



ISSUE 17: SEPTEMBER 2021

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET (ESSN)

Thanks to European Union funding and a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRC), 1.5 million refugees living in Turkey are receiving humanitarian support through monthly cash assistance.

September snapshots



1,510,722 individuals
reached with cash assistance



234,161,910 TRY
transferred to 243,274 households



5,136,070,370 TRY
transferred since April 2020

Sweepbacks: In September, 944,605.69 TRY was swept back in total; 325,515.00 TRY from 271 uncollected cards and 619,090.69 TRY from 654 dormant accounts. The total amount of funds swept back since April 2020 is 17,256,864.13 TRY.

Highlights

Cash transfers provided to 1.5 million individuals

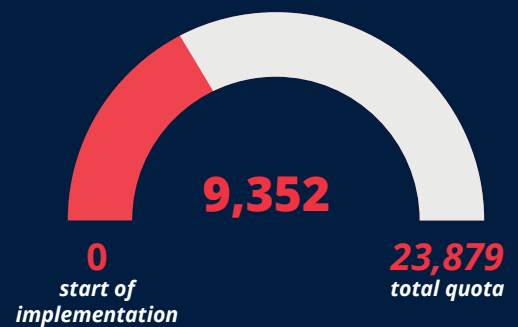
At the end of September, 234,161,910 TRY was transferred to 1,510,722 individuals living under temporary or international protection in Turkey. Coordination with the parallel C-ESSN project continues to be carried out smoothly.

Sharp increase in debt

While the ESSN assistance is an important contribution, ESSN applicants frequently resort to debt as a coping strategy to meet their basic needs. According to findings of the most recent studies conducted by TRC-IFRC, level of debt has increased sharply impacted multiple aspects of individuals' lives since the onset of the pandemic. For more information, please see page 4.

SASF ALLOWANCE

In September 2021, 9,352 households (37,568 individuals) across Turkey received ESSN assistance via the SASF allowance. The SASF allowance continues to play an integral role in minimizing exclusion errors and including vulnerable households into the ESSN.



Funded by
the European Union



ESSN APPLICATIONS

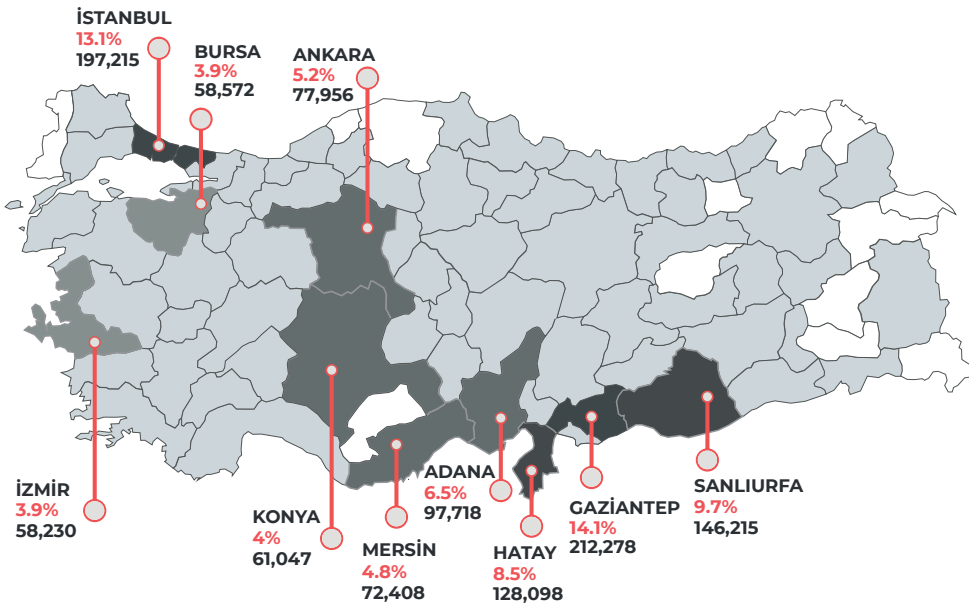
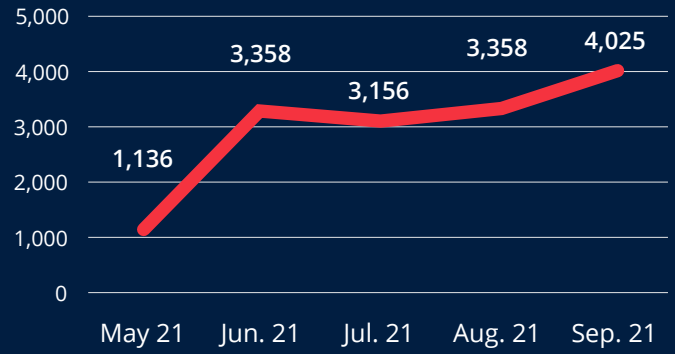
In September 2021, a total of 4,025 household applications were received by the SASF offices and TRC Service Centres.

Of these household applications, 40.8% percent were received by TRC Service Centres and 59.2% percent at SASF offices.

The total number of household applications received since the beginning of the ESSN III Programme has reached 630,584, with 36.3 percent of the total application having been received by the TRC Service Centres.

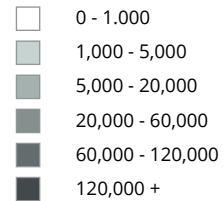
Applications figures have been steady since the end of the pandemic lockdown in May. In September 2021, a slight increase in the number of applications was detected. During the school registration period, the SASF Offices and TRC Service Centres have started to receive more visits from the target community for information updates with regard to student information, which may have had an impact on the ESSN application trend, as well.

Monthly Number of Household Application



Province breakdown of ESSN recipients

Number of individuals



CRITERIA BREAKDOWN ¹



56.0 %
households with four or more children



35.4%
households with high dependency ratio (≥1.5)



4.8%
single female

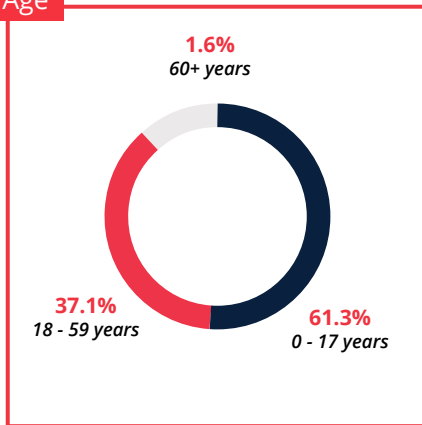
***3.8%** of households (9,352 HHs) receive ESSN assistance within the scope of the SASF allowance.

¹ 136,127 households with four or more children; 86,071 households with a dependency ratio equal to or above 1.5; 11,724 single females.



IN NUMBERS: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE WE SERVE

Age



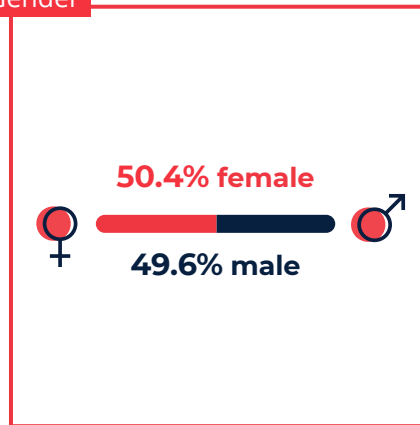
Age breakdown of ESSN recipients:

0 - 17 years: 926,423

18 - 59 years: 559,847

60+ years: 24,452

Gender

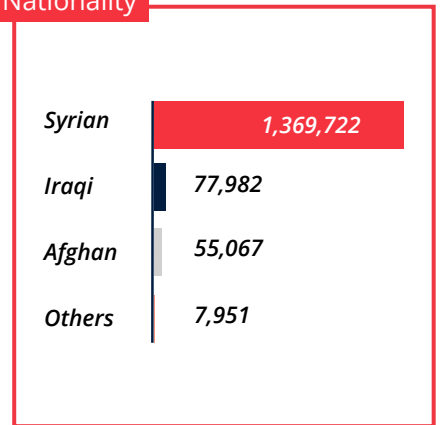


Gender breakdown of ESSN recipients:

Female: 761,420

Male: 749,302

Nationality



Among the 'others' category are Iranian, Somali, Pakistani, Chinese, Palestinian and other nationals.



“

“The assistance has been crucial to 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”

– Woman, ESSN recipient, Ankara

SHARP INCREASE IN DEBT DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ESSN applicants frequently resort to debt as a coping strategy to meet their basic needs, and the level of debt increased since the onset of the pandemic. According to preliminary findings of the Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) 12 survey, 88 per cent of households are currently in debt. Over 70 per cent incurred new debt in the past three months to cover their basic needs. Debt levels have doubled for ESSN recipients (the median household debt reaching 2000 TRY) and tripled for non-recipients (3000 TRY) since the outbreak of COVID-19. At the same time, less than 30 per cent of the participant households have been able to spend money on debt repayment in the past month.

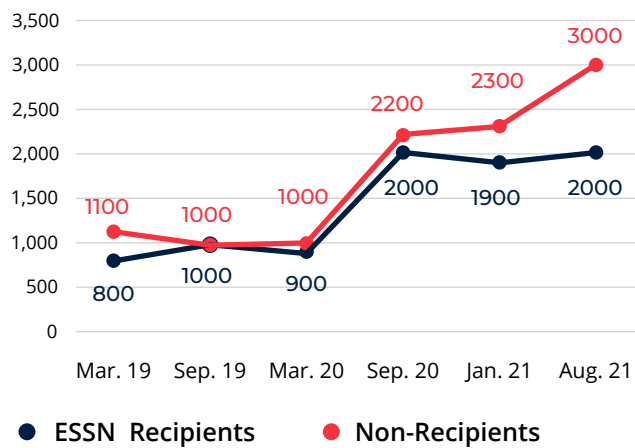


88 %
of households surveyed are currently indebted



73 %
of households surveyed incurred new debt in the past three months

Debt Among ESSN Recipient and Non-Recipient Refugees



To investigate this trend further, TRC and IFRC conducted a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to better understand the use of debt and its implications on households. According to this study, key reasons for debt are:

- Limited employment opportunities and shrinking of the labour market due to the pandemic
- Working in irregular or low-paying jobs
- Gap between income and expenditure
- High inflation rate
- Unexpected health expenses

Households frequently need to further cut down on their basic needs or borrow additional resources to pay their debts, in addition to paying in installments on a weekly or monthly basis.

“No, you cannot make a living without borrowing money. Previously, you could work 22 days, 20 days. Now you work 12 days, you are unemployed for 18 days. If you don’t work, you have no money. Debt became mandatory due to this corona. A year ago, Kızılaykart was able to both pay our rent and cover some of our expenses. Now it may only afford my house rent” – Male, ESSN recipient, Samsun

Indebtedness also has an impact on physical and psychological well-being. People shared how debt causes stress and anxiety. This includes the fear of eviction due to inability to pay rent; not being able to pay bills (electricity, water, heating), and food insecurity. It may lead to children being required to work at an early age to contribute to family income. Some individuals also mentioned that it increases family tensions, with children being exposed. Social life is negatively affected due to inability to host guests, feeling embarrassed, and hesitance to socialize due to depression.

These findings underline that ESSN programme is critically needed to help individuals under temporary or international protection with their struggle to maintain their daily lives, especially after COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, it is a priority for the programme to continue uninterrupted and potentially expand in the future, with complementary assistance to be explored. The also confirms that the increase of ESSN monthly cash assistance per individual from 120 TRY to 155 TRY in April 2021 is a very timely and relevant adjustment to the programme. Alongside cash assistance, ESSN programme supports individuals through socioeconomic empowerment referrals which aim to increase employability of individuals as well as support their job placement processes.

“Wherever you go, worry and debt are with you. You cannot improve yourself; you cannot improve your situation; you do not have any empty space in your head to think of something better. 90% of your brain is occupied by the thought of how to get through this month.”
-Male, Hatay, Non-recipient



PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS

Monitoring and evaluation:

Data collection for the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) Round 12 was concluded in early September, with a total of 3,208 households surveyed. PDM 12 is a panel study which links with the PDM10 household (which was conducted last year), allowing to monitor households' socio-economic situations over time and observe whether their condition has improved or not. A detailed report is currently being prepared and will be available soon.

Targeting studies are being conducted, focusing on humanitarian needs and do no harm. For this purpose, inclusion and exclusion error methods were re-defined, and the new methodology was developed and agreed. For now, data collected for monitoring and evaluation purposes have high variances, due to the impact of the COVID-19. This makes studies harder to conduct and cross-check. Further analysis will be conducted around these topics.

Systematic card distribution monitoring has been conducted over the past few months, and its results indicate that almost 80 per cent of card distribution sites adhere to COVID-19 measures, and crowds are observed in less than 10 per cent of visits. The main challenges observed were related to language barriers. Over 90 per cent of people surveyed did not face any difficulties in using Kizilaykart at ATMs. Furthermore, a new round of FDGs was conducted throughout September, focusing on trends in expenditure and coping strategies of ESSN applicants.

Referral and Outreach:

Referral and Outreach (R&O) field teams continue their activities within the scope of raising awareness targeting local authorities and NGOs, and carrying out advocacy activities through local authority visits to remove barriers of individuals who face challenges during ESSN application. Within this framework, field teams visited more than 350 local institutions in 36 cities in September.

During those visits, it was reported that the SASFs started and continued conducting household visits despite the increase in COVID-19 cases. Based on the feedback obtained through field visits, status determination interviews are intensified regarding the International Protection applicants.

Coordination:

Two ECHO monitoring missions took place, mainly focusing on ESSN implementation during COVID-19 as well as linkages between ESSN and C-ESSN. The first mission was held in Ankara and Istanbul between 20-24 September, and the second one was held in Gaziantep and Adana between 27-30 September.

TRC and IFRC coordination staff presented the ESSN's periodic figures and latest regional updates in the September Basic Needs Working Group regional and national meetings. Those two meetings, joined by almost 60 humanitarian workers from different institutions, were organised for Ankara, Gaziantep, Istanbul and Izmir and the regions these provinces represent. September also marks the beginning of the annually held 3RP Sectoral Consultations for the upcoming period. Sector Coordinators have started to conduct their consultations on either a national or sub-national level. Sector Coordinators have started to conduct their consultations on either a national or sub-national level. These consultations are closely followed up by the TRC Coordination Team, ensuring that the impact of the ESSN is meaningfully reflected and positive alternatives to meeting basic needs are promoted.

Accountability to affected populations:

The production process for second digital campaign was held in Istanbul between the 20-23 September, filming four ESSN recipient protagonists who are showcasing their talents in fine arts, culinary skills and sports. Another filming production was held in Mardin, based around a young juggler assisted by the ESSN, which was supported by the TRC Community Centers in the province. TRC and IFRC focal points participated in both events to monitor and support the process.

For information dissemination, the design of a new poster citing the updated criteria of ESSN programme was finalized and circulated. The designing process for an ATM guide is ongoing. In September 2021,

- 14,701 calls were received by the TRC 168 Call Centre,
- 266.468 SMSs were sent
- 184 messages were replied via Kizilaykart Facebook account and 89 messages were replied online
- 16 ESSN related content were posted.

