

## **The Challenge:**

**The right to work:** The right to work is set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and various other regional and international instruments such as the International Covenant on Economic Cultural and Social Rights. Nonetheless, refugees are not allowed to work in around 50% of asylum countries. They are further hindered by restrictions on their movement, a lack of access to education, restrictions on rights concerning housing and land, and a lack of access to business-crucial services such as banking and training.

**Refugees in developing countries:** A large majority of the world's refugees –85 per cent – live in developing countries. The size of the host country's population and the strength of its economy will affect how they cope with the economic impact of refugee flows. Countries bordering Syria, such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, have received the largest refugee populations relative to their host populations.

## **Country Context:**

As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Turkey established a rights based legal framework for international and temporary protection, providing persons in need of international protection with a broad range of rights and entitlements (GFI). The PoC population in Turkey comprises 4.8% of the national population. Due to few employment opportunities, current economic situation and a weak enabling environment most PoCs remain unemployed. Since 2015 PoCs have the right to work, however, as most opportunities are in the informal sector. Despite a favourable legal environment in Turkey, challenges do exist for refugees to access formal employment within the existing legal framework. Specifically, the formal quota for refugees not to exceed 10 per cent of the total workforce per enterprise, and the requirement that refugees be employed only in their province of registration. In coordination with other key actors in the sector, in particular FAO, ILO and UNDP, UNHCR continue to advocate for a more flexible and inclusive approach.

To support the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) in streamlining the certification of skills and enhance the knowledge by refugees of the process, the Turkish national qualification standards are being translated into Arabic. In addition, a pilot project with the VQA to facilitate the **accreditation process for refugees** will begin in the second quarter of 2019.

According to an initial analysis, if the working age interval of 18-49 taken into consideration, then we can state that there are almost 1.620.000 PoCs at working age both male and female. Around 600.000 of these PoCs are benefitting from the The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) which means they are not in the official employment. The total number of issued work permits for PoCs are 100.000. According to these data, the there are 900.000 PoCs that are not ESSN beneficiaries and they are not in official employment.

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Total # of Beneficiaries
60+	-	-	1.67%	28,635
18–59	16.55%	20.47%	37.02%	634,775
12–17	7.74%	7.19%	14.93%	256,002
5–11	13%	12.44%	25.44%	436,215
0-4	10.08%	9.59%	19.67%	337,278
Overall:	48.60%	51.40%	100.00%	1,714,680

Figure 1. ESN Age breakdown

Turkey has a large informal economy with educated youth struggling to integrate into the job market. There are currently 329,285 current vacancies in the Turkish Labor Market. The main sectors within the Turkish market system lacking viable workers are sewing machine operators, waiters, sales professionals, manufacturing labourers, cleaners etc. (Turkish Employment Agency, LMA). Turkey has an unemployment rate of 13.7%, with self-employment at 31.5%. Only 47.6% of the Turkish workforce are enrolled in formal employment with 29.7% of nationals working informally. The sectorial segregation in Turkey consist of the agriculture industry at 18.8% of employment, the industry sector at 20.4%, the construction sector at 5.2% and the services industry at 55.6% (Turkish Statistical Institute).

### **Livelihoods Activities in Turkey:**

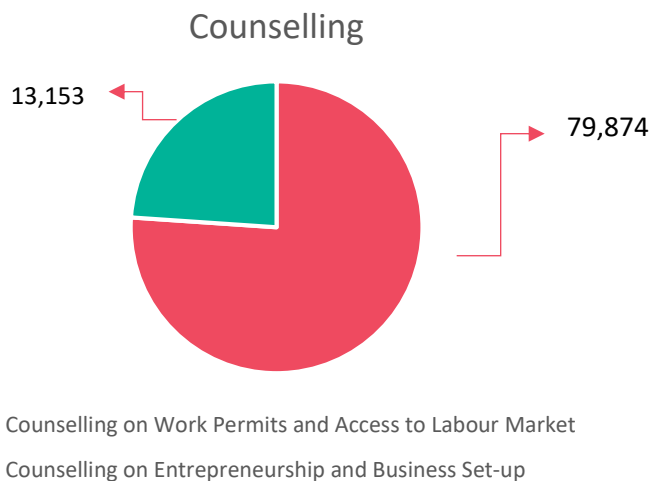
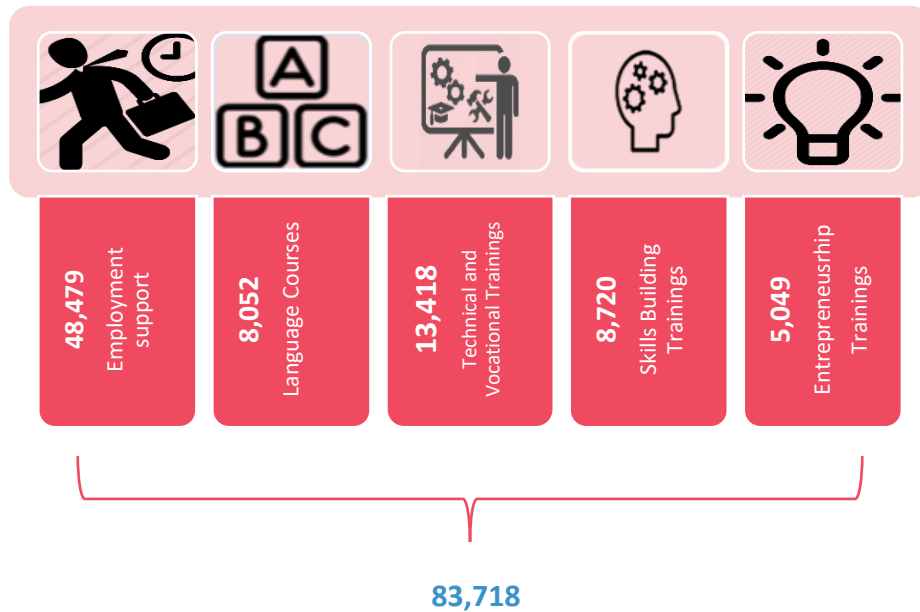
Livelihoods Programme aims to ensure following strategic objectives in Turkey;

- 1- Promote the right to work and the right to development,
- 2- Enable people to preserve and protect their productive assets as well as meet their immediate consumption needs,
- 3- Develop and expand proven and innovative ways of supporting people’s economic self-reliance,
- 4- Improve planning, learning, and practices on successful approaches to livelihoods development, and their impact on self-reliance. For this Livelihoods programme focus on 4 main pillars and carries out various programmes in cooperation with a wide range of actors:
  - Cooperation with the government of Turkey: Collaboration with government agencies in institutional, administrative, and legal environment in order to increase livelihoods opportunities for refugees as well as strengthening institutional capacity of government agencies.
  - Cooperation with Private Sector: Collaboration with companies, firms, chambers of commerce, chambers of industry on economic absorptive capacity and potential of labour markets for refugee employment and entrepreneurship programmes.
  - Vocational Training and Skills-Building Programmes: Vocational, language, and skills training in order to equip refugees with new skills and prepare their transition into the labour market.
  - Entrepreneurship Programmes

### Total Number of PoCs Reached:

Since the beginning of the UNHCR livelihoods activities in 2016 in Turkey, 35,239 individuals were reached with skills, language, vocational, and entrepreneurship training programmes.

- Through interpreters provided to Turkish Employment Agency Service Centres, counselling services on access to the labour market and entrepreneurship reached 93,027 individuals.
- As of 2020, UNHCR reached a total of 5,049 individuals with entrepreneurship training and 242 individuals with business licenses and 537 individuals with business grants since 2016.



## **COVID – 19 Response:**

### **UNHCR TURKEY COVID-19 Preparedness and Response of Government of Turkey – Support for the Private Sector**

COVID- 19 Affected UNHCR’s work with PoCs in many different areas. Many of the implementing partners had to suspend their vocational training sessions, language courses, skills building, and entrepreneurship activities. UNHCR Turkey Country Team revised the whole livelihoods program in line with refugee needs due to COVID-19. Many language and skills-building courses transformed into online platforms. Also the training and the certification of the online language courses were approved by the Ministry of National Education.

The Government of Turkey has announced support packages in order to prevent further unemployment and shrinkage of the private sector. These packages will have direct positive effect on refugee livelihoods.

The first support is being provided by The Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) in order to subsidize salaries and the programme is referred to as **Temporary Work Payment**.

### **TEMPORARY WORK PAYMENT**

#### **What is Temporary Work Payment?**

Income support for the employees when they cannot work for a period of not more than three months due to general economic, sectoral, or regional crisis or challenging reasons is currently being provided by Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR).

#### **What Services are provided under Temporary Work Payment and for how long?**

- A short term work payment,
- General Health insurance payments

### **TAX SUPPORT FOR THE EMPLOYERS**

The Revenue Administration of Turkey announced a support package for taxpayers who are affected by the measures taken against coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

**With this support package, below sectors were identified as the most affected sectors:**

1. Retail and Shopping Centers
2. Iron Steel and Metal Industry
3. Automotive Industry
4. Logistics-Transportation
5. Cinema and Theater Activities
6. Accommodation
7. Food and Beverage Services
8. Textile and Apparel
9. Event and Organization
10. Health Services
11. Furniture Manufacturing
12. Mining and Quarrying
13. Construction
14. Industrial Kitchen Equipment
15. Car Rental
16. Printed Publishing and Printing
17. All the Income Taxpayers

Moreover, taxpayers operating in sectors such as swimming pools, Turkish baths, spas, sports, games and wedding halls, barbershops and hairdressers, whose activities were temporarily stopped within the scope of the measures taken by the Ministry of Interior, can also benefit from force majeure provisions during this period.

Additionally, approximately 1.9 million citizens working as farmers, tailors, greengrocers, lawyers, financial advisors, architects, engineers, pharmacists, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, physiotherapists, software developers are also included to the context of the force majeure.

Payment deadlines of taxes were extended for six months and payments can be initiated within the last week of October, November, and December by taxpayers.