



1. Project Data

Project ID P161670	Project Name TK Employment Support for Syrians		
Country Turkiye	Practice Area(Lead) Social Protection & Jobs		
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-A5478	Closing Date (Original) 30-Jun-2019	Total Project Cost (USD) 51,837,754.84	
Bank Approval Date 08-Dec-2017	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Dec-2022		
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)	
Original Commitment	53,381,320.00	53,381,320.00	
Revised Commitment	49,480,934.26	53,294,484.26	
Actual	51,837,754.84	51,837,754.84	
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Grant Agreement dated December 2017 (p. 6), the project development objective was “to improve the employability of Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP) as well as Turkish citizens residing in selected localities.” The Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p.15) articulated the same objective. The objective remained the same throughout implementation. There were no deletions or substantive changes to key outcome indicators that would warrant a split rating. While two key outcome targets were increased and



one reduced, a split rating would not have made a difference for the efficacy or outcome ratings and therefore is not used in this Review.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Employment Services and Active Labor Market Programs (ALMP) (EUR 38.30 million or US\$40.47 million equivalent at appraisal; EUR 39.65 million or US\$46.23 million at closing). This component aimed to place SuTP and Turkish jobseekers residing in selected localities in a job as early as possible or, as a second option for those not succeeding in finding jobs, in an Applied Training Program (ATP), in which the Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) financed net minimum wage and health and accident insurance for workers placed in private sector jobs for the first six months of their employment. All service beneficiaries were to receive job search support, including skills assessment and counseling services. Where job search support was not successful, beneficiaries were to be offered skills training courses, ATP, and, where these measures did not result in placements, cash-for-work through a transition-to-labor-market program (TLMP). In addition, language training was to be provided to SuTPs after registration for job search support and counseling.

Institutional Support for Delivery of Employment Services and ALMP (EUR 7.15 million or US\$7.71 million equivalent at appraisal; EUR 5.80 million or US\$6.83 million at closing). This component aimed to support the Ministry of Labor and Social Services (MoLSS) and ISKUR. Both agencies were to be given support for counseling and job assistance, project implementation, information dissemination, communication, monitoring, and information technology (IT). Subcomponent 2a, Institutional Support for ISKUR, focused on strengthening various functions within ISKUR to allow the delivery of employment services and ALMP in line with the requirements of the project. Subcomponent 2b, Institutional Support for MoLSS, was to support MoLSS to improve the work permit application and monitoring as well as access to online systems. These subcomponents included creating and maintaining two project implementation units (PIUs), one in each implementing institution.

Estimated versus actual cost data is drawn from the PAD (p. 16) and ICR (Annex 3, p. 47).

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Project Cost. The total project cost was EUR 45.45 million. Due to exchange rate fluctuations, this was the equivalent of US\$48.18 million at approval and US\$53.06 million at project close (ICR, p. 47).



Project Financing. The project was fully financed by a European Union (EU) Recipient-Executed Trust Fund in the amount of EUR 45.45 million, which was fully disbursed.

Key Dates. The project was approved on December 8, 2017. According to the ICR, due to restrictions related to EU funding parameters, the project's original closing date was only 19 months later, on June 30, 2019. The original implementation period foreseen in the Administration Agreement with the EU was a two-and-one-half -year period between June 20, 2017 and December 30, 2019. However, the Grant Agreement with the government was not signed until December 21, 2017, and the project became effective only on March 21, 2018. In addition, the main counterpart agencies (ISKUR and MoLSS) had never implemented World Bank lending-type projects before, leading to further delays. As a result, the project was restructured three times. The following are the dates and details of the restructurings:

First Restructuring (April 5, 2019): The first restructuring, undertaken with 11 percent of the project financing disbursed, extended the project closing date from June 30, 2019 to December 31, 2020 (the maximum extension allowed in line with the Administration Agreement with the EU) due to delays in project launch and initial preparatory activities. In addition, it added "small works" to the list of permitted expenditure types under subcomponents 2a and 2b, to enable building renovations and IT improvements.

Second Restructuring (December 30, 2020): As the project closing date neared, only 68 percent of the grant had been disbursed, in part due to a COVID-19-related hiatus in service provision from March to July 2020. Based on the estimate that a further 12 months were needed to fully disburse funds and achieve project goals, the program deadline was extended to December 30, 2021. During that period, according to the Restructuring Paper, ISKAR planned to complete the ongoing ATPs, skills training, and language training programs and possibly open additional programs on demand from employers, in addition to completing the remaining activities under the institutional support component. In addition, TLMP (cash for work) was cancelled, and resources were diverted from TLMP and skills training programs and allocated to ATP, based partly on increased demand for ATP by employers facing financial constraints for new hiring post-COVID (ICR, p. 15). This shift in resources, according to the Second Disclosable Restructuring Paper (p. 3), was at the request of ISKUR, because "during the implementation of the project, ATP has been found to be the most efficient program compared to TLMP and skills training programs in terms of enhancing employability and labor market adjustment of in particular Syrian refugees." In addition, in line with the increased demand for ATP, the total allocation for Component 1 was increased from EUR 38.30 to EUR 39.6 million, and the allocation for the ISKUR part of Component 2 was decreased from EUR 5.95 to 4.65 million. To reflect these revisions, the following changes were made to targets:

PDO indicator targets:

- Number of ISKUR-registered SuTP placed in at least one ALMP (language training, skills training courses, or ATP) **increased** from 7,400 to 15,000
- Number of ISKUR-registered Turkish citizens residing in selected localities placed in at least one ALMP (language training, skills training courses, or ATP) **increased** from 7,400 to 8,000
- Two other PDO-level targets (percentage of ISKUR-registered female SuTP placed in language training, skills training courses, ATP, and TLMP; and percentage of ISKUR-registered youth SuTP placed in language training, skills training courses, ATP, and TLMP) remained unchanged.

Output and intermediate outcome targets:

- The ATP program placement target **increased** from 13,320 to 19,000.



- The skills training program placement target was **reduced** from 5,920 to 3,070.
- The language training program placement target was **reduced** from 5,920 to 3,350.
- The target for total number of ISKAR-registered Turkish and SuTPs benefiting from assessment and counseling services **increased** from 14,800 to 23,530.
- TLMP was **cancelled** before the start of its implementation, and the indicator “number of Turks/SuTPs refugees placed in TLMP” was **removed** from the results framework .

Third Restructuring (December 2021): This restructuring postponed the project closing date by one year to December 2022 to disburse remaining project funds, primarily to address high demand by businesses for ATP placements. Accordingly, the following adjustments were made to the results framework:

PDO indicator targets:

- Number of Syrians placed in labor market programs was further **increased** from 15,000 to 22,200, and number of Turks increased from 8,000 to 10,865, because of increased ATP enrollment. Similarly, targets for ATP enrollment were also **increased** from 12,000 to 16,250 for SuTP and from 7,000 to 9,000 for Turks.

Output and intermediate outcome targets:

- Target number of Syrians placed in language training was **reduced** from 3350 to 3217.
- Target number of ISKUR staff hired was **reduced** from 41 to 26, in line with an evolving assessment of staffing needs and receipt of funding from other sources for staff salaries, with excess funds being transferred to ATP.

In addition, the third restructuring included a minor revision to the scope of Component 1, dropping the establishment of a skills profiling tool, as the government was proceeding independently in this area without financing from the project.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The project objective addressed the needs of both SuTPs and Turkish citizens in economically disadvantaged regions of Turkey. Turkey is one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world, with over 3.6 million SuTP as of August 2022, representing a significant percentage of the population in provinces bordering Syria. Most of these provinces were already disadvantaged, independent of the refugee crisis, with a less educated population, lower labor force participation, and higher unemployment rates than the national average. These regions also had a high concentration of informal labor, and their capacity to absorb the large influx of SuTP was limited (ICR, p. 5). The influx of refugees was believed to have caused displacement of host community members out of informal employment. Particularly affected



were people without any formal education, suggesting that low-skilled workers residing in the selected localities would benefit from employment support.(ICR, p. 6).

The project objective was well aligned with the overarching goals of both the Country Partnership Framework (CPF, FY18-21, which was extended for two years) and the country's own strategies throughout the life of the operation. The project aligned with the CPF's Objective 5 on Increased Labor Force Participation of Women & Vulnerable Groups and the 2017 Strategic Country Diagnostic's (SCD) priority area of "Productive Individuals." Similarly, the project supported the CPF commitment to "continue supporting the public employment services (ISKUR) institution to strengthen its capacity as well as its effectiveness helping jobseekers" (CPF, p. 18). Finally, project goals were aligned with Türkiye's National Development Plan and one of its objectives to promote qualified individuals and a strong society through development of basic and occupational skills, and improvement of the effectiveness of the labor market. The objective continued to align to the current CPF, FY24-28, with its focus upon jobs for women, youth, and vulnerable groups.

There was lack of precision in the statement of objective and expectation for target beneficiaries compared with the guidance for specific groups (SuTP and Turkish women and youth) and equal participation within the lending agreement and legal covenant. The lack of definition of quota and equal participation noted in the lending agreement had implications on relevance of objective and assessment of efficacy.

Rating

Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

Improve the employability of SuTP as well as Turkish citizens residing in selected localities

Rationale

The program had one PDO-level objective, which was to improve employability of both SuTPs and Turkish citizens in target areas by providing services to help individuals find employment (job search support, including skills assessment and counseling services) and, for service beneficiaries not able to find successful placements, to make available a series of programs—individually or sequentially—to build their employability through training and work experience. Employment services and ALMPs were to be sequenced to allow for placement in jobs as early as possible. Following registration with ISKUR, each participant was to be assigned to a vocational counselor (JVC) for a counseling session and an assessment. All beneficiaries were to take a skills assessment before being placed in a program. Based on this assessment, JVCs were supposed to try to place the participant in jobs as early as possible, enabling the employability of SuTP and Turkish citizens residing in selected localities. Skills training courses were to be provided only if needed, to



prevent unnecessary delays in job placement. The Bank team also clarified that ATP was complementary to other livelihood interventions that provided language, vocational and soft skill training.

As the project design was meant to build employability, the PAD (p. 16) committed to “include quotas for women in ATP and TLMP” to “ensure that the ALMP and employment services financed by the program help less employable groups and do not benefit only those SuTPs who are already active in the labor market.” However, project design only weakly addressed the barriers with regard to SuTP women. In order to support women's ISKUR registration and absorption into jobs, project staff intermediated on an as-needed basis, for example, partnering with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support recruitment of women to ISKUR and working with employers to ensure special provisions to accommodate the unique needs of female employees.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes

All output and intermediate outcome indicators but one were met or surpassed, although some were downwardly-revised as funds were shifted from one program to another based on demand. Among the achievements represented in the intermediate indicators:

- 71,407 SuTP and 5,749,095 Turkish citizens were registered in ISKUR, **greatly surpassing** targets of 53,700 and 10,800, respectively. The project team attributed the unusually high achievement relative to this target to the increased visibility of ISKUR and its successes as a result of project activities.
- 22,737 SuTP benefitted from ISKUR assessments, **surpassing** an upwardly revised target of 22,220.
- 22,737 SuTP and 1,483,916 Turkish citizens benefitted from job search skills sessions and counseling services, **surpassing** targets of 22,200 and 7,530, respectively.
- 3,217 SuTP were placed in language training, falling short of the original target of 5,920 but **meeting** the revised target of 3,217. Targets were reduced from 3,350 (revised target under the second restructuring) to 3,217 in the third restructuring after remaining program funds were shifted from language training to other programs.
- 16,959 SuTP and 12,027 Turkish citizens were placed in the ATP program, **surpassing upwardly revised targets** of 16,250 and 9,000, respectively.
- 2,577 SuTP and 2,513 Turkish citizens were placed in skills training courses, **substantially exceeding downwardly revised targets** of 1,535 for each of the two populations and **mostly achieving the original target** of 2,960 for each of the two populations (87 percent and 85 percent achieved, respectively).
- **Targets were also surpassed for institutional capacity building goals**, including number of capacity building activities, trainings, and informative meetings for staff of ISKUR and MoLSS, and number of information dissemination and communication activities towards SuTP and Turkish citizens residing in selected localities regarding employment services and programs available for them.
- The target for number of ISKUR staff hired was **not achieved**, with only 16 staff against an original target of 41 and a revised target of 26 (under the third restructuring). This, according to the project team, was the result of a strategic decision to repurpose funds for the ATP program as well as ISKUR's use of other donor funds to meet its manpower needs.
- The indicator for number of SuTP and Turkish citizens placed in cash-for-work TLMP (target of 740 for each population) was deleted when that program was cancelled.



Outcomes

Three of the PDO-level indicators were **exceeded**. The number of ISKUR-registered SuTP placed in at least one ALMP (either language training, skills training courses, or ATP) was 22,753 against an upwardly revised target of 22,200. The number of ISKUR-registered Turkish citizens residing in selected localities placed in at least one ALMP was 15,450, as compared to an upwardly revised target of 10,865. The target for percentage of ISKUR-registered youth SuTP placed in language training, skills training courses, and ATP was **exceeded**, with 43.1 percent of youth placed in comparison to a possibly revised final target of 30 percent. (It should be noted that there is some confusion in project results framework documentation as to whether the original target for this indicator was 60 percent or 30 percent. According to the ICR [p. 10], the target of 60 percent for this indicator cited in the PAD was a “technical error” that was corrected in the third restructuring to reflect the originally intended target of 30 percent. However, it is noted that the 60 percent target was present in all project documents, including Implementation Status and Results Reports and restructuring statements, until the third restructuring.)

A final PDO-level indicator, percentage of ISKUR-registered female SuTP placed in language training, skills training courses, and ATP, was **mostly achieved**, with 27.1 percent of SuTP women being placed against a target of 30 percent.

Additional data were shared by the Bank team not included in the ICR that showed the transition to employment after STC and ATP was higher among Turkish Citizens than SuTP with lowest rates among women SuTP. After participating in STC employment among male Turkish Citizens was 87% and male SuTP was 19%. After participating in STC employment among female Turkish Citizens was 70% and female SuTP was 3%. After participating in ATP employment among male Turkish Citizens was 90% and male SuTP was 37%. After participating in ATP employment among female Turkish Citizens was 79% and female SuTP was 18%.

Other achievements

The project led to significant efficiency gains for the supported government agencies. Modernization of IT systems, hardware, and software improved the administration of work permits. According to the ICR (p. 18), with project-financed improvements, including upgrading and integration of information systems, the work permits system was able to process 2.5 times more foreign applicants per unit of time than before project improvements. The improved infrastructure has led to shorter periods for the evaluation of each individual application. Since other institutions’ information systems were interconnected, the speed of data exchange increased and eventually led to improved efficiency for the whole system. The improvement of the system also made it easier for employers to use ISKUR to find employees and to employ them formally through the ministry.

There is some evidence to suggest that the project helped increase willingness of employers to hire SuTPs. Evidence gathered from the project’s endline evaluation (ICR, p. 43) suggests that the project resulted in greater willingness of employers to hire SuTPs, better linkages between job seekers and employers, and improved social cohesion at firms. In addition, the project helped SuTPs move from informal to formal employment, although given the need to renew work permits annually and the administrative difficulties in doing so, it is not certain how sustainable this result will be. The eleven employers interviewed as part of the endline survey were generally satisfied with the motivation and skills of employees, and many of



them reported hiring for longer-term jobs a larger proportion of people from the program than from the general pool of applicants. In general, employers reported that they did not see any difference in performance between Turkish and SuTP employees. Employers also reported that the program helped integrate Syrian and Turkish workers and might have helped reduce prejudices against Syrian refugees within the host communities. It was stated that the motivation and attendance of the Turkish and Syrian beneficiaries were good throughout the project-supported trainings. According to the ICR (p. 20), "it is unlikely that firms would have taken on SuTP workers without the project. By tackling market failures, firms' hiring behaviors toward SuTPs have changed and arguably so, the market will continue to hire on the basis of skills." Having said that, analysis of statistics provided in the government's ICR suggests that while willingness to hire SuTPs has increased, there may still be an anti-SuTP bias, even in companies participating in the ATP program. According to the government's ICR (p. 5), while 58 percent of project beneficiaries placed in ATP were SuTPs, only 36.1 percent of those ATP participants employed by companies through the ATP were SuTPs, revealing a preference for hiring Turkish ATP participants over SuTPs.

The endline survey (p. 40) presents evidence suggesting that, while project beneficiary incomes may have improved overall after program participation (see section 9 for methodological issues). Surveyed beneficiaries, from an overall sample size of 378, were questioned about their earnings in the prior 30 days. In general, based on the comparison between endline and baseline data (each using separate sample populations), it was observed that the earnings of program beneficiaries increased significantly following the end of program support. The endline study findings show that 30 percent of respondents had more than 3,000TL earnings (i.e., above minimum wage) in the previous 30 days, as compared with 8.9 percent in the baseline study. Similarly, 49.8 percent of respondents in the endline survey reported that their earnings in the last 30 days were between 2,500-2,999 TL, as compared to 14.3 percent in the baseline survey. However, 9.59 percent of baseline survey respondents reported earnings in the last 30 days between 0 and 14,999 TL, as compared to 10.8 percent of respondents in the endline survey, suggesting that the project did not succeed in helping the worst-off beneficiaries, but rather that its impact was concentrated on those earning slightly below minimum wage who were helped to improve their incomes somewhat.

Rating

Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Project efficacy is rated as substantial. The project was successful at achieving most of the results framework targets. Three of the four PDO level targets were surpassed, and one was largely achieved. With regard to intermediate outcome-level targets, 15 were fully achieved or surpassed their original or upwardly revised targets, 2 surpassed their downwardly revised targets and achieved over 85 percent of their original targets, one target was not achieved. Transition to employment after STC and ATP was very high for Turkish Citizens, and lower for SuTP.



Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

Economic Efficiency

A cost-benefit analysis at appraisal revealed that the project impact in terms of direct costs and benefits to the government was expected to be marginally positive (ICR, p. 17). The net return for each dollar spent was estimated to range between -9 and +42 percent, depending on the program. Beyond these analyses of economic efficiency, it was predicted that the total social value would inherently be greater, considering the effect of formal employment on wage trajectory, employability, and worker safety. These estimates were not adjusted in the course of the project or as part of the ICR.

According to the economic and financial analysis at appraisal, the project was expected to provide direct economic benefits in terms of wages and incomes for the target SuTP and Turkish citizens residing in project localities. The activities that were expected to provide the greatest economic return (skills and language training) in the cost-benefit analysis were actually not the activities that were prioritized in the program design because other livelihood interventions that were operating provided language, vocational and soft skill training.. The estimated internal rate of return (IRR) of each activity supported by the project was analyzed at appraisal, with different rates provided depending on whether the program's focus was on highly employable participants or participants with low employability. In keeping with the PDO, the efficiency analysis estimated increases in likelihood of being employed in relation to costs per individual of various ALMP programs. Language and skills training were estimated to have an IRR of 9 percent for highly employable individuals and 22 percent for low employability participants. The ATP's expected IRR was between 3 percent (using a model with fewer participants with low employability) and 5 percent (when the model assumed a higher percentage of low employability participants) (ICR, p. 50). This would suggest that maximum efficiency would result from maintaining a strong project focus on low-employability participants in need of basic language and skills training to be more attractive candidates for employment. According to the cost-benefit analysis done at appraisal (PAD, p. 33), "given that the project will be effective for two and a half years (with an expected extension to the closing date) and that it will take at least six months to register SuTPs, assess their skills, and channel them into programs, they will be working, at most, for a total of two years. Even among those who find ATP opportunities immediately at the start of the program, given that they will receive payments from the program and that the social security contributions (SSCs) are about a third of the minimum wage, they will need formal employment for at least twice the duration of the program for net gains. For most program participants, the life of the project is likely too short for revenues in terms of SSCs and taxes to compensate for the cost within the lifespan of the program." Nevertheless, the PAD (p. 18) clearly prioritized ATP over language and skills training, specifying that "skills training courses will be the next option in case the SuTP cannot be placed into ATP." As a result of this prioritization, and given demand for ATPs by the private sector, activities deemed as having a higher IRR at appraisal were actually those that were curtailed in favor of the activity assessed at appraisal to have a lower economic rate of return (ATP), with project funds being shifted accordingly. Thus, following the logic of the cost benefit analysis, shifts of project funding away from skills and language training likely resulted in a lower rate of return.



Participation among interventions was present among both Turkish Citizens and SuTP, while transition to employment after STC and ATP has been much higher among Turkish Citizens, suggesting the presence of more barriers to employability than addressed by the operation. Thus, impacting efficiency of benefits and value for money of the operation.

Implementation Efficiency

The project fully used the entire EU Recipient-Executed Trust Fund. However, its originally envisaged implementation period of two years was more than doubled, with extensions adding an additional 3.5 years. The ICR (p. 18) notes that the original unusually short time frame of the project was imposed because of the initial short duration of the EU grant instrument, necessitating several extensions, particularly against the backdrop of COVID-19, slow approval, and capacity constraints. The ICR acknowledges that “this was probably not the most efficient approach (as) the processing of extensions, at a minimum, incurs hidden staff and administrative costs for all sides in the process, including the client, World Bank, and EU.” In particular, according to the First Restructuring Paper, the preparatory period before implementation lasted longer than originally foreseen, with a nine-month span between project approval and effectiveness. The Second Restructuring Paper cited COVID-19 restrictions as well as bureaucratic backlogs due to COVID-19 as the primary rationale for a further delay, with the additional positive rationale of strong private sector demand for more ATP placements. The Third Restructuring, for its part, cited delays in improvements to the work permit application and monitoring IT systems due to decision-making delays because of a government restructuring, as well as challenges getting adequate demand for previous tenders due to COVID-19 restrictions and their negative impact on suppliers/businesses.

Final administrative costs for the project were lower than originally planned. At appraisal, capacity building and administrative costs (Component 2) were planned to account for 15.7 percent of the project's cost (EUR 7.15 million of EUR 45.45 million total), while the actual percentage just before project closing was 9.7 percent spent on capacity building and operational costs. This was in part because the World Bank project was part of the larger EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey portfolio, and some administrative costs, including manpower, were shared. The project's administrative cost compares favorably to EU data for the administration of ALMPs at the national level, which varies from around 10 percent (for only a couple of rich countries with high program spending) to 25–20 percent or higher for many countries.

Relying on ISKUR's central and provincial offices for delivery of the ALMPs increased program efficiency. Similar employment programs already existed on the ISKUR's menu, so that the administration of the new project-added activities required only minor adjustments in terms of management systems and some investments in provincial office infrastructure and additional staff. These additional costs, however, were incremental additions to ISKUR's existing capacity. For example, the on-the-job training-type programs financed by other sources on average cost about US\$2,500–3,000 per participant (depending on the duration and intensity). In this project's case, the average cost was US\$1,200–1,300. However, the ICR does not compare the efficacy of the programs financed by others with the efficacy of programs financed under this project.

Efficiency Rating

Modest



a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

The relevance of objective rated substantial given its alignment with country needs and strategies and with the World Bank’s CPF. Project efficacy is rated substantial with caveats. Participation among interventions was present among both Turkish Citizens and SuTP, while transition to employment after STC and ATP was higher among Turkish Citizens, suggesting the presence of more barriers to employability than addressed by the operation. Project efficiency is rated as modest. Taken together, these ratings indicate that there were moderate shortcomings in the project's preparation, implementation, and achievement, resulting in an Outcome rating of Moderately Satisfactory.

a. **Outcome Rating**
Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

Risk to development outcome is moderate, with the main challenge being structural barriers to continued formal employment of SuTPs. The PDO aimed to build employability, and it is reasonable to expect that the training and work experience received through the project will enhance employability, whether through continued employment in job placements found through ISKUR or through other employment opportunities. However, it is difficult to determine, on the basis of evidence collected by the project partners, the extent to which placements in ATP, which funded salaries and insurance costs for up to a six-month period, led to sustainable employment. According to the endline evaluation (p. 7), which interviewed 11 employers in the ATP program, "the employers reported that the administrative work and quota are the major obstacle to hiring Syrians after program support ends. The program may consider supporting work-permit issuance following the end of program support for the sake of placing beneficiaries in long-term positions." More specifically, businesses complained of the need to renew work permits annually, the high rates of tax and social security for formal workers, and regulations that mandate that SuTPs cannot represent more than 10 percent of employees in any place of employment. As evidence of the scope of the challenge of formalizing employment, the endline evaluation cites a 2019 World Food Program (WFP) Livelihoods Survey finding that only 3 percent of refugees, or 3 percent of 750,000-1,000,000 working SuTPs, work "with a work permit," a number that was not meaningfully affected by the project (p. 18).



A follow-on project—Support for Transition to Labor Market Project (P171471)—became effective on August 2, 2022. The new project, which supports the same government agencies as this project, incorporates lessons learned from this project and provides for the continuation of mechanisms and programs that succeeded.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project was designed with a flexible menu of interventions to compensate for lack of information about the qualifications and skills of SuTPs. At appraisal, no donor-financed project had as yet supported SuTP employment in Türkiye. Project design empowered job counselors to determine what were the most relevant program offerings, and feedback mechanisms enabled the project team to adjust program offerings according to demand. The choice to build flexibility into program design rather than waiting to first conduct a more in-depth study of SuTP characteristics reflected the urgency of the intervention, due to the significant influx of refugees from Syria into Türkiye. However, some aspects of the covenant and lending agreement needed clearer definitions in relation to equal participation between refugees and host communities and quotas for women and youth. More barriers were present for women than addressed by the project e The PAD suggesting that it might be necessary to extend ATP placements for women or youth beyond six months due to their relative inexperience, however, other known barriers for women were not included such as child care or social and cultural aspects.

Program design was unique in the Turkish context in that it connected skills-building with employment placement, whereas other donor-funded programs concentrated only on training. Employment services and ALMPs were sequenced to allow for placement in jobs as early as possible. Following registration with ISKUR, each participant was to be assigned to a JVC for a counseling session and assessment. All beneficiaries were to do a skills assessment before being placed in a program. Based on this assessment, JVCs were supposed to try to place participants in jobs as early as possible, enabling the employability of SuTP and Turkish citizens residing in selected localities to be “partly revealed by the market.” Skills training courses were to be provided only if needed, to prevent unnecessary delays in job placement. The Bank team was aware of the country’s labor market and social context and used practical solutions to help the Government of Türkiye tackle the refugee socioeconomic integration. The Bank team led discussions between representatives of the EU and government to develop a framework for the collaboration.

The project results framework had shortcomings. As discussed in Section 9b below, the only level at which results were tracked in the program results framework was that of program placement. No data were gathered in the results framework to track acquisition of skills and language or completion of program, to address barriers to employability, nor were robust data gathered to track follow-up after ATP. The results framework did gather disaggregated data on SuTP youth and women, these data



were on program placement in general and did not include useful measures such as, for example, the number of SuTP women placed in ATP.

Quality-at-Entry Rating Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The project was responsive to changing circumstances and labor market needs. In keeping with project design, numeric targets and funding for each of the programs were adjusted several times to reflect relative demand for the various support programs. In particular, the impacts of COVID-19 and its aftermath on the private sector resulted in increased demand for hiring support through the ATP program, which financed on-the-job training for service beneficiaries. This demand was met through redirecting financing from other ISKUR programs financed by the project and from the project administration budget. The Bank team shared additional data not reported in the ICR that confirmed the project focus upon youth among both host communities and SuTP and that these groups were equally disadvantaged, as nearly all of them had less than a secondary education.

The Bank project team provided intensive support to implementing agency throughout the operation. The implementing agencies had not worked previously with refugee populations or with the World Bank, and thus needed intensive initial capacity strengthening. The Bank team provided daily check-ins at project outset. The Bank team addressed issues as they arose and made proactive implementation adjustments. This included the problem of diploma equivalency for people with higher education degrees, cultural differences such as Friday workdays, and particular needs of women in the workplace (ICR, p. 22). The Bank team also reported when women's participation was lower than expected, ISKUR partnered with NGOs for outreach efforts targeting women and provided tailored counseling services for women. Despite these efforts, the ICR (p. 26) reflected that "more support may have been needed to ensure implementation according to the ambitious initial plans, including additional handholding by the World Bank, especially regarding the client's application of World Bank procurement and disbursement procedures, and coordination with the EU as the provider of the World Bank-administered trust fund financing." These capacity weaknesses led to a slower than optimal launch of the project, although as the project progressed, implementing agencies became increasingly capable of project management in accordance with World Bank procedures.

As elaborated in Section 9b, the baseline and endline surveys financed by the project were methodologically weak, limiting their utility for gauging program results deriving lessons. Among the shortcomings of the surveys were lack of rigorous data on the extent to which the project led to sustainable employment and reduced employability barriers.

Quality of Supervision Rating Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating



Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The project adapted existing systems within MoLSS and ISKUR to monitor employment support programs and services delivered to SuTP and Turkish citizens residing in selected localities. Complementary modules to the existing ISKUR monitoring systems were developed and put in place to capture the process, from ISKUR registration to job counseling and placement services and ALMP. The design envisaged that key administrative data collected during meetings between service beneficiaries and JVCs at ISKUR provincial offices/service units were to be logged into a computer-based system, regularly reported to the central-level ISKUR and compiled into quarterly reports by the PIU to be shared with MoLSS and the World Bank (ICR, p. 23). These data, however, were not all disaggregated by gender.

The results framework did not adequately reflect the theory of change of the project. The PAD (p. 14) presented a theory of change with the following intended outcomes:

- Number of registered SuTP placed in jobs through ALMP (by gender and target group)
- Number of ALMP beneficiaries who remain employed 6-12 months after completion of program relative to employment status of control group
- Number of registered SuTP de-registering from unemployment registry because they found a formal job
- Number of SuTP who receive counselling and job placement services

Of these four, the first three measures could have provided meaningful information on employability outcomes, but none of them were incorporated in the results framework or tracked in a methodologically rigorous way through the baseline/impact surveys financed by the project.

The results framework did not adequately track evidence of program results for the two designated target groups of SuTP youth and women. The only indicator in the results framework tracking these two groups is placement in any of the offered ALMP. The results framework did not track or incentivize placement of these groups in the more labor market-adjacent ATP program, nor did it track their job placement. Thus, the results framework did not provide sufficient evidence to assess the program's intermediate or ultimate outcomes on these target groups. The Bank team shared additional indicators that was also collected by the operation not captured in the ICR that tracked transition to employment after STC and ATP disaggregated by gender among host communities or SuTP, but not by youth.

The project included a baseline and endline evaluation, which could have provided valuable information on program results. According to the PAD (p. 23),

"The purpose of the planned impact evaluation is to examine the impact of the whole employment services and ALMP sequence, to inform a potential scale-up and introduce modifications; report on employment status of beneficiaries and a control group, addressed during the lifespan of the project, from 6 to 12 months after program completion; and draw lessons applicable to other countries hosting refugee populations. The impact evaluation will need to closely monitor when project beneficiaries find employment



or become discouraged, to adjust the steps and sequencing. It will be key to track the outcomes of project beneficiaries and the control group of similar SuTP who would not benefit from the project, through various activities and statistical methods implemented by ISKUR, including household surveys."

b. M&E Implementation

According to the ICR (p. 23), ISKUR provided regular project progress updates on ALMPs and other project activities. The ALMP monitoring system underwent improvements to facilitate enhanced real-time data compilation on program beneficiaries. Under the institutional support Component 2, ISKUR provided support (with additional consultants) to the ALMP unit to implement monitoring system enhancements. ISKUR, alongside IT consultants, developed an interface to allow periodic tracking of M&E data. However, the granularity of the data received was lacking and was not disaggregated to enable monitoring of results for less employable groups, or the trajectory from program placement to program completion, and beyond to job placement. In response to a question posed by IEG, the project team noted, "ISKUR was never fully able to unpack the type of counseling and job search assistance services that were provided in each of the provincial offices."

Data gathering in the baseline and impact evaluation commissioned by the project was methodologically weak. The "baseline survey" included a telephone survey in December 2020 of 368 beneficiaries, or less than 1 percent of the total of 37,293 who were placed in ALMP. An endline survey of 376 project beneficiaries (a different group than those surveyed in the baseline survey), or 1 percent of the total placed in ALMP, was completed in October 2021. In addition, as part of the endline survey, in-depth interviews were held with 15 beneficiaries, 11 employers, seven internal stakeholders, and five external stakeholders. Survey response rates were not given, nor were the survey instruments and interview questions shared in the endline report. According to the endline evaluation report (p. 5), the evaluation "does not cover all program activities. The scope is mainly limited to the Applied Training Programme (ATP), as the beneficiaries of ATP were interviewed." Having said this, the sample in both the baseline and endline surveys did include a small percentage of non-ATP beneficiaries, so that the survey cannot be considered to be fully representative of either ATP beneficiaries or ALMP beneficiaries as a whole. Similarly, the baseline and endline surveys had a smaller than representative sample of women, with women representing only 15 percent of beneficiaries surveyed as compared to 27 percent of the total number of those placed in programs. The endline evaluation report does not indicate how many of the interviewed beneficiaries were women. The evaluation report cites the following substantial limitations to its methodology (p. 31):

"The samples of baseline and endline are not fully randomized, which may result in a biased statistical estimate. Besides, it was not feasible to have control and experimental groups to measure intervention impact. Limited contact information for the beneficiary surveys and employer interviews were available. The implementing partner somehow selected the samples. The list of beneficiaries was provided to implement baseline and endline surveys and qualitative interviews."

"The employment outcome presented in the assessment does not entirely depict the incremental impact caused by the program. It is impossible to attribute these outcomes to the program definitively without comparing the beneficiaries to a similar cohort of individuals that did not benefit from the program, for example, by using matched pairs or other statistical analysis. To mitigate this constraint, the assessment



considers different ways of determining attribution, such as beneficiary perceptions of how likely they would have obtained the position without the program, beneficiary satisfaction ratings with the usefulness of the services, and qualitative examples of how the services have impacted beneficiaries."

In addition to the above, the baseline survey took place in December 2020, after 68 percent of project funds had already been disbursed, and it is unclear to what extent the baseline survey respondents had already been placed in ATP or other ALMP. For example, the ICR (p. 16) cited the endline survey as providing evidence that "nearly two-thirds of surveyed beneficiaries were employed and earning an income as a result of the program." However, the endline survey did not actually ask respondents whether they were employed as a result of the program, or even if they had regular full-time or part-time employment. Instead, the data cited by the ICR seems to be derived from the question: "Have you been engaged in any work for compensation, including self-employment or a family business, for more than one hour in the last week?" Similarly, the endline evaluation did not ask respondents to compare their pre-program and post-program livelihoods and incomes and did not trace the trajectory of ATP beneficiaries to understand how many were still employed by ATP employers 6 months post-completion of the ATP, and/or how many of these participants found work elsewhere based on skills obtained during the ATP. As such, it is difficult to know what, if anything, comparison of baseline and endline surveys can tell us about program effects.

c. M&E Utilization

Data on project indicators were used for decision-making, adjustments (restructuring), and planning purposes. The ICR (p. 24) reported that M&E activities were used to gauge demand for various program offerings, and adjustments to those offerings were made accordingly, including updates to targets and changes to project activities. In addition, the data from project M&E helped develop the follow-on operation (Support for Transition to Labor Market Project) by scaling up to 8 provinces those ALMPs that were found to be more successful and integrating them into an efficient workflow with the involvement of new partners.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

There were no environmental issues related to this project, and none of the environmental safeguards were triggered. At appraisal, the project was classified as Environmental Category C according to OP 4.01, requiring no environmental assessment. The project did not include activities that could have a direct or indirect adverse impact on the environment. Due to the category, there was no environmental assessment document prepared by either the Borrower or the World Bank before or after project appraisal (ICR, p. 24).



Governmental implementing agencies were responsible for ensuring that appropriate social compliance was in place. The World Bank worked with the PIUs to ensure that the terms of references and scope of payments included provisions about applying the World Bank’s safeguard policies in the activities to be conducted (ICR, p. 25). No social safeguards-related issues emerged as part of the project.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Overall, according to financial management (FM) reviews and audits conducted for the project, FM was found to be adequate, with a properly functioning FM system. According to the ICR (p. 25), project accounting and reporting was up to date, and adequate control procedures were in place during implementation. Accounting records were properly kept, and interim unaudited financial reports were automatically generated from locally developed accounting software. The project complied with audit requirements, and there were no overdue audits. FM was steadily rated Satisfactory during the life of the project.

Procurement was consistently rated Satisfactory over time and was carried out in accordance with the applicable Procurement and Consultant Guidelines and as agreed in the Loan Agreement and the Procurement Plan.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

Employers benefitting from ATP reported receiving better coverage of their needs for labor and cost reduction through the incentive support provided during the six-month program period (ICR, p. 14). Qualitative information gathered in the endline survey from 11 sample employers involved in ATP indicates that they saw the ATP program as a benefit to their companies. Some interviewed companies noted that the program helped integrate Syrian and Turkish workers and might have helped reduce prejudices against Syrian refugees within the host communities. The ATP program may have contributed to increased formalized employment among SuTPs. However, as the endline evaluation report notes, as companies need to renew SuTPs’ work permits annually, it is unknown how lasting these benefits will be (ICR, p. 21).

d. Other

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Efficiency is rated as modest.
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderate shortcomings in the results framework and M&E.



Quality of M&E	Substantial	Modest	The results framework primarily gathered data on program placement and did not track evidence of higher-level/PDO goals (address barriers to employability). The endline evaluation was methodologically weak.
Quality of ICR	---	Modest	

12. Lessons

Lesson developed by IEG:

It is necessary to incorporate adequate measures of progress for women and youth among host communities and SuTP in the M&E framework to trace the trajectory of services and programs aiming to improve their employability. Data on program placement alone is insufficient to gauge program success. Ideally, the results framework should measure more than participation in interventions and also include program completion and examination of reduction of barriers. A methodologically robust impact evaluation to measure the extent to which program participants remain formally employed 6 months following the intervention with disaggregated data to show the extent that employability improved among specific groups such as women and youth among host communities and SuTP.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

While the ICR presented a concise narrative of the project, the quality of evidence and analysis in the ICR was poor. The ICR's assessment of project efficacy was based on a tally of targets and indicators from an out-put focused results framework rather than on an assessment of whether the PDO (address barriers to employability) was achieved. IEG reviewed additional data provided by the Bank team (not contained in the ICR) to make the assessment of efficacy. Lessons learned were pertinent and responsive to this context.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

Modest

