



## EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET (ESSN)

Thanks to European Union (EU) funding and a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), the most at-risk refugees living in Türkiye received humanitarian support through monthly cash assistance. The assistance was delivered through the "KIZILAYKART, a prepaid debit card, which allowed recipients to manage their funds with dignity and flexibility. At its peak, the ESSN reached over 2.3 million people.

In addition to cash assistance, complementary services like livelihood support and protection referrals helped improve the resilience of those receiving aid. Throughout the ESSN, monthly cash assistance was made, with additional support for larger and more vulnerable households.

By the end of 2023, the programme transitioned to the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), ensuring continued support for vulnerable populations.

# € 1.1B

## ESSN III TOTAL

Between  
**April 2020 - July 2023**

reached over

# 2,3M people

from

## 383K households

“  
*ESSN assistance especially helps with rent expenses. I used to worry when it was time to pay rent, now I'm better thanks to the card. Apart from that, our food consumption has increased and we started to consume more meat and vegetables.*

Male, ESSN recipient, Gaziantep

“  
*The assistance has been crucial for us to pay the rent and bills, as my husband is not able to find jobs all the time. Without the assistance, our life would be very difficult.*

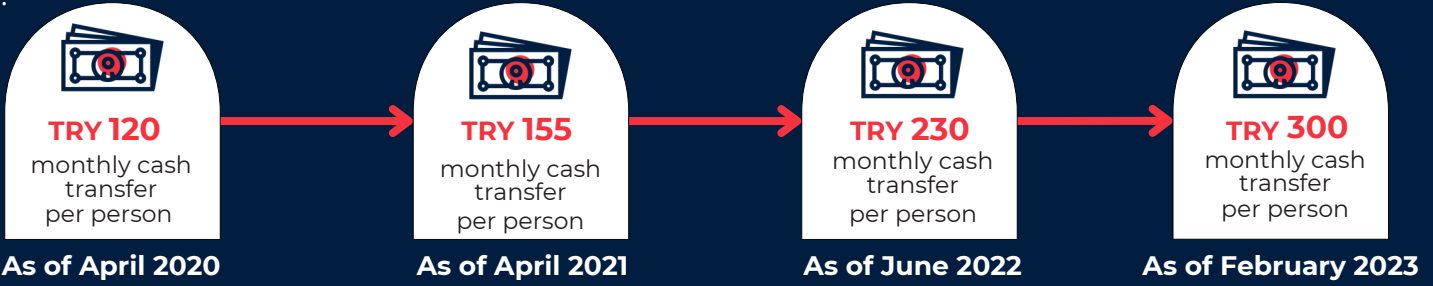
Female, ESSN recipient, Ankara



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European Union  
Humanitarian Aid



The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) adjusted the amount of cash to be distributed based on the evolving economic conditions and ongoing needs of vulnerable populations. Factors such as inflation, cost of living, and household expenditure patterns were central in determining these adjustments. The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) was regularly reviewed to understand the basic monthly costs for refugees to adjust the monthly cash assistance amount. Quarterly top-ups were provided to help households cope with seasonal challenges, such as increased costs during winter.



Ten provinces with the highest number of refugees receiving the ESSN. Percentages show how much of the total ESSN recipients resided in these provinces.

## TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The ESSN programme evolved over time to ensure that cash assistance was directed to the most vulnerable households. The demographic criteria ESSN used to identify recipients shifted over time as the programme progressed and learned from ongoing monitoring and evaluations. The aim of streamlining the criteria was not only to simplify the process with focus on those who were most in need, but to be more inclusive. These adjustments helped make the programme more flexible and responsive to the realities faced by refugees in Türkiye.

In addition to the main eligibility criteria, the programme included a backup mechanism through the discretionary allowance through Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASFs), local government foundations responsible for managing social assistance in Türkiye. This mechanism allowed SASFs to include households that, while not meeting the ESSN criteria, were still in critical need of support due to their specific vulnerabilities.

### Initial eligibility criteria

- Four or more children
- Highly dependent households
- Single females
- Elderly people as the only adult
- Single parents
- Individual(s) with disability



### Final eligibility criterion



Highly dependent households after **gender adjustment**

Dependency ratio is calculated based on the ratio of all adults to working adults in a household. As of July 2022, this calculation excluded adult women (due to low employment rate) which resulted in significantly higher inclusivity.



TRC Social Service Experts facilitating an online Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session, April 2021.

## Innovation and Technology

Innovative solutions helped maintain uninterrupted programme implementation during crises. For example, despite COVID-19 restrictions, the IFRC and TRC partnership continued to hold Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with ESSN recipients. Field teams visited participants with the necessary communication tools, enabling real-time discussions among groups of ten.

The ESSN demonstrated strong shock responsiveness, alleviating the effects of crises on its target population. Both cash assistance and programme operations were adapted to address emerging challenges. Besides monthly transfers and regular top-ups, one-off payments were provided to support recipients during times of crisis.

## Cash in Response to Shocks



### COVID-19 Top-Up

₺1,000 distributed  
in June  
and July 2020



### Economic Downturn Top-Up

₺1,400 distributed  
in May 2022  
₺900 distributed  
in July 2023



### Earthquake Top-Up

₺2,300 to EQ zone  
₺1,300 to outside  
distributed  
in June 2023

## PEOPLE AT THE CENTER

### Feedback Mechanisms

The ESSN was centered around the needs of its recipients, incorporating various feedback channels to ensure people's voices influenced programme improvements. Feedback mechanisms included social media, a toll-free call centre, and a dedicated KIZILAYKART platform, which allowed participants to share their experiences and address concerns.



Website



Social Media



**168  
CALL  
CENTER**

*"I must say that the Kizilay Service Center is something else. They know how to treat everyone, from children to adults. Say you want to change your phone number: they will take care of it right away. They treat us like family. When they see you outside the service center, they ask how you are doing, regardless of who you are."*

Male, ESSN recipient, Gaziantep



## Informed Decision Making

Data-driven decision-making was also integral to the programme, with Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) calculations, Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) studies, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and satisfaction surveys conducted by TRC and IFRC informing adjustments to better support vulnerable households. Moreover, the Intersectoral Vulnerability Study provided in-depth insights into recipient needs by examining multiple factors affecting vulnerability, while the IFRC's GO Platform facilitated efficient data collection and analysis, supporting responsive and informed decision-making.



**12**

Focus Group Discussion Reports



IFRC GO Platform



**9**

Post-Distribution Monitoring Studies



**6**

Satisfaction Surveys



**2**

Intersectoral Vulnerability Studies

*It helps many people in need. Most of these people came here from their homeland far away to flee from war and conflict. This programme supports them by alleviating their rent, electricity and water expenses.*

Male, Non-recipient, Gaziantep

To access these reports and other studies that informed the KIZILAYKART programmes, scan this code.





ESSN leveraged both social media campaigns and traditional media to broaden awareness and build understanding of its impact. Focusing on the human aspect of the programme, ESSN shared success stories through social media platforms, reaching a wide audience and fostering engagement.

## #PowerToBe

The #PowerToBe social media campaign aims to raise awareness and understanding for people that had to flee conflict by showing them as individuals with passions.



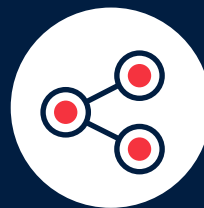
**3,983**

ESSN  
Mentions



**2,373,794**

Engagements



**83,877,435**

Potential Reach



**56,259,641**

Video Views

## Storytelling Project

The ESSN empowered refugees with a passion for storytelling by equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and tools to express themselves in unique ways. Through collaboration with external partners, participants received practical training in photography, videography, social media, and storytelling techniques.

Each storyteller was paired with an experienced professional who provided mentorship, guiding them in refining their communication strategies and enhancing their social media and storytelling abilities.



*My passion for photography started about three years ago. I enjoy capturing human stories and stories about refugees. I am working on learning photoshop and editing programs. Through this training I was able to learn from world-famous photographers and content creators and apply the learning to build my skills.*

Abdurrezak Attar, Storyteller



Scan this code to meet our storytellers with their unique voices and powerful stories



## A TIMELINE OF THE ESSN

### APRIL 2020 IFRC - TRC Partnership Begins

IFRC takes over the implementing partner role from WFP, sustaining the partnership with TRC as of the third phase of the ESSN called ESSN III.

### ESSN III Implemented Successfully

Cash transfers to refugee households in Türkiye continued without any interruptions despite emerging global and national crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Pazarçık earthquake, commonly referred to as the disaster of the century.

### Transition

### JULY 2021 C-ESSN Launched

In July 2021, ESSN-receiving households with the most severe vulnerabilities were transferred to the Complementary Emergency Social Safety Net programme implemented by a partnership between TRC and the Ministry of Family and Social Services.

### JULY 2023 IFRC Hands over to the Ministry

IFRC hands over the implementing partner role to the safe hands that is the Ministry of Family and Social Services. IFRC-TRC partnership continues through various other programmes.



These smiles, and many more, were made possible thanks to the partnership between



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