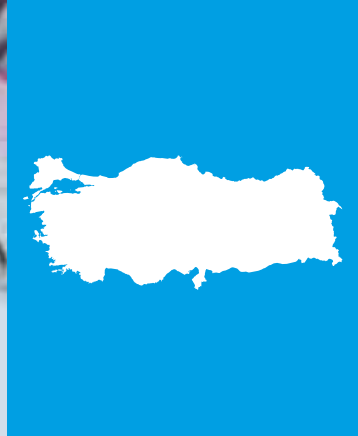




**TURKEY //**  
**Extending the National Cash  
Transfer Programme to Promote  
Refugee Children's Access  
to Education**





## Issue

Turkey is now home to the largest refugee population in the world, with 4 million (3.6 million are Syrians)<sup>109</sup> displaced persons living under temporary and international protection, comprising more than 1.7 million children.<sup>110</sup> Refugees in Turkey find themselves in a protracted situation of displacement, leading to socio-economic, physical, and mental vulnerability. As families run low on assets and barriers to livelihoods and social support systems remain, vulnerability increases. Needs are especially acute in education, child protection, and social protection. In 2017, it was found that over 82% of refugees in Turkey are below the poverty line, with 24% experiencing extreme poverty.<sup>111</sup>

At the same time, additional and immediate efforts were required to improve access to vital services, especially education for children. In December 2016, nearly 500,000 Syrian and other refugee children were enrolled in formal education across the country, while nearly 400,000 children remained out of school, hence, the strong need for a social assistance programme to increase school enrolment and retention of refugee children. The majority of another 800,000 refugee children are not of school-going age and therefore are mostly under homecare.



## Actions

The legal framework in Turkey provided a unique opportunity to extend national social protection and access to education to refugees in Turkey, namely: the national Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE). For instance, the 1986 Turkish National Social Assistance Law allows for the provision of social assistance to non-citizens legally residing in Turkey. This law, in conjunction with the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection also permits service provision to those under protection. The CCTE is one of the flagship social assistance programmes implemented by the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Services (MoFLSS) since 2003 for Turkish citizens.

In 2016, UNICEF and other partners organised a series of discussions with the MoFLSS, the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) Society, and ECHO. The discussion led to the consensus that the national CCTE should be extended to Syrian families and other refugee families to help them overcome financial barriers to education.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme – a multipurpose cash assistance scheme for refugees – was launched in November 2016 to respond to the needs of refugees.<sup>112</sup>

With more than EUR150 million provided by the primary donor (ECHO) for the extension of the programme, the CCTE is among the largest interventions to support access to education in an emergency context. The programme is also supported by the Governments of Norway and the US State Department's Bureau of Population and Migration. Aligned with the national CCTE, refugee CCTE beneficiaries receive a monthly cash benefit of 35-60 TL (USD6-10) for each child that

attends school regularly. The benefit is paid on a bimonthly basis. An additional cash benefit of 100-250 TL (USD17-44) is provided twice a year in order to help families cover the extra expenses occurring at the beginning of school terms.

Given that refugee families face multiple barriers to regular school attendance, UNICEF advocated for a 'Cash Plus' approach and incorporated a child protection component into the CCTE to further enhance the programme's impact. Thus, when a beneficiary student stops attending school regularly, their families receive a visit from the child protection outreach teams of the TRC. The visit entails a child protection assessment of children in the household, and referrals to specialised services if needed. The 'Cash Plus' component provides a means to mitigate those child protection risks and violations most closely intertwined with economic vulnerabilities, such as child labour, early marriage, physical and emotional violence, and family separation.

UNICEF also undertook additional activities to improve the CCTE. To ensure rapid roll-out and efficient implementation and harmonisation of cash disbursements to refugees; UNICEF established partnerships with the ESSN and adopted common application and payment platforms. Moreover, UNICEF advocated for the extension of the CCTE to children enrolled in the Accelerated Learning Programme, a certified non-formal education programme which provides a pathway to formal education for those missing several years of schooling. For the first time in Turkey, those enrolled in non-formal education have become eligible for cash-transfers.

<sup>15</sup> Eligibility is determined by income-regularity, receipt of other social protection benefits (i.e. benefit-tested) and assets. Children must be enrolled in school and maintain 80% attendance in each month.



## Impact

Over 650,000 refugee children have received cash support through the CCTE programme since mid-2017, and almost 70,000 refugee children have benefited from the child protection component. The programme is widely appreciated by the refugee community, as well as humanitarian/developmental stakeholders. It has also generated interest in integrated social protection in contexts of forced displacement to realise a range of children's rights. The MoFLSS has expressed an interest in the 'cash plus child protection' model and is engaged in policy dialogue about introducing a similar component into the national CCTE, thereby illustrating how UNICEF's work for refugee children may have the potential to also enhance the quality of social protection provision for Turkish children. Moreover, the CCTE provided an opportunity to introduce Public Finance for Children work in Turkey. A CCTE Costing and Financing Study calculating the total cost of implementing the programme and exploring how fiscal space can be

expanded to ensure sustainability is currently being pursued in partnership with the MoFLSS and the Strategy and Budget Presidency of Turkey.

The expansion of the CCTE scheme to include refugee children represents an important moment globally for realising the right to social protection and education for displaced populations. Rather exceptionally, a national programme has been extended to refugee children in Turkey. In doing so, a coordinated response led by UNICEF to address the needs of refugees has been undertaken. This response is characterised by (i) *complementarity* (i.e. disbursing cash for basic needs through the ESSN and for education through the CCTE); (ii) *integrated* (cash plus) design, as well as common operational modalities (i.e. application points, beneficiary payment modalities, and feedback mechanisms for both the ESSN and CCTE).

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD //

### Turkey — Conditional Cash Transfer for Education increases school attendance of Syrian and refugee children

"When we first arrived in Turkey, the very first thing I did was to look for a school for my children", says Leyla Reshid, a mother of three girls and one boy. The Reshid family fled Syria to Turkey in 2012, eventually settling in Istanbul. Leyla says that despite the challenges associated with their new life, as parents they want to provide their children with a brighter future. "We need to pay the rent and pay the bills. My husband and I even thought about Ahmad becoming another breadwinner", she says, referring to her 13-year-old son. "But for God's sake, he is still a child. He belongs in school. He needs to continue his education." Ahmad has benefitted from the extension of the CCTE programme since May 2017. "We need money to send all four of them to school", Leyla says, explaining that all her children have been supported by the CCTE since July 2017. "They love their school and do not want to miss a day. I feel very proud every morning when they leave for school and I feel more hopeful every evening when they come back home", she adds. Leyla remembers the increasingly harsh conditions they lived

under in Syria. "We suffered bombings; our home was hit and destroyed. Thank God none of us were hurt. With no water and no electricity, no home" the family embarked on their escape to Turkey. "The journey was physically and emotionally very hard on all of us. The atrocities we witnessed still has psychological effects on us. Especially on my twins, Melek and Zeynep. When they hear a loud noise they still jolt in terror. We are slowly recovering from the trauma of war." Trying to leave those terrible days behind, Leyla says that she wakes up every day thinking about a hopeful future. "My happiest moment of the day is when I send my children off to school. I pray for them and watch them from the window of our house as they walk to school. My hope for them is to build their own lives. Proper education will provide them with an opportunity for a better future. I want them to have much better lives than us. They will be educated, and they will get a good job when the time comes. I could only make it to the 9th grade in school and my biggest dream is to see my children go to university", she concludes.

*Adapted from:* <https://www.unicef.org/turkey/en/stories/conditional-cash-transfer-education-increases-school-attendance-syrian-and-refugee-children>



**TURKEY //**  
**Harnessing UNICEF's Global  
Child-Friendly City Initiative to  
Produce Positive Results for  
Children at the Local Level**





## Issue

Turkey has a large population consisting of 82 million people, including 23 million children. Turkey has rapidly urbanised over the past decades, which presents multiple challenges for urban infrastructure and services and child wellbeing. Thirty metropolitan provinces of Turkey now account for 60 million citizens, 18 million of whom are children. Turkey also hosts more than 4 million refugees, of whom 1.7 million are children. They too reside predominantly in metropolitan provinces.

Although cities are a major source of economic growth and social development, they are also a source of vulnerability and inequity, since urbanisation does not automatically generate positive results for all citizens, including children. The quality of urban settings, where now most children grow up, has a strong impact on children's development. Many children in Turkey benefit from the opportunities an urban life presents, such as access to educational, health, and various other

social services and leisure opportunities. However, a considerable number of families and children unevenly benefit from such opportunities. Income inequality in Istanbul, for example, is higher than the national average and other provinces. The National Gini coefficient is 0.40, whereas it is 0.44 for Istanbul. Similarly, the wealthiest quintile of the Turkish population has 7.8 times more income than the poorest quintile, whereas the figure for Istanbul is 8.6. Thus, given these uneven human development indicators throughout Turkey, there was a need to address aspects of the quality of urban and rural life for children. At the same time, rural poverty in Turkey has been historically higher than urban poverty. A new analysis of multi-dimensional poverty (MDP) in Turkey finds that while the Urban MDP is 40%, rural MDP is 51%.<sup>151</sup> The effects of rural poverty also show up in the high incidence of child labour in agriculture. According to the 2012 TURKSTAT Survey, nearly 45% of child labour cases in Turkey occur in agriculture.<sup>152</sup>



## Actions

Drawing on the global Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Framework, UNICEF Turkey has been working to address some of the inequities posed by urban living. It has supported both evidence generation and programming for children at the local level. This was pursued in partnership with individual municipalities as well as the national association of municipalities. From 2016 onwards, UNICEF Turkey has intensified its efforts in using the CFCI framework as an instrument to improve local governance in favour of children. Through the community-based assessments conducted by youth volunteers trained by UNICEF in CFCI principles and the consultation sessions with municipal staff, the following five thematic areas were identified as priorities: child participation, child labour, child marriage, child rights programming, and child-friendly planning. UNICEF provided training to 288 specialists (190 women, 98 men) from 100 municipalities to increase their capacities to be able to address these thematic issues in their jurisdictions.

UNICEF also developed thematic guidelines to strengthen the capacity of municipality personnel on specific child rights issues through training sessions, network meetings, and online platforms. Building on lessons drawn from the training sessions, UNICEF produced municipal guidelines on the five thematic areas. Furthermore, given that Turkey's municipal police have a role in identifying/

referring child labour cases, particularly children working on the street, child labour training modules for municipal police were developed to increase capacity on child rights and working with vulnerable children. UNICEF provided 'Training of Trainers' to twelve Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT)<sup>153</sup> experts to build CFCI capacity sustainably at the UMT and leverage its wide coverage to all municipalities in Turkey. Additionally, UNICEF and the UMT provided training to 200 municipal police staff. UNICEF used the UMT's online platform to ensure the availability of materials to a wide range of municipalities countrywide. UNICEF also organised a series of CFCI Network meetings to enable municipalities to exchange their knowledge and experiences in child-sensitive programming.

**UNICEF supported municipalities to increase their child-sensitive strategic planning and budgeting after the 2019 local elections.** In Turkey, upon local elections, all municipalities must develop new five-year plans. Utilising the March 2019 local elections as an opportunity, UNICEF and the UMT provided Child-Friendly Budget and Strategy-Development Training to 120 staff from 29 municipalities. Additionally, 20 municipalities benefited from follow-up technical assistance and a preliminary analysis of their past budgets from a child-sensitive perspective. These efforts aimed to increase municipal capacity in child-focused budgeting, design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

UNICEF provided technical and financial support to targeted municipalities through multi-sectoral work plans addressing thematic child rights issues, such as child labour, child protection, child marriage, and early childhood education. As a result of this engagement with municipalities through training and knowledge-sharing meetings, certain municipalities displayed an interest in working with UNICEF to further increase their capacity to address child rights issues and improve their child-friendliness. In Yüreğir, which is a highly populated district hosting a large number of Turkish and refugee seasonal agricultural workers including child labourers, social inclusion was identified as a key priority. Municipality community centres' staff and teachers received training on child rights, child participation, child labour, and working with vulnerable children. A child-friendly mobile vehicle was procured to facilitate outreach and used to provide psycho-social support services to children and families living in agricultural areas in Yüreğir. This was important, as seasonal workers have very limited access to education services and developmental and recreational opportunities. There were also efforts to increase community and home-based early childhood education

services and to conduct school and community-based activities with Syrian and Turkish parents to increase their school/community participation and promote social cohesion among different communities.

In İzmit, which is an industrialised district, UNICEF, the İzmit Municipality, and Local Directorate of the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Services (MoFLSS) focussed on children engaged in or at risk of child labour, particularly those working on the streets. In 2018, a 'My House' Child Support Centre was opened with UNICEF's support. The centre functions as a platform providing psychosocial support services for children at risk of child labour. It also offers referral pathways, for these children and their families, to the relevant local services provided by different ministries to facilitate their withdrawal from labour. In Kilis, which remains home to the most refugees per capita of any province in Turkey (approximately half the total population), UNICEF focussed on promoting social cohesion activities and multi-sectoral services (e.g. child protection, education, adolescent development, and participation) for children.





## Impact

**Youth-volunteer training, community-based assessments, and consultation meetings generated positive CFCI results.** They empowered people, established a network of child rights advocates at the provincial level, and engaged young people to identify problems and be part of the solution. Youth volunteers came from various backgrounds, such as local NGO volunteers and university students. The CFCI functioned as a useful platform for them to connect and come together in a structured manner. To that end, 189 youth volunteers, aged 15 to 29, received training on child rights and child-friendly cities objectives and then conducted a community-based assessment in 10 municipal areas. Based on the assessments undertaken by youths, local child action plans were developed to improve the quality of cities for children.

**UNICEF's CFCI drive helped realise the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level.** As a result of UNICEF's support, cultural acceptance of the idea of children's rights was developed and nurtured among municipality representatives. Local government authorities' sensitivity to child rights also increased. Nearly 250 specialists from 77 municipalities attended UNICEF meetings, meaning that awareness of CFCI had increased. Many municipalities continue to contact UNICEF and request technical assistance on child-focussed programming, therefore illustrating not only interest in the CFCI-initiative, but also a recognition of its importance and relevance. At the same time, working with associative bodies, such as the UMT, helped to increase the number of beneficiary municipalities as well the number of those developing an interest in UNICEF's work to improve children's rights. The UMT functions as a platform for long-term accessibility of capacity-development tools developed under the CFCI and for exchange of knowledge/experience among municipalities. This underscores the importance of leveraging local partnerships in all UNICEF activities.

**UNICEF Turkey's CFCI work demonstrated that the success of local programming increases when municipal services are linked to those provided by central ministries' local offices, as showcased in the İzmit case.** Child

labourers identified by municipal teams benefited from a range of services provided by the MoFLSS at the 'My House' Centre. For example, between 2018 and 2019, some 700 Turkish and refugee children were identified by municipal teams, and more than 350 children referred to specialised child protection and social protection services provided by the MoFLSS. Currently, approximately 50 children are also regularly benefiting from the services provided at the centre. In Kilis, UNICEF's community-based approach included the establishment of youth and women committees to accelerate outreach, benefitting 9,191 children and adults in 2019. Under the UNICEF partnership, a Social Cohesion Coordination Platform was established for coordinating social cohesion activities in the province.

**UNICEF developed and fostered strategic partnerships to enable the effective implementation of CFCI goals.** UNICEF's collaboration with individual municipalities and associative bodies representing all municipalities, such as the UMT, is an effort to leverage the mandate and capacities of municipalities at scale for the benefit of children. This focussed on developing the capacities of municipalities to design policies and programmes to promote children's rights (by benefiting from CFCI building blocks); creating platforms for knowledge sharing among municipalities, and empowering young people to be agents of change for the realisation of child rights at the local level.

**Steps towards increased fiscal space and investment for children were also made at the local level. A child-friendly budget and strategy-development training increased municipalities' capacity in child-focussed design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.** Furthermore, this engagement helped municipalities to design their 2021-2025 Development Plans with a stronger vision in favour of children. UNICEF also compared each municipality's pre-training (2018) expenditure and post-training (allocated for 2020) expenditure for children's issues. The preliminary analysis demonstrates that there is, on average, a 66% increase from 2018 to 2020. The analysis also shows that children have become more visible in the new 5-year plans as a result of UNICEF's CFCI engagement.

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