

TURKEY

July-August 2021

Key Figures (as of 31 August 2021)

4 million

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey including over 3.6 million Syrians under temporary protection and over 330,000 international protection status holders and asylum-seekers of other nationalities. Over 98% of Syrian refugees live across Turkey in 81 provinces, while 1.5% are hosted in seven temporary accommodation centres managed by DGMM.

5,600

Refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration to 14 countries in 2021 so far. Over 4,300 refugees departed for resettlement to 13 countries, 79% of whom were Syrian and 13% Afghan.

32,900

Calls answered on the UNHCR Counselling Line in August with the majority of calls enquiring about resettlement opportunities followed by legal assistance. Among those were 4,650 calls which came through UNHCR's dedicated GBV line, where 2,700 individuals chose GBV-related counselling.

Funding (as of 31 August 2021)

USD 349.7 million

requested for UNHCR operations in Turkey

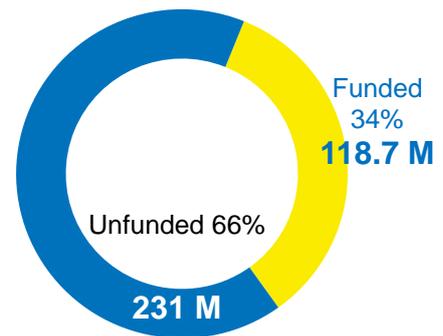


Photo credit: Mohammed Eyad

Mohammed Eyad's The Cave won the 2020 Emmy for Outstanding Cinematography for a Nonfiction Programme. The film documents the true story of a Syrian underground hospital and a team of civilians and medical professionals led by women who risk their lives to provide medical care to trapped locals. Mohammed is a Syrian refugee living in Turkey. Read more about him and his award-winning account of bravery and resilience [here](#).

The [UN Cross-Border Humanitarian Response in Northwest Syria](#) was renewed on 9 July essentially for six months with the likely extension of an additional six months to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid across the border from Turkey. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release welcoming the extension, underlining that the UN humanitarian aid delivered through the cross-border mechanism is essential for the continuation of the effective response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria as well as for regional stability and security. UNHCR co-leads the Protection, Shelter/Non-Food Items (Shelter/NFI) and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Clusters. All Clusters closely follow the humanitarian developments in the conflict areas in north-west Syria and contribute to emergency preparedness response plans accordingly.

[Wildfires](#) broke out across the south and southwest of Turkey from 28 July through the first half of August resulting in loss of agriculture and livestock. UNHCR was in close contact with provincial authorities in Muğla, Antalya and Mersin to follow up on the situation and needs of the people affected by the fires. According to information received from the provincial directorates of migration management, and family and social services, no cases involving refugees were reported.

Following the serious incidents that took place in the Altındağ district of Ankara on 11 August, UNHCR was in close contact with both the authorities and refugee representatives in the district, as well as NGOs operating in the area, to discuss proposed measures to ease tensions and to assess needs. The Representative visited IGAM, the Research Centre on Asylum and Migration in Ankara, where he had the opportunity to discuss the situation with some affected refugees. Some were considering moving to another district because of the tensions in the area; some were also concerned about their children enrolling in school.

The [Preliminary Analysis of Round 4 Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment](#) was published in August. This round of the assessment was conducted with 26 protection sector partners and four municipalities. Over 1,220 individuals were interviewed, including Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian nationals. A small sample of individuals pending registration and documentation with DGMM (mostly Afghan nationals) were also included to compare their overall access to rights and services with those registered with DGMM. While the majority of inquiry areas remained similar to that of Round 3, in this round the assessment included expanded questions around registration status and included new thematic areas on access to COVID-19 vaccines and to digital tools/literacy. A report is expected to provide an annual overview including a comparative analysis of findings over four rounds, triangulated with other inter-agency data sources such as Activity Info and partner assessments.

Mission to Istanbul

UNHCR Representative was on mission to Istanbul 26-28 July. In addition to holding various meetings with local authorities, partners, NGO representatives and academics, the Representative signed a Letter of Understanding with Mayor of Istanbul, Mr. Ekrem İmamoğlu for Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality marking both entities' willingness to further institutionalize and strengthen their ongoing partnership by extending municipal services and social protection opportunities to refugees and fostering social cohesion across the province. During his mission, the Representative met with notable protection and livelihoods counterparts, including the Deputy Governor of Istanbul, the Head of Istanbul PDMM and the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. The Representative also held meetings with refugees, representatives of Afghan grassroots organizations, local community leaders and prominent academics to gain information pertaining to protection, social cohesion, and livelihoods conditions in Istanbul. Overall, the mission provided an overview of the situation, needs and challenges of refugees and services providers, and to discuss areas for future collaboration to strengthen the refugee response in Istanbul. Prior to the Representative's visit, UNHCR signed a Letter of Understanding with the Istanbul Arts and Culture Foundation (IKSV) for child-focused arts activities for refugees, complementing the Together Stronger Voices Choir II activities that took place in 2020, fostering positive experiences of children singing in a multicultural learning environment.

During the Municipality Coordination Meeting in February 2021, platform members collectively agreed on the need to revise the [Istanbul Declaration](#) considering changes in the operational context in Turkey and an increase in municipal engagement with refugees. UNHCR, WALD and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality therefore organized and facilitated a workshop on 25 August with the participation of 20 municipalities in the Marmara region. The Municipality Coordination Platform focused on the significance of the Istanbul Declaration as well as overall and in-depth discussions on the draft revised document. The workshop was in line with the spirit of the Global Compact for Refugees to strengthen municipal ownership over the refugee response in the Marmara Region. Various points were raised during the workshop, including members expressing a commitment to providing services to refugees alongside the host community; the necessity of

further resources for the institutionalization of refugee-inclusive municipal services; and additional emphasis on municipalities' need for direct access to external funding. Participants showed an interest in inviting other local governments to include migration and refugee issues to their five-year strategic plans, and to advance the scope of the Platform's coordination activities through decision-maker and technical level meetings.

Social Cohesion and Harmonization

Under the DGMM-UNHCR Joint Harmonization Initiative, the fourth and fifth [workshops with mukhtars](#) for 2021 were held on 5 July (online) and 12 July (in-person). Mukhtars from four districts in Istanbul participated in the workshops, as well as around 80 participants including DGMM's Deputy General Manager, Head of Istanbul PDMM, and representatives from the provincial and local authorities were present at the workshops. Mukhtars were provided with information on the national policies and programs concerning social cohesion and international protection procedures. During a discussion session, mukhtars shared their observations on the situation of foreigners and social cohesion aspects within their neighbourhoods as well as the challenges that they encounter. One of these challenges is the inability to plan assistance needs because of insufficient information on the refugee population residing in their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, UNHCR arranged visits to various neighbourhoods on 13 and 14 July, to visit offices and business of refugees and the host community to discuss observations, challenges and recommendations for improved social cohesion.

Engaging at the Local Level

The [Gaziantep Municipality Vocational Centre \(GASMEK\)](#) has been yielding a regular output of 20-25 thousand facemasks a day. Some 30 people (Turkish and Syrian) work in the production and distribution of facemasks, 18 of whom are volunteers. UNHCR has supported the municipality with raw material for 1.5 million masks, around 1.3 million of which have already been produced. Facemasks are distributed for free to Syrian and Turkish families identified by the municipality during house visits and to the beneficiaries of the vocational courses and Turkish classes at GASMEK.



As part of the IMECE Project, a project supported by Google and implemented by UNHCR in partnership with Habitat Association to improve entrepreneurial capacities and employability of Syrian refugees in Turkey by increasing digital skills, Habitat organized a [Google Digital Skills Training session](#) through its Maharat programme. The training benefitted seven female participants and was held on 14-15 August. Habitat had already exceeded its initial target of 270 beneficiaries, reaching 309 individuals, 143 of whom are female. A new batch of activities is expected to commence in September. Habitat Association will also be organizing its first inspiration meeting with a senior software engineer from an e-commerce website with the IMECE circle participants.



Photo ©Sultanbeyli Municipality

UNHCR supports [refugee self-reliance](#) through coordination with refugee communities, partner NGOs and local government. In July, 10 municipal staff completed their training of trainers on mentoring at the UNHCR-supported Sultanbeyli Municipality Career Centre. The staff gave their first mentoring session to university students, both Turkish and refugee, thereby increasing employability after graduation. The career centre provides counselling on labour market opportunities, vocational and soft skill trainings to facilitate the employment process through networking with the private sector.

[Various activities were organised in July](#) in Mersin, Van and Niğde to encourage refugee and Turkish children to mix and mingle and spend time in the outdoors in a safe and natural environment considering the long months of the pandemic. Two of these activities were summer camps; one for children aged 12-14 years and organised by UNHCR partner Tarsus Life Association with the participation of local authorities and organisations in Mersin; the second was supported through the child support centre in Van with around 55 children. In addition to the fun activities, the camp also helped the institution personnel to increase resilience and support for themselves and the children. A picnic outing was also planned by the Yetim Eli Association (Orphan Hand Association), UNHCR's partner in Niğde, in cooperation with local authorities. Around 100 Turkish citizens and 75 Afghan, Syrian and Iraqi nationals, mostly single-parent families, took part in a variety of activities and sports competitions throughout the day.

A [women's coppersmith training](#) which was carried out through the Mardin Meydanbasi multi-purpose community centre (CATOM) was completed on 6 August. The participants, 16 refugee women and 15 local community women trained for three months from March to August and produced some 140 products including trays and decorative plates. UNHCR provided the raw material and tools. This was a unique experience for the women who expressed their pleasure at attending the course. The program brings together people from diverse social backgrounds and provides a common place for them to work and learn together. The participants formed strong relationships and friendships. UNHCR is exploring ways to support a strategy for the sale of the produced items.



COVID-19 Support

UNHCR and its partners continue to reach out to refugee communities across the country to inform them about Turkey's [COVID-19 vaccination scheme](#) and to raise awareness on the benefits of vaccination in the interest of public health. While in some areas there are no reported challenges in receiving the vaccination, for other areas, especially for refugees residing in rural areas, vaccination and access to information poses a challenge. UNHCR conducts regular meetings with its partners to better understand the situation, to advise and suggest solutions. UNHCR is increasing its advocacy through partners, communication with communities and at the inter-agency level, while ensuring the dissemination of information in multiple languages.

In order to monitor [refugee's access to the COVID-19 vaccination](#) in Turkey, UNHCR conducted a [survey](#) in July covering 49 provinces using a random sample of 1,200 refugees respecting the age, gender and demographical location of refugees. The refugees were reached by phone and the same respondents will be called for consecutive rounds in a longitudinal cohort study to monitor how their access to COVID-19 vaccines has changed over time. The survey results showed that more than a third of refugees were vaccinated and 13 per cent are willing to be vaccinated either by already having an appointment or a plan to do so. Six per cent explicitly expressed their unwillingness to be vaccinated. About half the respondents mentioned they were undecided about the vaccination; mainly because they lack clear information about procedures, or because of health issues. The survey results showed that almost all refugees are aware of the vaccination campaign and that social media is the most common channel for receiving information about it. The vaccination rate of the refugee population appears to largely correspond to that of the general trend of vaccination in Turkey. A second round of the survey is expected to take place in September, focusing on those who were not vaccinated at the time of the first round of the survey.

Access to Registration and Protection

An in-person [Training on International Protection Status Determination \(IPSD\)](#), aiming to provide theoretical and practical information on interview techniques, credibility, legal analysis and decision drafting was held in Ankara, 16-20 August. Around 35 participants from PDMMs and DGMM took part in the training which covered information sessions as well as practical interview simulations on interviewing techniques and case studies. The participants were trained on the legal analysis of international protection applications and drafting decisions. The training series will continue in September and will be complemented with online trainings on Country of Origin Information specifically covering Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

Virtual [Country of Origin Information \(COI\) trainings](#) on Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq were held 24-26 August, to equip 54 PDMM participants with relevant and up to date COI and to improve their capacity in utilising this information on particular caseloads during refugee-status determination (RSD) proceedings. The trainings were complementary to specific trainings on RSD adjudication targeting PDMM staff, also held in August. The participants were presented with the historical background, political/geographical context, current security situation and possible risk profiles for each caseload and had the opportunity to pose questions on challenges they face in COI research and utilization of COI in the RSD context. UNHCR also prepares regular COI updates and documents on various countries of the region to share with DGMM senior staff and officials responsible for decision-making. In July and August, UNHCR shared regular updates on Afghanistan as well as Iran, Iraq and various African countries.

Situation in Afghanistan

In view of the evolving situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR has been in close communication with the Turkish authorities and strengthening efforts related to monitoring movements and analysing trends at the borders to gain an understanding of population movements. The Representative met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yavuz Selim Kiran, on 12 August to exchange information on the latest developments. Close cooperation with, and support to authorities, in implementation of the legal framework, especially in border areas and transit routes was discussed. The Deputy Minister underlined the need to further support Afghanistan and neighbouring countries to Afghanistan; UNHCR confirmed its continued efforts in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries.

The Representative also had a meeting with the Director General of Migration Management, Dr. Savaş Ünlü, on 19 August to exchange information on the rapidly unfolding developments in Afghanistan. The DG reiterated Turkey's concerns regarding the large number of refugees hosted by Turkey and insufficient international support with respect to resettlement. The Representative highlighted UNHCR's ongoing advocacy for international solidarity towards humanitarian activities in Afghanistan and support to neighbouring countries and underlined the protection needs of Afghan nationals already in Turkey.



Mayor of Istanbul, Mr. Ekrem İmamoğlu, and UNHCR Representative, Mr. Philippe Leclerc, sign a Letter of Understanding at the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Photo ©Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality

Thanks to donors for their support to UNHCR Turkey in 2021

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