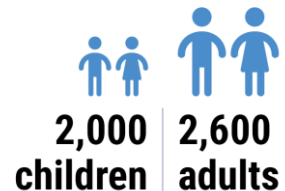
the waiver of higher education fees for international protection students.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of the **27 higher education advisors**, who usually assist scholarship students with academic advice, was adapted to provide targeted support and monitoring through phone and social media platforms to help students with challenges in online learning. UNHCR developed a new support toolkit to guide and structure advisors' activities and to refer students to assistance outside of academic support.

Turkish Language courses

Some **2,000 refugee children** taking Turkish language courses transitioned to online learning. Following the suspension of all classroom learning by the Ministry of National Education, the provincial directorates of MoFLSS put in place measures for free and accessible remote online learning. These measures included internet quotas, individual or smaller-group sessions with children who need additional tutoring, and pre-recorded training videos which children could access through WhatsApp groups.

With UNHCR's support, more than **2,600 adults** were able to attend basic Turkish language courses in eight public education centres (PECs) in four provinces. UNHCR supported the PECs to increase access to language and skills training for youth and adult Syrians under temporary protection; as well as the Education Informatics Network (known as the EBA Support Centres) and Youth Centres with computers and furniture.



attend Turkish language courses
in Public Education Centres

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_17467

