Supporting Syrian volunteer teachers in Turkey

Access to education for Syrian refugee children

The project “Support to the Syrian volunteer teachers incentives programme” enables Syrian refugee children to attend school by providing financial incentives for Syrian volunteer teachers. Approximately 11,000 teachers benefit from the monthly incentive payments reaching a total of more than 200,000 school children. The project is a substantial part of a comprehensive UNICEF programme in Turkey aiming at qualitative and inclusive education in a protected environment in order to prevent a “lost generation”.

Context

With 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees – among them approximately one million school-aged children – Turkey hosts the largest group of Syrians who have fled abroad. The high number of Syrian refugees poses an enormous challenge for Turkey and especially the most affected host communities in providing public services.

According to estimates, 400,000 Syrian refugee children currently lack access to school education. This is especially alarming when taking into account the importance of education for children in such a precarious context. They face a particularly high risk of discrimination, isolation and exploitation in various forms. The experience of war and displacement, being uprooted from their well-known social environment and living a life below poverty line can lead to severe impairments in children’s psycho-social well-being. If these handicaps are not addressed, they can have negative long-term impacts on the children’s development.

Regular school attendance is therefore extremely important to protect children as a specifically vulnerable group from violence and exploitation and reobtain a structured daily routine. Safe, high-quality and inclusive education forms the basis to prevent a “lost generation”. Moreover, the access to education and the Turkish language, which allows children to get into touch with their Turkish peers, improves social cohesion, fosters social inclusion and provides perspectives to vulnerable youth.

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<th>Project name</th>
<th>Support to the Syrian volunteer teachers incentives programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioned by</td>
<td>Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Republic of Turkey</td>
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<td>Lead executing agency</td>
<td>UNICEF Ministry of National Education (MoNE)</td>
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As at: 08/2019
Project approach
The project financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) provides financial support for Syrian volunteer teachers. The project has been implemented by UNICEF in close co-operation with the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) since the 2016/17 school year. With the support of UNICEF, MoNE recruits Syrian volunteer teachers and verifies their eligibility for the incentive payments. Teachers need to work at least 20 hours per week in a school accredited by MoNE in one of the selected project provinces. Every month, MoNE submits the lists of teachers to the Turkish post PTT, which then transfers the incentive payments via cash cards to the beneficiaries.

Whereas schooling mainly took place in so-called Temporary Education Centres (TECs) at the beginning of the project, most Syrian refugees meanwhile have moved to host communities across the country. With a focus on integration, education of refugee children increasingly takes place in Turkish public schools.

With minor fluctuations, the project provides for incentive payments to approx. 11,000 Syrian volunteer teachers reaching more than 200,000 school children each year. The project benefits from the close cooperation between UNICEF and the Turkish government since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011.

Impact
The project has allowed for some considerably broad and structural impacts. 11,000 teachers receive monthly payments in line with the Turkish minimum wage. They can thus provide for a living for themselves and their families. Besides, the regular teaching entails a meaningful and structuring occupation for the Syrian volunteers in a very difficult and precarious situation.

The Syrian teachers establish a central link to the refugee children by bridging linguistic and cultural barriers. Access to school education considerably improves the development and income opportunities for Syrian refugee children and thus opens up more promising prospects for the future.

The project initially aimed at short-term and fast employment effects as well as a rapid access to education for refugee children. Based on a multi-annual approach in supporting the partners in Turkey, the project is currently underway to a transition from emergency assistance to a more structural and medium-term support.