Operational Context

Turkey currently hosts the highest number of refugees in the world, 4 million people, of which 3.58 million are from Syria. Around 63,700 refugees reside in 7 camps located in the southeast, while the majority live in cities and villages throughout the country. The Government of Turkey has demonstrated leadership and generosity in providing for the needs of these populations. Since June 2011, a temporary protection regime has granted Syrians access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Refugees of other nationalities benefit from International Protection status.

WFP re-established a presence in Turkey in 2012, in response to the Syria crisis. WFP Turkey’s Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP 2020-2021) builds on WFP’s partnership with the Government of Turkey and other stakeholders to contribute to refugee households’ ability to meet their basic needs, ensuring no vulnerable refugee is left behind. Considering the protracted refugee presence in Turkey, the ICSP adds longer-term activities by increasing direct engagement in resilience programming that creates opportunities for refugees and host communities alike.

In Numbers

- 1.77 m people assisted in March 2020
- US$35.3 m distributed in multi-purpose cash
- US$0.9 m distributed through value vouchers
- US$14.4 million six-month net funding requirements (April – September 2020)

Operational Updates

- WFP, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC/Kızılay) and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS), with funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), continued to deliver assistance through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), the world’s largest humanitarian multi-purpose cash programme.

- In March, the ESSN assisted over 1.7 million vulnerable refugees across Turkey, providing each person with TRY 120 (USD 19.4) to help cover their essential needs. Of those, 9,228 people also received the monthly “severe disability top-up” payment of TRY 600 (USD 97.1). As of 1 April 2020, ESSN implementation will be continued by Kızılay and its parent organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in alignment with the Grand Bargain commitment to localization. WFP’s handover of the ESSN to IFRC was successfully concluded in March.

- WFP supported 55,587 refugees in six camps across the southeast of Turkey with a monthly e-voucher worth TRY 100 (USD 16.2) per person to buy food and non-food items in participating shops. The conditional cash-for-training programme Mutlaka Umut Var/Kitchen of Hope continued in March with vocational trainings in 7 provinces. The training sessions were held online in the second half of the month after school closures due to COVID-19. After completing the first month of the training in February with at least 80 percent attendance, 180 participants received a monthly cash transfer of TRY 750 (USD 121).

- Participants who complete the 3-month theoretical training with at least 70 percent attendance will receive a vocational training certificate. Assuming the COVID-19 situation allows, participants will then continue with a 3 months on-the-job training, during which they will receive a cash transfer corresponding to the minimum wage (TRY 2,324/USD 376) complemented by social security incentives (TRY 161.89/USD 26).
Participants reported that the ESSN cash assistance e.g. during winter, participants rely solely on the ESSN and can only afford a subsistence diet.

- Participants expressed concern that food prices have been increasing while the cash assistance and wages remain the same.

**Story Worth Telling**

- **Read** how WFP joined forces with the EU and Turkish agencies to bring choice to vulnerable refugees with the ESSN assistance since December 2016. The ESSN has touched the lives of vulnerable refugees in a very concrete manner. The number of ESSN participants withdrawing their children from school due to financial difficulties fell from 17 percent in May 2017 to 6 percent in March 2019, while the number of those sending their children to work in order to help financially support their families dropped from 22 percent to 8 percent in the same period. Despite rising prices in Turkey since 2018, 97 percent of refugees receiving ESSN assistance have a diet that is acceptable or borderline acceptable.

**WFP in the News**

- In March, WFP shared a news release explaining how ESSN assistance has changed the lives of vulnerable refugees in Turkey during more than three years of implementation. Various local media in Austria, Germany and Italy covered the news release including **Der Standard**, **ZDF**, **Hurriyet Germany**, **La Repubblica**, **Agr Press** and **EUnews.it**.

**Monitoring**

- In March, in view of COVID-19 outbreak, ESSN focus group discussions were cancelled while data collection for the ninth round of ESSN Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) was postponed to a later date. Price market monitoring (PMM) data in camps was collected by phone and from market websites.

- The February edition of the monthly ESSN Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) report explored food security among refugees. The aim of the FGDs was to enhance understanding of refugees’ food consumption and coping practices and to explore how the ESSN contributes to household food security.

- Most participants noted that food items that meet their preferences are generally available in markets and in close proximity. However, their diet depends on availability of money to buy food and varies throughout the year.

- Most participants reported that the ESSN cash assistance indirectly supports their food security as though this cash is spent on rent and utility bills, it enables them to spend any other income earned on food. In the absence of such income,