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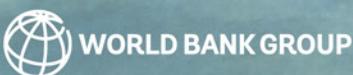
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VULNERABILITY AND PROTECTION OF REFUGEES IN TURKEY

Findings from the Rollout of the Largest Humanitarian
Cash Assistance Program in the World

P. Facundo Cuevas
O. Kaan Inan
Aysha Twose
Çiğdem Çelik



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Acronyms

AIDA	Asylum Information Database
ASPIRE	Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity
CTP	Cash-Transfer Programming
CVME	Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise
DGMM	Directorate General of Migration Management
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
FRIT	European Union's Facility for Refugees in Turkey
FCS	Food Consumption Score
HBS	Household Budget Survey
ISAS	Integrated Social Assistance System
LCS	Livelihood Coping Strategies
LCSI	Livelihoods Coping Strategies Index
LIC	Low-Income Country
LMIC	Lower-Middle-Income Country
MoFLSS	Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PAB	Pre-Assistance Baseline
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
PDMM	Provincial Directorate of Migration Management
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
rCSI	reduced (Food) Coping Strategies Index
SASF	Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation
SSC	Social Service Center
TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
UMIC	Upper-Middle-Income Country
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAM	Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Turkey hosts more refugees than any other country in the world, with near 4 million refugees living in the country by December 2018.¹ The overwhelming majority, 3.6 million, are from Syria. The remainder originate mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq. Turkey's response to the refugee crisis has drawn international praise, highlighted for providing a non-camp solution to the refugee influx, and granting access to public services. Notwithstanding this, the nature of the crisis calls for humanitarian assistance to help refugees cope with it.

In November 2016, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program was introduced with the objective of supporting the most vulnerable refugees meet their basic needs through monthly cash transfers. The targeting criteria were developed by identifying household demographic characteristics as best proxy to being poor, unable to afford basic needs. With 1.5 million

beneficiaries as of December 2018, ESSN is the largest humanitarian assistance program in the world. The program is funded by the European Union member states, and implemented nationwide in partnership with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MoFLSS), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC).

This report provides local and international policy actors, stakeholders, and those interested in the developments of one of the most significant humanitarian crises of our time with

- a. A comprehensive view of the vulnerability situation of refugees eligible for ESSN and
- b. An assessment of how well ESSN targets, supports, and protects the most vulnerable refugees.

The timing of the analysis takes place *after* program eligibility is determined but *before* transfers are disbursed. Future work will focus on the impact of transfers.

Readers in Turkey and abroad might find this report valuable for at least two reasons. It fills a knowledge gap in terms of assessing refugees'

¹ The report uses the term refugee regardless of country of origin, although Syrians are under temporary protection status, and non-Syrians under international protection law. For more details: Asylum Information Database (AIDA), *Introduction to the Asylum Context in Turkey*.

vulnerabilities using population-representative data. Existing studies have used purposive and non-representative samples that constrain the generalizability of their findings. This report uses nationwide representative data to characterize the living conditions of refugees that applied to ESSN. It is a significant step forward in achieving a more accurate and unbiased picture of refugees' vulnerabilities on the ground and understanding population-level trends relative to existing studies.

Second, the report documents the rollout results of a unique humanitarian cash assistance program, the largest of its kind, at a time when there is a call in the international community for more cash-based programming of humanitarian aid. While cash-transfer programming (CTP) is regarded as an important area of innovation in humanitarian assistance, with great potential to meet assistance needs more efficiently and more effectively, it accounted for only 10 percent of humanitarian aid in the world in 2016.

Findings from Vulnerability Assessment of Refugees Targeted by ESSN

The report assesses vulnerability of refugees eligible for ESSN before they start receiving transfers, using a multidimensional approach that includes the following areas: poverty, household resources, access to key services, food security, capacity to cope, skills and livelihood sources, and debt burden.

The vulnerabilities of the refugee population targeted by ESSN are multiple and complex: there is a pervasive prevalence of poverty, affecting 76 percent of ESSN refugees, compounded by other types of vulnerabilities with inter-temporal and inter-generational poverty

implications. First, a proportion of refugees suffer from food insecurity and face constraints in children's access to education, which bear enduring human capital consequences. Second, there is an intensive use of 'costly' coping strategies, which cripple ESSN households' longer-term livelihood capacity.

There is an ample degree of heterogeneity across regions in terms of incidence of vulnerability dimensions, and there is no simple regional pattern, which speaks to the complexity of refugee vulnerability.

- Refugees in Istanbul and Aegean regions are less vulnerable to poverty, lack of skills, and precarious labor income sources than the rest but show the highest vulnerability in access to education.
- Refugees in Anatolia show the least vulnerability to food insecurity, perhaps given the proximity to agricultural activities, but they suffer the worst access to skilled labor opportunities.
- Refugees in the Southeast show better access to education than the rest but suffer the highest vulnerabilities in food security and language skills.
- The single unifying pattern is, perhaps, that refugees in all regions resort to intensive use of detrimental coping strategies that cripple the productive capacity of the household, its resilience, and its ability to face adversity in the future.

Findings from ESSN Rollout on Targeting and Protection of Refugees

The analysis here focuses on issues of targeting, coverage, errors of exclusion and inclusion, and adequacy of the transfer size relative to pre-assistance refugee budgets.

The report finds the following:

- a. The ESSN targeting criteria was effective in identifying a relatively poorer and more vulnerable population, compared to the population that applied but do not fit the program's eligibility criteria. This holds both at the national level and within every region.
- b. Relative to international experience in unconditional cash transfers, ESSN achieves high coverage of the poor, as well as high (*ex ante*) adequacy and protection of the poor, though it allows higher inclusion error. Among ESSN applicants, 6 percent are extreme poor and ineligible, 17 percent are poor (but not extreme poor) and ineligible, and 14 percent are nonpoor and eligible.
- c. In the context of humanitarian assistance to refugee populations, prioritizing coverage and inclusion at the expense of accuracy is probably the preferred balance, since the nonpoor population that represents the inclusion error is relatively vulnerable. A third of nonpoor beneficiaries live with a budget that is within 10 percent of the poverty line.
- d. If ESSN had gone with an untargeted design, such that every applicant is eligible to receive some assistance, it could have addressed the exclusion error borne by the chosen targeted design. But, given resource constraints, this would require a large reduction in the size of the transfer provided to each beneficiary, that is a significant decrease in adequacy. This would compromise the ability of each household to meet their basic needs, which is the main programmatic objective of ESSN.

Policy Discussion and Way Forward

The report identifies four emerging policy lessons.

The first policy lesson that emerges is 'yes we can'. In a constrained resource, data, and time context, ESSN achieves good performance marks. The complementarities in design and implementation capacity of the WFP-TRC-Mo-FLSS partnership have been among the key drivers of this performance, which made it possible to receive, process, and validate thousands of applications across Turkey.

The second policy lesson is that within the debate of whether assistance should be targeted or untargeted, the ESSN's targeting already looks more 'universal' than other cash transfer programs, since ESSN achieves relatively high coverage, at the expense of higher inclusion error, but providing meaningful assistance to support beneficiaries' basic needs. An untargeted design would have to make large sacrifices on the adequacy of the benefit level.

While ESSN decision makers gave priority to the advantages of the targeted design given ESSN's programmatic objective and budget constraints, a third policy implication is that still the ineligible population is in need of support since poverty is high among them. A promising area for policy action could be to improve access to economic opportunities. In a sense, the eligibility criteria capture lack of capacity to work, which implies that ineligible refugees have relatively better prospects for income generation with the right support, such as Turkish language skills.

As a fourth policy implication, efforts must focus on decreasing ESSN's exclusion error among the extreme poor, with complementary actions

to increase their inclusion in the program. The Turkish Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF) Allowance, started in November 2018, presents a promising step forward. It is recommended that this allowance finds ways to incorporate knowledge of community leaders, *Muhtars*, and local organizations, who could give refugees referrals to the SASFs to foster equitable access.

Moving forward, on the analytical front, WFP and the World Bank will jointly evaluate the impacts of the ESSN assistance on beneficiary lives. Additionally, on the operational front, as the conflict underlying the refugee influx becomes more protracted, ESSN should transition from a humanitarian-type to a development-type response to promote a sustainable exit from poverty and vulnerability. In that regard, ESSN stakeholders are starting to focus on designing strategies to transition beneficiaries toward better income opportunities.

Future developments in ESSN should be documented and made publicly available, to ensure the ESSN experience can be productively used for policy discussions and programming responses in other humanitarian challenges and contexts. This report is a building block toward that larger, longer-term objective.

//

1. Introduction

Turkey is host to more refugees than any other country in the world. Close to 4 million refugees were living in Turkey by December 2018.² The overwhelming majority, 3.6 million, are from Syria.³ The remainder originate mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴ Turkey's response to the refugee crisis has drawn international acclaim, highlighted for providing a non-camp solution to the refugee influx, and granting access to public services.⁵ A reduced number of refugees, about 5 percent of the total, are hosted in camps near the Syrian border.⁶ Refugees in Turkey can obtain identity cards, with which they can access health care in government facilities and enroll in schools. Working-age refugees can also potentially obtain work permits. Notwithstanding this, other significant barriers

remain to increase coverage of these services, particularly with regard to work permits and schooling.

In November 2016, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program was introduced to help the most vulnerable refugees meet their basic needs through monthly cash transfers. ESSN was set up with financial support from the European Union's Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) through its humanitarian arm, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). The program is implemented nationwide in partnership with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MoFLSS), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). With 1.5 million beneficiaries as of December 2018, ESSN is the largest humanitarian cash transfer program in the world.

This report has two objectives. First, to provide an assessment of the vulnerability situation of refugees eligible for ESSN. Second, to evaluate how well the ESSN targets, supports, and protects the most vulnerable refugees. To do so, the report uses data from program applicants *after* their eligibility into the program has been determined but *before* the distribution of the cash assistance. This allows to examine issues of targeting, errors of exclusion and inclusion, and adequacy of the transfer size relative to pre-assistance budgets of refugees.

² The report uses the term refugee regardless of country of origin, although Syrians are under temporary protection status, and non-Syrians under international protection law. For more details: Asylum Information Database (AIDA), *Introduction to the Asylum Context in Turkey*.

³ There are 3,585,738 Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. *Source*: DGMM (2018).

⁴ There are 164,351 Afghans, 142,576 Iraqis, 37,732 Iranians, 5,518 Somalis, 11,515 Other countries. *Source*: UNHCR (2018).

⁵ See, for example, World Bank (2015), New York Times (2017).

⁶ The refugee camp population is 177,376, while the off-camp population is 3,408,362 (DGMM 2018).

This report makes two contributions to the growing literature on refugee crises, forced displacement, and policy responses. First, it contributes to fill in a gap in terms of vulnerability assessments of refugees in Turkey. There are many studies and reports on the subject, but they are based on purposive samples rather than representative data, which prevents knowing how generalizable or biased findings are. This report uses nationwide representative data from a probability sample of refugees that applied to ESSN. While it has its limitations, that is, the study is not representative of the non-applicant refugee population in Turkey, it is a significant step forward in achieving a more accurate and unbiased picture of refugees' vulnerabilities on the ground and understanding population-level trends.⁷

Second, the report documents the rollout results of a large-scale and unique humanitarian assistance program, the largest of its kind, at a time when there is a call in the international community for more cash-based programming of humanitarian aid.⁸ While cash-transfer programming (CTP) is regarded as an important area of innovation in humanitarian assistance, with great potential to meet assistance needs more efficiently and more effectively, it accounted for only 10 percent of humanitarian

aid in the world in 2016, up by 2.5 percent from 2015.⁹

The study is intended for the wide audience of stakeholders, both in Turkey and abroad, concerned about refugees' vulnerabilities and policy and program responses to refugee crises. The findings may be of interest, among others, to those interested in monitoring and evaluation, those focused on program design and operational issues, and those keen on knowing more about the policy responses to one of the most significant humanitarian crises of our time.

The report is organized in the following sections. Section 2 describes the main design features of the ESSN program. Section 3 presents the report's conceptual approach to the multiple dimensions of vulnerability, giving a consistent framework to the assessment. Section 4 describes the analytical approach and data sources used in the study. Sections 5 and 6, the main sections of the report, present the findings of the analysis: a vulnerability assessment of refugees targeted by ESSN, and a review of different aspects of ESSN performance at pre-assistance distribution time. Finally, section 7 discusses policy implications and the way forward.

⁷ As discussed in the Data section, data from a complementary survey called Comprehensive Vulnerability Monitoring Exercise (CVME) shows that non-applicants and ineligible applicants have similar poverty levels, and non-applicants are not poorer than eligible applicants. Since the CVME sampling is not representative beyond the survey subjects, this is indicative evidence (CVME 2017).

⁸ See High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers (2015); Bailey and Harvey (2017); Grand Bargain Signatories (2016).

⁹ Cash Learning Partnership (2018).

2. Background: The Emergency Social Safety Net for Refugees in Turkey

ESSN was launched nationwide in November 2016 to support the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey.¹⁰ The main partners of the program are ECHO, MoFLSS, WFP and TRC. It provides unconditional cash transfers of TL 120 per person per month to promote access to basic needs through easing households' constrained budgets.¹¹

Eligibility of a household to benefit from ESSN is determined based on six demographic criteria, selected as proxy measures of household poverty and vulnerability to meet basic needs.¹² These are (1) a dependency ratio greater than

or equal to 1.5 (essentially, at least three dependents for every two able-bodied adults); (2) families with four or more children; (3) single females; (4) elderly headed households; (5) single parent households; and (6) households with one member at least 40 percent disabled.¹³

Comprehensive outreach efforts have been undertaken to reach the intended population and key stakeholders. This included the use of multiple media (workshops, printed materials, social media) in four languages to provide accurate information on the program and support ESSN reach the target population and relevant actors—for example, Turkish Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASFs), Social Service Centers (SSCs), Nüfus, Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) offices, Provincial Governors, *Kaymakams* (heads of district), and *Muhtars* (community leaders).

All ESSN applications are digitized and consolidated into the Integrated Social Assistance

¹⁰ More precisely, the program covers foreigners residing in Turkey under International Protection, including Temporary Protection for Syrians. For brevity, these foreigners will be referred to as refugees, although not all of them have the legal status of refugees within Turkey.

¹¹ In addition to the regular monthly transfers, beneficiary households also receive flat quarterly top-ups designed to support smaller households in meeting their basic needs. Household size 1–4: TL 250; Household size 5–8: TL 150; Household size 9+: TL 50. For more details on the ESSN program, please refer to its website: <http://kizilaykart-suy.org/>.

¹² Using quantitative data from a 2015 household survey, a model was developed to understand the relationship between household characteristics and household welfare (measured using per capita expenditure). These results were used, in combination with other secondary data, to develop the demographic targeting criteria. For details on

the model, refer to the WFP Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (VAM) report (WFP 2016).

¹³ Before June 2017, the dependency ratio threshold was above 1.5 (not including those with ratio equal to 1.5) and the disability threshold was two members (not one). The targeting criteria was revised to increase the coverage of vulnerable refugee households.

System (ISAS), or *Bütünleşik Sosyal Yardım Bilgi Sistemi*, an e-government system developed by Turkey and introduced in 2009 that electronically integrates and facilitates all steps related to the management of social assistance. The government of Turkey adapted ISAS to handle ESSN application processes, and assess eligibility into the program, including verification of required documents. As a result, ESSN applicants and beneficiaries are integrated into the same registry with Turkish applicants and beneficiaries of MoFLSS social assistance programs. This integration makes Turkey an interesting and leading example of ‘adaptive social protection’ to effectively respond to a surge in social assistance needs caused by the humanitarian emergency situation created by the refugee crisis.

Monitoring and evaluation is an essential component of the program. This includes a Pre-Assistance Baseline (PAB) survey, which is used as the main source of data for this report, and Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) surveys collected with quarterly frequency. The surveys are collected by a TRC call center, with technical support from the WFP and the World Bank.

Given the ESSN characteristics, findings of this report will be useful to a wider audience focused on the links between humanitarian assistance and national social protection systems, ‘adaptive social protection’, and forced displacement contexts.¹⁴ Understanding the ESSN rollout and performance to date helps inform these developments moving forward.

¹⁴ A discussion is already underway in Lebanon: <http://odhpn.org/blog/cash-debate-lebanon/>.

3. Conceptual Approach: The Multiple Dimensions of Vulnerability

The analysis of the report is conducted within a ‘multidimensional vulnerability’ conceptual framework. Vulnerability refers to a situation where the household has limited ability to meet basic needs and a constrained capacity to cope with risks that can negatively affect the achievement of those needs. In the face of ongoing risks, this constrained household capacity can bear short- and long-term consequences on its members’ well-being. In being vulnerable, there is an element that pertains to a current situation (for example, meeting basic needs at a point in time) and an element that relates to the susceptibility or fragility of that situation to change and worsen in the future (for example, high risk of not meeting basic needs tomorrow). As such, vulnerability can manifest itself along multiple dimensions. For example, a household may be considered to be in a vulnerable condition if...

- ... it is affected by food insecurity
- ... it struggles to access basic services
- ... it has a large number of dependents per able working-age member
- ... it lacks adequate coping strategies to face adverse shocks
- ... it burdens itself with debt to meet to-day’s basic needs

These vulnerabilities are of diverse nature: some are economic, some demographic, some are more static, and some are inter-temporal.

Income is an important part of the story, but there are dimensions of being vulnerable that go well beyond income. Income is necessary, but not sufficient, to escape vulnerability. For example, for refugee populations, access to legal status and capacity to cope with trauma are two dimensions that cannot be captured by just focusing on income.

While there are considerations to make for each specific context, the following seven dimensions provide a relatively comprehensive account useful for a study of household vulnerability:

- 1. Poverty and resources:** Does the household have enough resources to meet basic needs?
- 2. Access to key services:** Do school-age children have access to education? Do households have access to housing, health services, legal status?
- 3. Food security:** Can a household procure a diet with the necessary caloric and nutritional content for all its members?
- 4. Capacity to cope:** Can the household resort to safe coping strategies to face adversity? Or does the household use strategies that may be damaging for future productivity (including sale of assets, reductions in human capital and risky behaviors)?
- 5. Household composition:** Do households have a structure that puts them in a more

fragile situation (such as a large number of dependents, single parent, female head)?

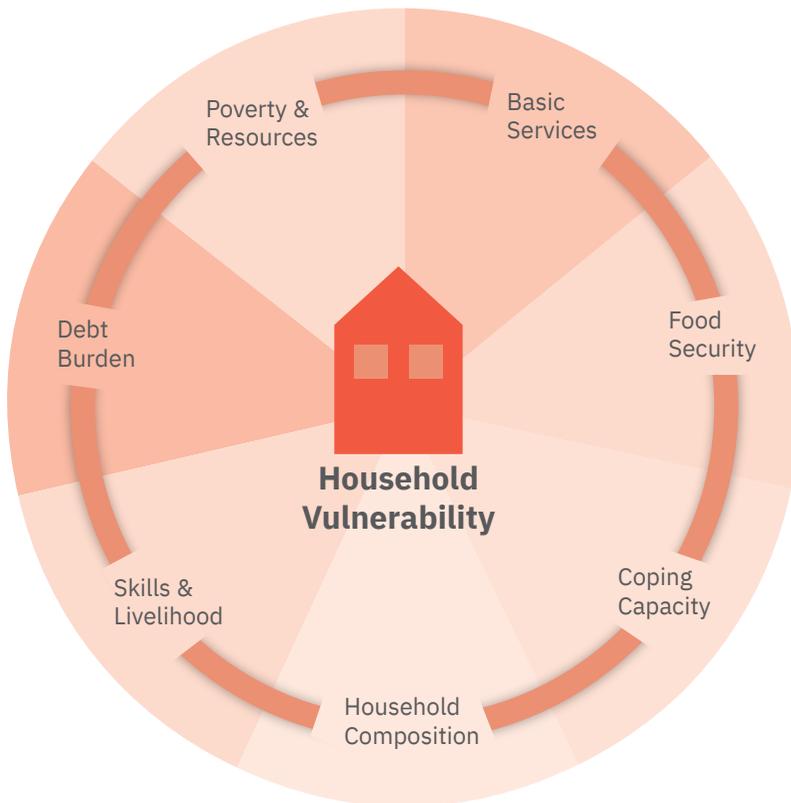
- 6. Skills and livelihood:** Do household adults have the skills required by the context? Can they access income sources for self-reliance?
- 7. Debt burden:** Do household incur in debt that can become unsustainable?

Naturally, these dimensions are inextricably intertwined. They are not linked by a unidirectional causal relation and they are not mutually exclusive either but somewhat overlapping and

complementary. For example, a household that afford basic needs could still be vulnerable to food insecurity if the composition of the diet is not adequate. Each dimension captures a standalone aspect of being vulnerable. Figure 1 provides a graphic summary of the approach.

The first part of the report assesses the vulnerability of refugees in the ESSN program using each of these dimensions, first at the national level and then across regions of the country. In addition, in the targeting section, this vulnerability framework will be used to compare refugees eligible to receive ESSN with those ineligible for ESSN.

Figure 1: Dimensions of Vulnerability



4. Empirical Approach to Assessing Vulnerability and ESSN Protection Performance

4.1 Data

The main data source for the analysis is the PAB survey, which was collected by TRC as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the program, and is representative of refugee households that applied to ESSN between the start of the program and May 2017.¹⁵ In population terms, the survey is representative of 1.6 million people.¹⁶ At that time, there were 3.2 million refugees in Turkey, so the PAB is representative of half of the refugee population.

The PAB survey is innovative in being representative of a refugee population in the Turkey context. There are many surveys collected around the country but due to a lack of sampling framework, their samples are not representative of a population.¹⁷ This is an important limitation

because it means that findings in those surveys cannot be generalized beyond those cases that answered the survey and have limited value for decision making or program design. In this sense, the PAB is unique—by using the registry of ESSN applicants as the sampling framework to randomly select respondents, PAB findings are generalizable to the 1.6 million people who applied to the program.

A second important strength of the PAB is that the survey sample was also designed to be representative of both the eligible population and the ineligible population that applied to ESSN, which allows to conduct comparative analysis between these two groups of interest.

A third advantage of the PAB survey is that it is not only representative of the population of applicants at the national level but also at the subnational level. In other words, survey respondents were selected at random within five regional strata. Therefore, the data can be broken down for analysis across the following five regions: Southeast, Anatolia/Thrace, Istanbul,

¹⁵ This section summarizes the main features of the data used in the analysis. For further technical detail see Cuevas et al (2019).

¹⁶ Since May 2017, about 500,000 additional people have applied.

¹⁷ This happens, for example, in surveys that choose their respondents in specific locations such as a market, a community center, a neighborhood. Without a comprehensive understanding of all the households that make up the population of interest ('the universe'), these surveys do not have a way to assess what population are the cases included in the study representative of. In technical terms, they cannot

calculate sampling weights to make the observations in the sample representative of the population where they come from. For a regularly updated list of assessments and surveys see: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/documents.php?page=2&view=grid&Language%5B%5D=1&Country%5B%5D=224&Type%5B%5D=4>.

Figure 2: Map of subnational strata of the PAB survey



Mediterranean, and Aegean. Figure 2 illustrates the composition of each region.

The survey was collected by the TRC call center and was designed by the WFP with inputs from the World Bank. The TRC call center team was recruited and trained to conduct interviews in three languages: Arabic, Turkish, and English, to minimize the number of surveys that could not be completed due to a language barrier.

Although the PAB data brings important value added, it faces two limitations that are useful to highlight to motivate the data-collection agenda going forward. First, the PAB survey does not sample the non-applicant population. Therefore, the vulnerability and targeting assessment is based on those that applied. If, for example, all non-applicants were poor, then the targeting conclusions of the report would be too ‘optimistic’. However, there is indication that that is not the case. A survey of applicants and non-applicants shows that the poverty levels of non-ap-

plicants are similar to those of ineligible applicants. It also shows that non-applicants have entered Turkey more recently than applicants and have not applied to ESSN because their registration with the authorities for identity cards is still in process.¹⁸

Second, the phone-based modality poses an important limitation on the amount of information that can be collected from survey respondents. A face-to-face survey can collect information about every household member and can ask about living standards with a fine level of detail through hundreds of questions.¹⁹ A phone-based survey is constrained to a sub-

¹⁸ CVME Survey (WFP 2017): Sample of non-applicants and ineligible applicants was obtained using neighborhood snowball sampling, so the results are not representative of the refugee population beyond the sample.

¹⁹ For example, Turkey’s household expenditure survey asks respondents about expenses on more than 200 items.

Table 1: Distribution of ESSN applicants by eligibility and region

	Households		Individuals	
	Number	Share (%)	Number	Share (%)
Total	268,602	100	1,627,874	100
Eligible	141,330	53	956,653	59
Ineligible	127,272	47	671,221	41
Region				
Istanbul	37,855	14	236,018	15
Aegean	29,377	11	175,718	11
Anatolia/Thrace	59,259	22	363,679	22
Mediterranean	24,454	9	150,895	9
Southeast	117,657	44	701,564	43

Source: PAB data.

set of questions and to basic information about household living conditions.

The PAB sample size is 8,690 households, which were interviewed after the ESSN program had determined their eligibility but before households knew their eligibility status and therefore before receiving any ESSN transfers. The majority of those who applied were considered eligible. The eligibility rate reached 53 percent of households, which, taking into account their members, meant that nearly 60 percent of all individuals who applied were assessed as eligible. Among regions, the provinces in the Southeast provided more than 40 percent of the ESSN applications. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of applicants and their status.

4.2 Methodology

The multiple dimensions of vulnerability discussed in section 3 can be measured with the

PAB survey through different variables and indicators, as follows:²⁰

- 1. Poverty and resources:** A household is considered poor if its per capita expenditure is below the poverty line. Expenditure is measured by monthly expenses on food, housing, utilities (electricity, heating, gas), water, phone/internet service, health, hygiene, education, transportation, and other non-food items (like clothes, tobacco, and so on) reported by households in the PAB survey and adjusted by price differences between regions.²¹

²⁰ This section provides a summary of the methodology. For further technical detail see Cuevas et al (2019).

²¹ Following Deaton and Saidi (2002), expenditure on celebrations and debt repayment are excluded, while expenditure on health is included due to their high elasticity. Expenditures are adjusted using spatial price indexes from Turkey's National Statistics Office (TUIK) to account for

The main poverty line used in the analysis is equal to US\$5.5 per capita per day, in 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP), equivalent to TL 284 per capita per month in 2016. This is an internationally comparable line calculated by the World Bank to monitor poverty in upper-middle-income contexts like Turkey.²² A complementary line is used to capture extreme poverty, which takes the value of US\$3.20 per capita per day (2011 PPP), equivalent to TL 165 per capita per month in 2016 terms.²³ The analysis looks also at those that are closely above the poverty line, since while they are making ends meet on the day of survey, they are vulnerable to fall below the poverty line if there is a small decrease in income.

2. Access to key services: The PAB allows to construct three indicators to measure access to education. First, the share of school-age children that are regularly attending school. Second, whether none of the school-age children in the household are regularly attending school. Third, whether all the school-age children in the household are regularly attending school. Regular attendance was defined

purchasing power and cost of living differences across regions (the value of TL 1 in Istanbul is not the same as TL 1 in Sanliurfa).

²² For technical details, see Jolliffe and Prydz (2016).

²³ This is an internationally comparable line calculated by the World Bank to measure poverty in lower-middle-income countries. For the Turkey context, it can be taken as a proxy for extreme poverty, whereby households cannot afford food needs. Many countries calculate and use national poverty and extreme poverty lines based on cost of basic needs and cost of food needs, but that is not the case in Turkey. If those lines were available, they would be used in the analysis.

as 4 out of 5 days per week. Access to health services (mental or physical), adequate housing (for example, sanitation, housing materials, number of rooms), and legal services are not captured in the survey.²⁴

3. Food security: To assess households' access to an adequate diet, the analysis uses the Food Consumption Score (FCS). The FCS is constructed with questions on consumption frequency of 9 different food groups during the past 7 days. Therefore, it considers not only the frequency but also the diversity of the diet.²⁵ It is a standard WFP indicator used globally to measure food security and allows to assess if households achieve acceptable or unacceptable food consumption.²⁶

4. Capacity to cope: This is measured by two indicators: the reduced (Food) Cop-

²⁴ Access to identification and legal status is not collected by the survey since registration with the DGMM (temporary protection for Syrians, international protection for non-Syrians) is a prerequisite to apply for ESSN. In addition, ESSN officers helped refugees get their papers in order with the DGMM when needed (for example when the person registered in one province but moved to another).

²⁵ For more details on the FCS, refer to WFP (2008).

²⁶ FCS classifies household diets into three groups: acceptable, borderline, or poor. In this analysis, all households with poor and borderline FCS are grouped into unacceptable. Borderline food consumption equates to daily consumption of staples and vegetables, with frequent (4 days/week) consumption of oil and pulses. As sugar and oil are consumed as part of the daily diet in the context of Middle East populations where refugees come from, thresholds are set to include oil and sugar within the poor and borderline classification. Therefore, a borderline or worse diet is very restricted, usually including no or extremely low consumption of meat, dairy, pulses, or fruit.

ing Strategies Index (rCSI) and the Livelihoods Coping Strategies Index (LCSI).

- a. The rCSI is constructed with questions about reductions in quantity or quality of food intake to cope with adversity. It includes five specific consumption coping strategies, each given a standard severity weight and aggregated into an index.²⁷
- b. The LCSI assesses the stress and severity of coping mechanisms used by households and their implications for longer-term productive capacity. It is derived from a series of 14 questions regarding households' experience with livelihood stress and asset depletion during the 30 days before the survey. Coping strategies are classified into three categories: stress, crisis, and emergency, based on the severity of the impact of the strategy on household resilience and the ability to cope with future livelihood shocks. The questions used for the PAB's LCS module were validated and weighted based on focus group discussions conducted with the affected population, to ensure that they are appropriate and representative for the current context. When the respondent reports that the household has not used a given coping strategy, he or she reports whether it is because the household has exhausted the use of such strategy (for example, selling assets) or simply did not need to engage in that behavior.

5. Household composition: The data at hand allow to capture the household composition dimension of vulnerabili-

ty through the household's dependency ratio and female headship. Households with higher dependency or headed by a woman are in a more vulnerable situation to afford adverse shocks than households with lower dependency or headed by a man. The dependency ratio is calculated as the number of children and elderly members (ages 0–17 and 60 or more, respectively), by the number of working-age members in the household (ages 18–59). While the ESSN targeting criteria related to the dependency ratio accounts for disability, the PAB survey does not collect information on disability status.

6. Skills and livelihood: In a high literacy context like Turkey, language skills are a key competency to escape vulnerability and access economic opportunities. The analysis uses two indicators to capture this: first, whether at least one household member can read/write Arabic and second, whether at least one household member can read/speak Turkish. In addition, access to livelihood sources is captured in the PAB by asking respondents about their three main sources of income: skilled labor, unskilled labor, borrowing, gifts, remittances, and others.

7. Debt burden: While having access to credit to weather shocks can be considered positive, it can put households in a very vulnerable situation if the amount of debt becomes unsustainable. To capture this, the analysis uses the ratio between the household's stock of debt and the household's monthly expenditure.

To tackle the second question of interest, that is, how well does ESSN target and support its beneficiaries, the analysis will use the following approach.

²⁷ For more details on the rCSI, refer to the Coping Strategies Index: Field Methods Manual (Maxwell and Caldwell 2008).

- **Comparative vulnerability assessment of ESSN eligible households to ESSN ineligible households:** Using the multi-dimensional vulnerability approach and the indicators described above, eligible households are compared to ineligible households to assess whether the program was able to target the more vulnerable population. Ideally, the comparison would also be done with households that did not apply to ESSN, but data for that do not exist.
- **Coverage rate and targeting exclusion error:** An important indicator to evaluate the performance of any assistance program is its coverage of the target population. In this case, that is measured by share of eligible population among the poor. Conversely, the complement of the coverage rate represents the targeting exclusion error. That is, the share among the poor that the targeting criteria of the program failed to identify as ‘in need of ESSN support’.²⁸
- **Targeting inclusion error:** This concerns those cases that were not part of the target population of the program, that is the nonpoor, but were assessed eligible by the program’s targeting criteria. The inclusion error is calculated as the share of nonpoor population among the eligible. This error is a function of the poverty rate.

²⁸ Instead of poverty, other indicators of vulnerability could be used to assess exclusion error. However, the poverty indicator is at the core of ESSN’s targeting strategy—the targeting criteria were defined as the best proxies to being under the poverty line that can be measurable and verifiable in this context. In addition, the nature of the poverty measure, with a clear threshold to classify households, makes the analysis clearer and the findings simpler to communicate.

If the poverty rate is 100 percent, then by definition the targeting inclusion error will be zero regardless of any targeting strategy.

- **Adequacy of the transfer size:** It is of little use to have a great targeting system if the transfers do not provide meaningful support to those eligible. Benefit adequacy represents the ratio between the monthly value of transfers that eligible households will receive and their pre-transfer monthly budget. In this way, adequacy portrays the capacity of the program to adequately support expenses of beneficiaries.²⁹
- **Benchmarking:** To complement the assessment of the coverage, targeting, and adequacy rates of ESSN, the analysis makes use of a benchmarking approach. Comparing ESSN performance indicators to other situations brings perspective into the analysis. The goodness of ESSN’s support to vulnerable refugees cannot be measured by how far it is from a utopia of zero targeting errors but by using realistic alternatives as benchmarks. The analysis makes use of two different yardsticks. First, ESSN is benchmarked with respect to the international evidence on performance of cash transfer programs around the world. The analysis uses data from the Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity (ASPIRE), the largest and most comprehensive database on worldwide safety net performance indicators. Second, the existing ESSN protection performance is benchmarked to

²⁹ As a reminder, the PAB survey was collected before any ESSN transfers were distributed, so the adequacy calculations are made using the amounts that eligible households *will* start receiving.

an alternative design of universal, untargeted transfers, as a simulated counterfactual. This is a scenario where, keeping the total transfers budget constant, all those who apply receive a cash transfer, but lower in size than the one under the existing targeted design. This is a design question that most programs struggle with: giving a bit of support to all regardless of their vulnerability versus trying to give a bit more to those who need it more.

- To assess the performance of an untargeted, universal transfer and deal with the challenge of estimating how many people would apply if the transfer was known to be untargeted, the analysis proceeds with a method of bounds, keeping total transfer budget constant. In the **lower-bound scenario**, the number of applicants to the untargeted transfer equals the number of applicants to the existing targeted design. That is 1.6 million people according to the PAB data, and the value of the transfer would be TL 70 per person per month.³⁰ In the **upper-bound scenario**, the number of applicants to the untargeted transfer equals the number of refugees registered in the country. That is 4 million people as of December 2018, and the value of the transfer would be TL 39 per person per month.³¹ Performance indicators are calculated under each simulated counterfactual to bound what would be observed if an untargeted transfer was implemented. The reality would sit somewhere in between.

³⁰ Calculated as $(\text{TL } 120 \times 956,653 \text{ ESSN eligible people in the PAB}) / 1,627,874 \text{ applicant people in the PAB}$.

³¹ Calculated as $(\text{TL } 120 \times 1.3 \text{ million ESSN eligible in admin data}) / 4 \text{ million refugees in admin data}$.

5. What vulnerabilities affect the population of ESSN refugees?

Based on the multidimensional vulnerability framework presented in section 3, the main findings of the first research question of the report are the following:

- a. The vulnerabilities of the refugee population targeted by ESSN are multiple and complex: there is a pervasive incidence of poverty, affecting 76 percent of ESSN refugees, compounded by three other types of vulnerabilities with wide-ranging inter-temporal and inter-generational implications. First, a proportion of refugees are food insecure and have limited access to education for their children, which bears detrimental human capital implications. Second, there is an intensive use of ‘costly’ coping strategies, which cripple ESSN households’ longer-term livelihood capacity. And finally, there are important constraints with regard to skills and livelihood sources to better participate in the labor market, which limits the short-term ability to emerge out of poverty.
- b. There is an ample degree of heterogeneity across regions in their exposure to each vulnerability dimension, and there is no simple regional pattern, which speaks to the complexity of refugee vulnerability. The Istanbul and Aegean regions are less vulnerable to poverty, lack of skills, and precarious labor income sources but show the highest vulnerability in access

to education. Anatolia shows the least vulnerability to food insecurity, given the proximity to agricultural activities, but suffers the worst access to labor income. The Southeast benefits from the best access to education but shows the highest vulnerabilities in food security and language skills. The single unifying pattern is, perhaps, that given refugees’ limited resources and opportunities and disadvantages of each region, all regions show a vulnerable side in some dimension. In addition, all regions resort to intensive use of detrimental coping strategies that cripple the productive capacity of the household, its resilience, and its ability to face adversity in the future.

It is important to remember that the report assesses vulnerability of refugees targeted by ESSN *after* they are assessed as eligible and *before* any transfer is disbursed to them. This section summarizes the findings in each of the seven dimensions of vulnerability described by the conceptual approach.

Poverty and resources

The average refugee eligible for ESSN lives on a median budget of TL 219 per month. Expenditure levels are highest in Istanbul, reflecting better economic opportunities, with a median of TL 242 per month. Meanwhile, ESSN

Table 2: Per capita monthly expenditure of ESSN refugees, average and median

	Mean	Per capita monthly expenditure (TL)	
		Median	Median
Eligible		233	219
Eligible by Region	Istanbul	257	242
	Aegean	243	227
	Anatolia/Thrace	219	202
	Mediterranean	226	209
	Southeast	233	216

Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

refugees in Anatolia and Mediterranean regions show the lowest budget levels, with medians of 202 and 209, respectively.³²

The overwhelming majority of the refugee population targeted by ESSN is poor. Poverty—living with a budget below TL 284 per person per month—affects 76 percent of ESSN refugees. Meanwhile extreme poverty—having a budget lower than TL 165 per person per month—affects 24 percent of the ESSN population. Basically 3 out of 4 ESSN refugees are poor and 1 out of 4 is extreme poor. In addition, 12 percent live with budgets that are above, but within 20 percent of, the poverty line and are therefore vulnerable to fall into poverty in the face of a moderate income decline. That is, 88 percent of ESSN refugees are poor or ‘nearly’ poor.

The poverty rates of the ESSN refugees living in Turkey are significantly higher than those of the

³² As explained in the Methodology section, spatial deflators are used to adjust for cost of living and purchasing power differences between regions.

Table 3: Poverty and inequality among ESSN refugee population

Poverty indicators	Headcount ratio	Poverty gap
Extreme poverty	23.8%	5.8%
Poverty	76.0%	25.0%
	Gini	Top10/Bottom10
Inequality indicators	0.228	5.0

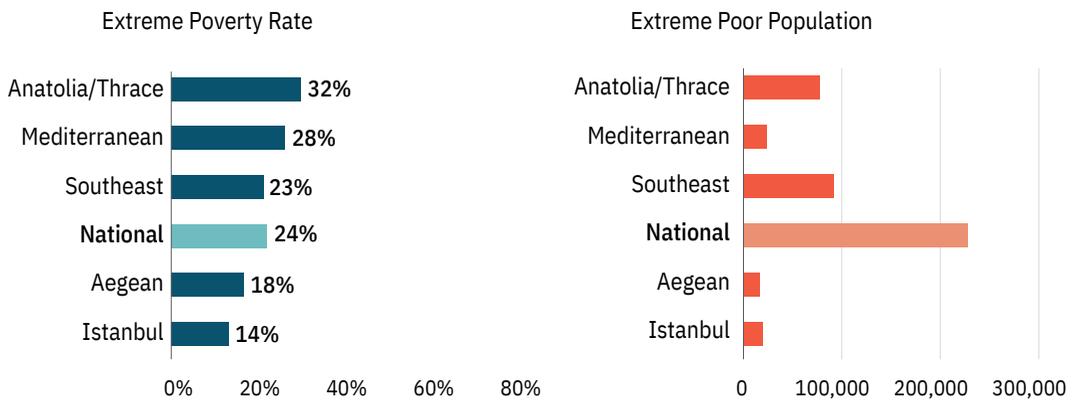
Note: Extreme poverty line = TL165 per person per month. Poverty line = TL284 per person per month. Top10/Bottom10 = Average Expenditure of richest 10% / Average expenditure of poorest 10%. **Source:** PAB data, authors' calculations.

native Turkish population. Based on expenditure data from the Household Budget Survey (HBS), about 10 percent of Turks live in poverty, and 2 percent are affected by extreme poverty.³³ The comparison, however, is only indicative. Although the same poverty line is used for both refugees and Turks, the survey used to measure poverty of Turkish locals is quite different from the PAB and that poses methodological comparability limitations. PAB consumption aggregate is built upon 10 questions, while HBS consumption aggregate uses 300 consumption items. Findings from previous research imply that refugee poverty rates would be lower if they were measured with a long and detailed questionnaire similar to HBS.³⁴

³³ Source: World Bank calculations using Turkey's Household Budget Survey (HBS) 2016; see *Poverty and Equity Brief* (World Bank 2018a) for more details on poverty monitoring in Turkey.

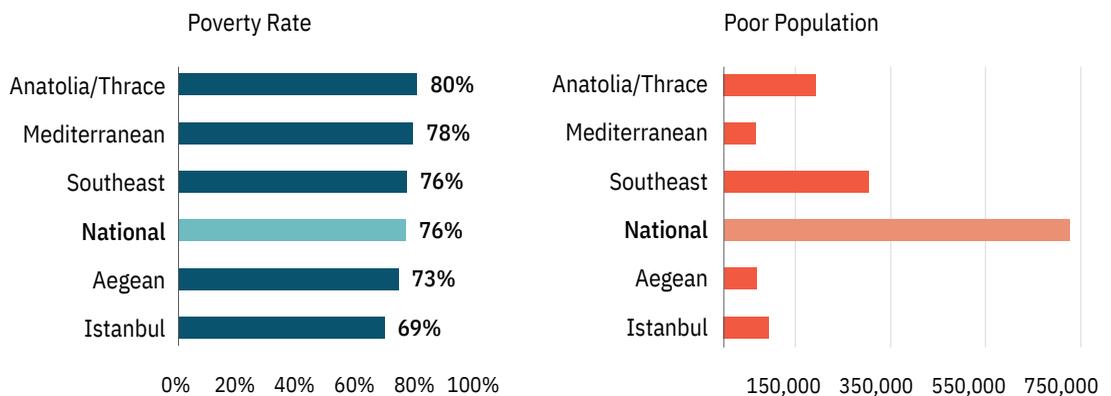
³⁴ The comparison is useful to illustrate the gaps, but it should be considered carefully. The PAB consumption aggregate is built upon 10 questions, while HBS consumption ag-

Figure 3: Extreme poverty rate and number of poor among ESN refugees



Source: Extreme poverty line = TL165 per person per month. PAB data, authors' calculations.

Figure 4: Poverty rate and number of poor among ESN refugees



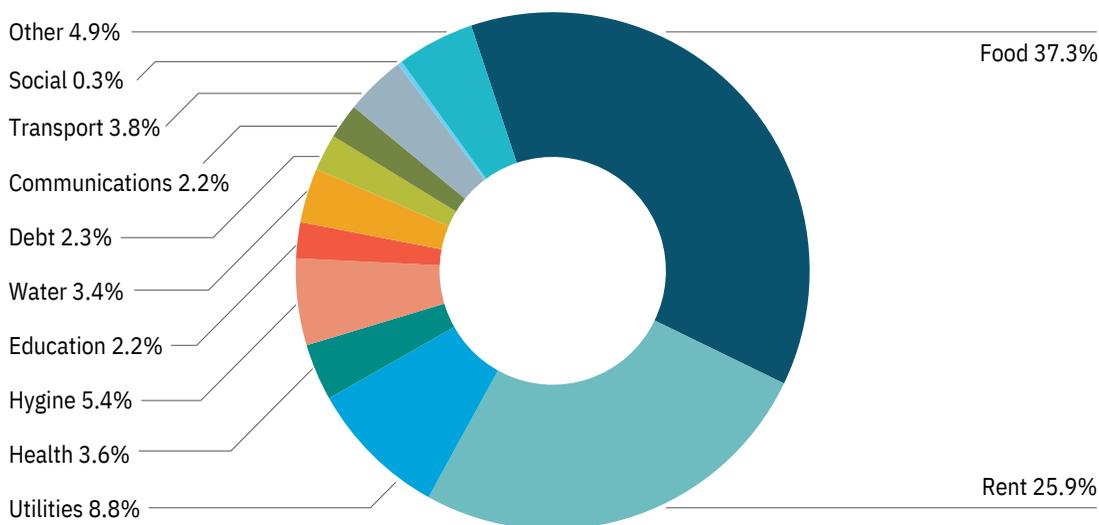
Source: Poverty line = TL284 per person per month. PAB data, authors' calculations.

Poverty rates vary significantly across regions. The share of ESN refugees living in extreme poverty, with TL 165 or less per month, is at

least twice as high in the Anatolia and Mediterranean regions than in Istanbul. In addition, the share living in poverty reaches 80 percent in Anatolia but 69 percent in Istanbul. Regional poverty disparities are somewhat reflective of the spatial variation in regional economic development. The Istanbul and Aegean regions are home to some of the most developed industries in the country, with a higher number of relatively better job opportunities.

gregate uses more than 300 questions. Previous research shows (for example, Beegle et al. 2012) that detailed survey modules lead to higher consumption measures. This implies that the PAB poverty rates would be lower if they were measured with a long and detailed questionnaire similar to HBS.

Figure 5: Expenditure shares among ESSN households



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

For program design and budget allocations across regions, it is important to look at the number of poor in addition to the headcount poverty rate. Two regions with the same rate of poverty can present different challenges with regard to policy solutions if they differ in the size of the poor population. In fact, among ESSN refugees the rankings in poverty rates and poor population are different. Overall, there are around 227 thousand extreme poor and 727 thousand poor individuals among the ESSN refugees. The largest poor populations are in Southeastern Turkey, which houses 41 percent of ESSN refugees in poverty. Istanbul, despite having a lower headcount rate using the TL 284 per month line, has more poor refugees than the Mediterranean and the Aegean.

An additional measure of vulnerability of expenditure looks at expenditure composition. The data show that 37 percent of expenditure is

dedicated to food. In addition, about a quarter (26 percent) is spent on rent. When food, rent, and utilities are accounted for, ESSN households are left with just 28 percent of their total monthly budget for all other needs. This presents a precarious situation; any unexpected cost, such as a medical bill or a funeral, could leave a household unable to pay rent or meet their food needs.

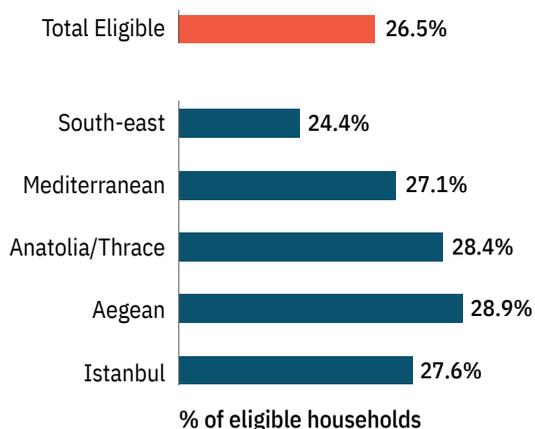
Rent and food expenditure shares vary significantly across regions. In Istanbul, rent accounts for 32 percent of total expenditure versus only 25 percent in the Southeast. Accordingly, food accounts for about 40 percent of expenditure in the Southeast but only 32 percent in Istanbul. This reflects the fact that rent costs are significantly higher in Istanbul, and households are forced to adjust their budgets accordingly. In Istanbul, median rent paid for a household with five members was TL 550 in rent per month versus TL 350 in the Southeast.

Access to key services: Education

With regard to access to education, in the average ESSN refugee household just over half (54 percent) of school-age children are regularly attending school. Moreover, in many households, none of the school-age children attended school. In more than a quarter of all ESSN households, none of the school-age children are in school. In contrast, 31 percent of ESSN households have all their children regularly attending school.

There is certain degree of variation in access to education across regions. Households in the Aegean, Anatolia, and Istanbul regions show the highest incidence of vulnerability with regard to children's schooling. These regions have the highest proportion of households with no children attending school, at 28–29 percent. Access to schooling is significantly better in the Southeast, where only 24 percent of ESSN households have none of their children attending school.

Figure 6: Percentage of ESSN households with all school-age children out of school



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

Regional differences are related to a higher proportion of children working in the Aegean, Anatolia, and Istanbul regions, as the livelihoods coping analysis will show, and the presence of Temporary Education Centers with lessons taught in Arabic in the Southeast, which facilitate school attendance for children who do not speak Turkish.

Food security

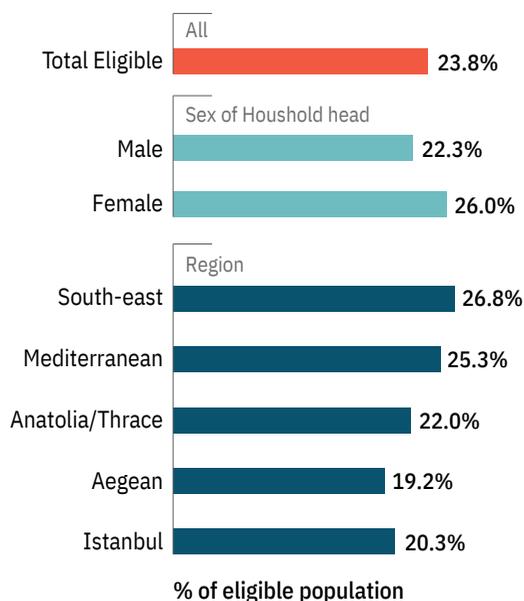
The proportion of eligible households with unacceptable food consumption reaches 24 percent. This is driven by constraints in consumption of fruits, pulses, vegetables, animal protein (eggs, meat, fish), and dairy, which are consumed only 1, 2, 2.8, 2.9, and 3.6 days a week, respectively. Only 6 percent of the ESSN refugee population eats fruits at least 4 times per week.

The Southeast and Mediterranean regions present higher levels of food insecurity, with 27 and 25 percent of the eligible population having an unacceptable (that is, poor or borderline) food consumption score, respectively. In comparison, for example, 33 percent of the eligible population live in households that eat vegetables at least 4 days per week in Anatolia versus only 21 percent in the Southeast. Similarly, while 41 percent of the population consume animal protein (eggs, fish, meat) at least 4 days a week in Anatolia, the corresponding share is 27 percent in the Southeast.

Capacity to cope

Overall, 90 percent of eligible households engaged in some form of consumption-based coping to face shortages in income and means of support. The most commonly employed strategy was relying on less expensive or less

Figure 7: Percentage of ESSN households with unacceptable food consumption



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

preferred foods. On average, ESSN households resort to this strategy 4.4 days per week. It is also relatively frequent for eligible households to reduce the number of meals and portion sizes and decrease adult intake in favor of children. These coping strategies are used 2 days per week, on average. It is not so common to borrow food from friends or neighbors (0.6 days per week).

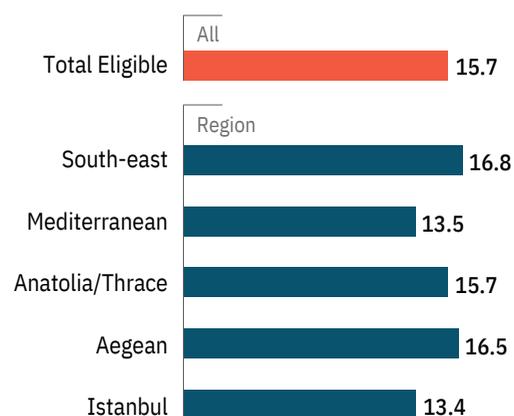
The consumption-based coping strategies index reaches a relatively high level for the ESSN targeted households. The index also reveals that there are three regions that are relatively more vulnerable to this dimension: Southeast, Anatolia, and Aegean all suffer from significantly higher consumption-coping vulnerability than the Istanbul and Mediterranean regions.

Table 4: Use of consumption coping strategies in ESSN households

Strategy	Mean days per week that the strategy is used
Less preferred, less expensive foods	4.4
Borrow food from friends or neighbors	0.6
Reduced number of meals per week	2.1
Reduce portion size at meals	2.0
Reduce adult consumption so children can eat	2.0

Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

Figure 8: Consumption-based Coping Strategies Index among ESSN households



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

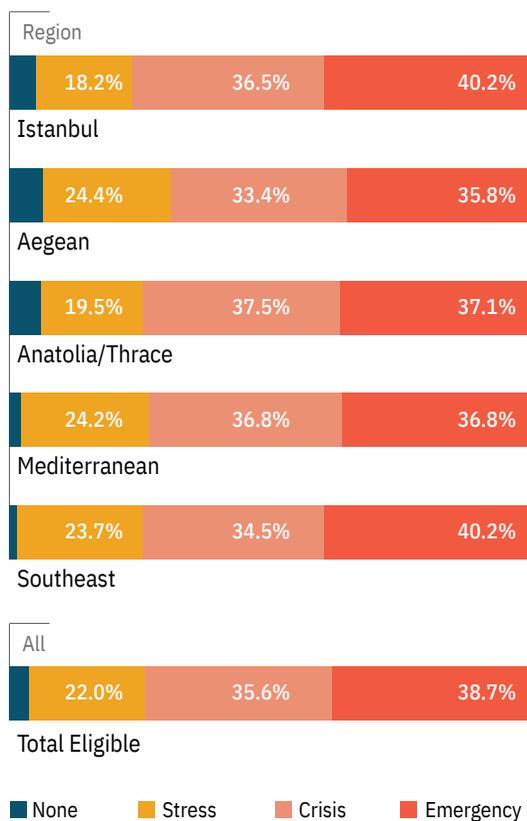
The incidence of 'costly' livelihood coping strategies (LCS), which could cripple ESSN households' longer-term livelihood capacity, is also relatively high. Overall, 89 percent of households applied stress strategies (at least once), 63 percent of households applied crisis strat-

egies (at least once), and 39 percent applied emergency strategies (at least once).

Households are then classified by the most severe type of coping strategy they adopted. In order of severity, emergency is worse than crisis, and crisis is worse than stress. Therefore, if a household used both crisis and emergency LCS, it is classified as emergency. Accordingly, households are put into one of four mutually exclusive groups: did not use any LCS, the most severe LCS used was stress, the most severe LCS used was crisis, the most severe LCS used was emergency LCS. In turn, only 3.7 percent of ESSN households did not engage in any livelihood coping strategies. Moreover, most households resorted to emergency coping as their most severe strategy, such as sending children to work or relocating the household to an entirely different location.³⁵ Crisis coping strategies are almost as frequently used as emergency ones. Both types involve costly consequences that are harder to reverse and likely to reduce future productivity and resilience to shocks. Overall, 39, 36, and 22 percent of the ESSN households used emergency, crisis, and stress coping strategies, respectively, as their most severe LCS.

Looking within each of the LCS types allows to understand what individual coping actions are driving the use of each type. Within emergency LCS, the most commonly used coping actions are child labor and household relocation (18 and 21 percent, respectively). Within crisis LCS, the most frequently used coping mecha-

Figure 9: Most severe livelihood coping strategies used by ESSN households



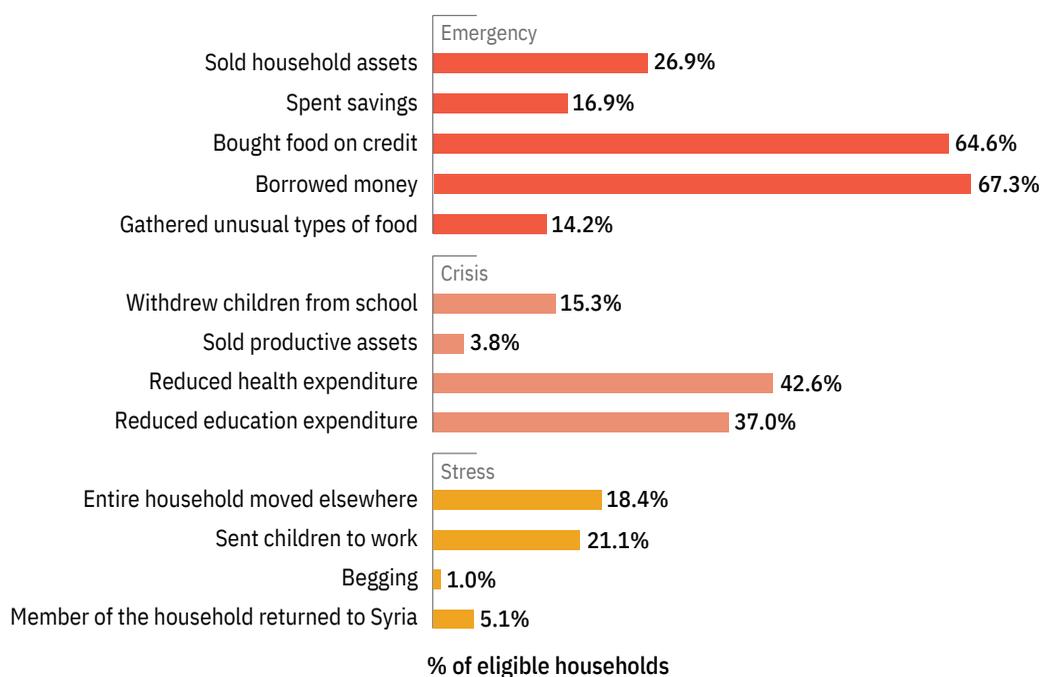
Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

nisms are reducing investments in health and education (43 and 37 percent, respectively). Within stress LCS, borrowing money and buying food on credit are typically the most resorted ones.³⁶

³⁵ The reference period of the LCS questions is the past 30 days. Therefore, this is only capturing the refugees who recently moved into Turkey, not the ones who have been in living in Turkey for more than a month.

³⁶ These are unconditional averages. For example, the percentage using child labor as coping represents the average among all ESSN households. It is not conditional on having used at least one emergency strategy.

Figure 10: Types of livelihood coping strategies used by ESSN households



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

Household composition

The ESSN targeting conditions are based on vulnerability criteria related to household demographic structure. Therefore, targeted refugee households show a high incidence of female headship as well as high dependency ratios. In ESSN households, for every working-age adult there almost two dependents to take care of, making refugee households vulnerable to adverse changes in livelihood. In addition, 40 percent of ESSN households are headed by women.

The regional breakdown shows moderate variations across regions in household composition indicators. In terms of dependency ratios, the largest variation is observed between South-east and Anatolia, displaying ratios of 1.86 and

Table 5: Demographics of ESSN refugee households

Demographics	
Percentage with male household head	60%
Percentage with female household head	40%
Number of household members	6.8
Share of members age 0–5	20.3%
Share of members age 6–17	38.1%
Share of members age 18–59	37.8%
Share of members age 60+	3.8%
Dependency ratio	1.9

Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

2.00, respectively. Regarding female headship, the highest share of female-headed ESSN households is seen in Istanbul with 43 percent,

while the Anatolia region exhibits the lowest share, with 38 percent.

The average refugee household in ESSN has 6.8 members and has a relatively young age structure, with 20 percent being children under 5 years, 38 percent children in the 6–17 age group, another 38 percent in 18–59 group, and 4 percent in the 60-or-more years-old group.

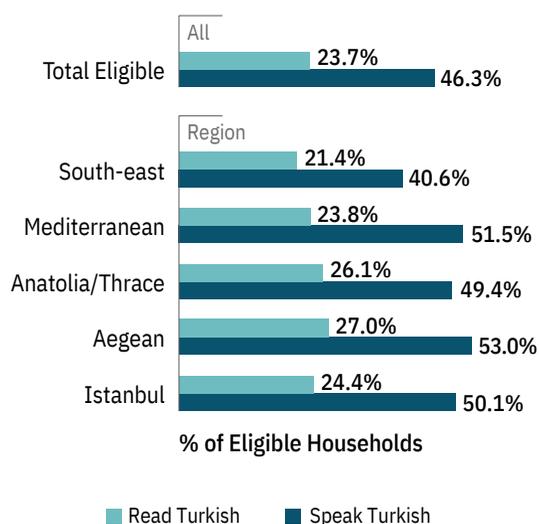
Skills and Livelihood

About 90 percent of ESSN households have at least one member who can read or write Arabic. This does not necessarily indicate that the remaining 10 percent are illiterate, however. While some may be illiterate, many are likely coming from non-Arabic speaking countries, such as Afghanistan and Iran. Unfortunately, the PAB survey does not allow to distinguish between the two hypotheses.

In any case, the more important language skills to decrease vulnerability and enhance the prospects of integration (accessing public services, DGMM registration and Nüfus [Population Department] registration) are Turkish. Only 46 percent of ESSN households have a member who can speak Turkish, and 24 percent have a member who can read Turkish.

There is significant variation in Turkish language skills across regions. The Southeast has the lowest proportion of ESSN households with Turkish language abilities—only 41 percent can speak Turkish and 21 percent can read Turkish. This phenomenon is related to the presence of many Arabic speaking local populations in Southeastern provinces, allowing Syrians to communicate without the need to know the Turkish language. Furthermore, Southeastern Turkey has the largest numbers of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, allowing for wider Syrian/Iraqi communities to develop, which reduces the need to learn Turkish for daily interactions. In addition, the Temporary Education Centers, which teach in Arabic, are mostly in the South-east—therefore children do not enroll in local schools and do not learn Turkish.³⁷

Figure 11: Share of ESSN households with at least one member with Turkish language abilities

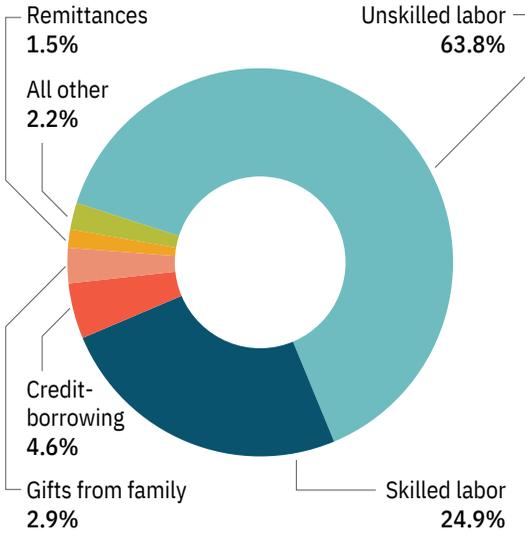


Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

In terms of income sources, about 90 percent of ESSN refugees obtain their main source of livelihood from labor. For the vast majority, 64 percent, unskilled labor is the main income source. Skilled labor is the main livelihood source for 25 percent of eligible refugees. Very few refugees report living from assistance, begging, or gifts from friends.

³⁷ It is expected that the Temporary Education Centers will be closed in phases, and children enrolled there will be transferred to local schools with Turkish curricula.

Figure 12: Main income sources of ESSN households



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

This partly reflects the protracted nature of the conflict. As most refugees have been residing in Turkey for an extended period, they have been able to find basic livelihood opportunities and generate their own income. The issue is that the labor income they are able to generate is still too low and does not provide enough resources to meet basic needs and escape from poverty. As shown earlier, 64 percent of targeted refugees live with a budget below the poverty line. Therefore, vulnerability in the livelihood sources dimension for refugees targeted by the program is relatively high.³⁸

In addition, even among the 25 percent of households that get most of their income through skilled labor, employment conditions are vulnerable and largely informal, for two reasons. First, while em-

ployers of Syrians under temporary protection have the option to apply for work permits since 2016, very few refugees have obtained work permits; only 21,000 were issued in 2017.³⁹ Second, to reach the more vulnerable households, ESSN eligibility rules deem ineligible those households with any member enrolled in social security (a result of formal employment).

With regard to the second source of income, 61 percent of households reported borrowing money or credit. When asked about a third income source, 61 percent stated that they do not have any access to cash besides these two sources. Around 17 percent of households stated their second or third main source of income to be assistance from other organizations or the Turkish government.

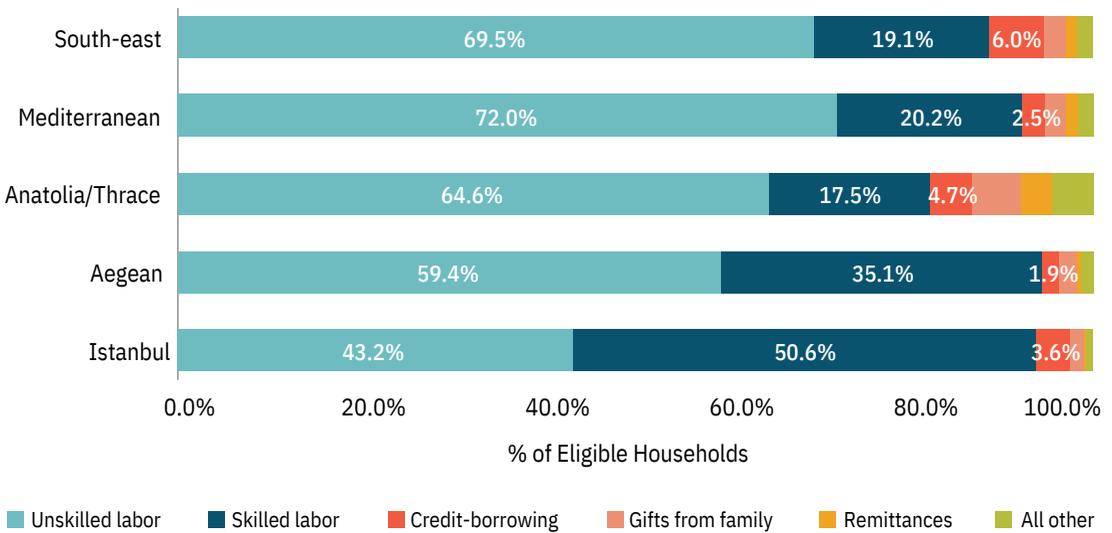
Results across the five geographical areas show significant differences. In Istanbul over 50 percent of households reported skilled labor as their main source of income, with 43 percent relying on unskilled labor. In the Aegean region, 60 percent of households report unskilled labor as their main income source, followed by skilled labor with 35 percent of households. These proportions look very different in the other regions. In Anatolia, the Mediterranean, and Southeast, the clear majority of households engage in unskilled labor, and only 18–20 percent gain most of their income through skilled work.

Almost all refugees enter Turkey through the Southeast. Population movements toward Istanbul and the Aegean are driven by the search for better work opportunities. The higher incidence of skilled labor as a main source of income among

³⁸ As a reminder, all of this is analyzed before eligible refugees start receiving ESSN transfers.

³⁹ Source: Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, Work permit statistics: http://bit.ly/2j04WVH_

Figure 13: Primary income source of ESSN households, by region



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

Table 6: Median debt of ESSN households, total and as a proportion of expenditure

		Total debt (TL, nominal)	Total debt (TL, regionally adjusted)	As proportion of expenditure (%)
Strata	Istanbul	1,000	876	61.4
	Aegean	1,000	935	58.9
	Anatolia/Thrace	900	924	60.7
	Mediterranean	1,000	986	65.2
	Southeast	1,000	1,039	70.5
Household head	Female	1,000	935	59.2
	Male	1,000	1,039	69.4
Total Eligible		1,000	1,020	64.8

Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

households in these regions is consistent with the drivers of refugee population movements.

Debt burden

Among ESSN households, only 20 percent have not incurred any accumulated debt. This varies per region with a low of 15 percent in the Mediterranean, and a high of 27 percent in Anatolia. Among

indebted ESSN households, the median amount of accumulated debt is TL 1,000, representing a risky burden relative to households' monthly budgets. For the median ESSN household, debt represents 65 percent of the monthly budget. Put in perspective, a household is in debt for an amount that equals the value of their monthly food and rent expenditures combined (which represents 63.2 percent of expenditure on average).

6. How well does ESSN target and protect vulnerable refugees in Turkey?⁴⁰

Comparative vulnerability between refugees eligible and ineligible to ESSN

The first important result in terms of assessing how well ESSN targets the most vulnerable refugees is that poverty incidence among the ESSN eligible refugees is significantly higher than among ineligible refugees.⁴¹

Nationwide statistics show that 76 percent of eligible refugees live with a budget below the poverty line of TL 284 per month, while 55 percent of ineligible do so. The incidence of poverty among ESSN refugees is higher than among ineligible refugees by a proportion of 38 percent.⁴² Moreover, the difference remains substantial across all regions of the country. In proportional terms, ESSN refugees are poorer by a magnitude that ranges from 33 to 51 percent. The ESSN criteria were effective in identifying a relatively poorer population, at the national level, and within every region. That said, at 55

percent, the incidence of poverty among the ineligible is a cause for concern.

A similar trend can be observed in extreme poverty rates. At the national level, 24 percent of eligible individuals are in extreme poverty, while the rate is 14 percent for the ineligible. Extreme poverty is 71 percent higher for ESSN refugees. In addition, a large gap between the two groups can be observed in each of the five regions. In three of the five regions, the incidence of extreme poverty among the ESSN refugees is double or higher than extreme poverty among the ineligible.

It is important to make sure that this finding is not the result of choosing two arbitrary poverty lines. Therefore, a complementary analysis is conducted comparing eligible and ineligible along the entire distribution of per capita expenditure. It goes to show that at any possible poverty line, the finding that the incidence of poverty is significantly higher among ESSN refugees is unequivocal. On average the eligible population is substantially poorer than the ineligible applicant population, and this is robust to whatever threshold is chosen to determine poverty status.

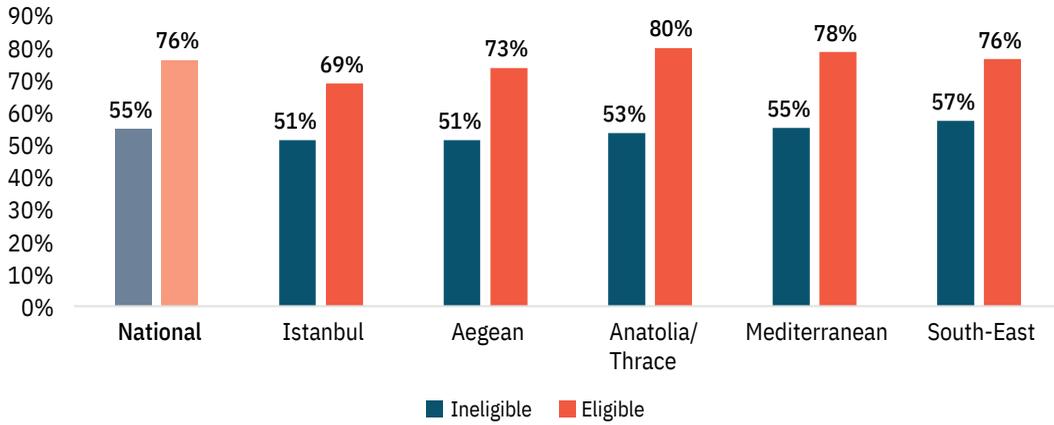
It is also useful to study proximity to the poverty line as a measure of vulnerability. It is interesting to consider the size of the groups on both

⁴⁰ The WFP asked the World Bank to lead the targeting and performance analysis for the report to preserve an objective perspective since WFP also leads ESSN's implementation. The results of section 6 were therefore led by the World Bank alone.

⁴¹ This section presents the main findings of the analysis. For additional and detailed results see Cuevas et al (2019).

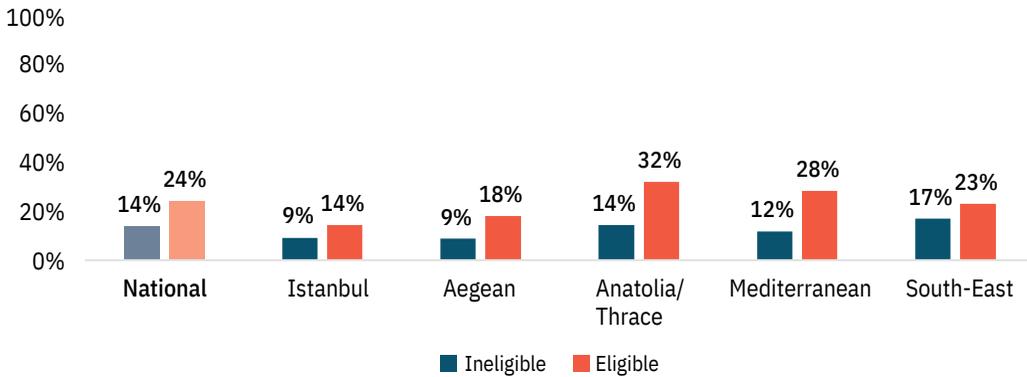
⁴² Calculated as $(76/55 - 1) \times 100$.

Figure 14: Poverty rate among eligible and ineligible ESSN refugee population



Note: Poverty line = TL 284 per person per month. **Source:** PAB data, authors' calculations.

Figure 15: Extreme poverty rate among eligible and ineligible ESSN refugee population



Note: Extreme poverty line = TL 165 per person per month. **Source:** PAB data, authors' calculations.

sides of the poverty line: (a) those vulnerable to fall into poverty, with per capita expenditure above but close to the poverty line and (b) those prone to exit poverty, with resources below but close to the poverty threshold.

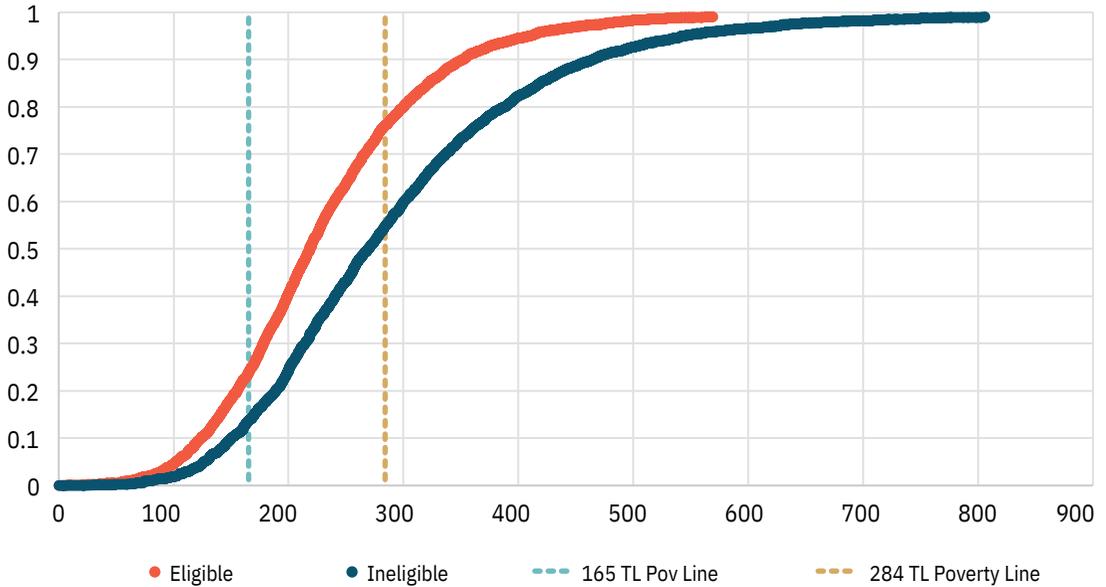
Visually, this can be done by inspecting the expenditure cumulative distributions. This reveals that 7 percent ESSN refugees live with budgets just 10 percent above the poverty line of TL 284 per month. On the flip side, 10 percent of ESSN

refugees have an expenditure level just 10 percent below the poverty line, close to exiting poverty.

To complete the comparative assessment of vulnerability between eligible and ineligible, the analysis turns to the other six dimensions of vulnerability. The findings reveal that the population targeted by ESSN is more vulnerable across most, though not all, dimensions. In particular, the most noticeable differences

Figure 16: At any value of poverty line, ESSN eligible refugees are poorer

Cumulative Distribution of Expenditure per Capita by Eligible and Ineligible Status



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

are found in the use of coping strategies. ESSN refugees have a consumption coping index that is 32 percent higher than ineligible refugees. They also make use of crisis livelihood coping strategies and emergency livelihood coping strategies 20 and 15 percent more than ineligible, respectively.⁴³

Coverage and targeting

The first standard metric used to evaluate the performance of an assistance program is coverage of the target population. For ESSN, the

target population is poor households, and the targeting criteria were developed by identifying the demographic characteristics as best proxy to the population that could not meet basic needs. The ESSN coverage rate, the percentage of the poor population assessed eligible, reaches 66 percent. Ideally, the coverage of the poor would be 100 percent. The gap between the coverage rate and 100 is typically called exclusion error, which in this case amounts to 34 percent of the poor. Among the extreme poor, the coverage rate is 71 percent, and the exclusion rate is therefore 29 percent.

⁴³ There are also large differences in household composition, such as dependency ratios, but that difference arises by construction as a result of the targeting criteria, making it redundant to report.

The other side of the coin of assessing a program's targeting performance is the inclusion error. This is given by the share of nonpoor refugees among all eligible refugee population. For the ESSN program, the inclusion error stands at

Table 7: Comparative vulnerability between ESSN eligible and ineligible across dimensions

Proportion in which vulnerability is higher among eligible relative to ineligible, by dimension (%)

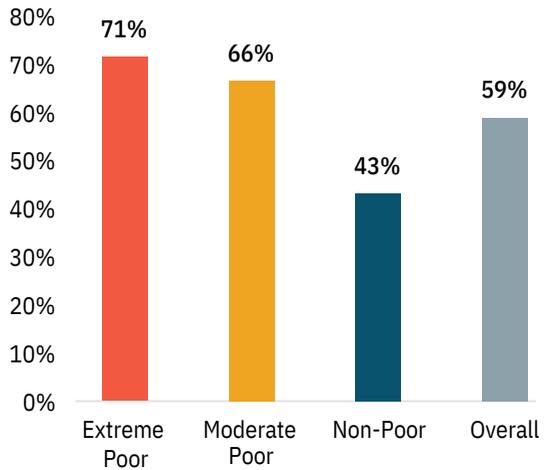
Share of households with no school-age children attending school	14
Percentage of population with Unacceptable Food Consumption	9
Average consumption-based Coping Strategies Index	32
Percentage of population that used crisis livelihood coping strategies	20
Percentage of population that used emergency livelihood coping strategies	15
Percentage of population living in households where no member can speak Turkish	10
Percentage of population living in households where no member can read Turkish	3
Percentage of population living with unskilled labor as main income source	6
Median debt as share of total expenditure	1

Note: For each indicator, calculated as (value for eligible / value for ineligible) – 1. **Source:** PAB data, authors' calculations.

24 percent. Given the data and time constraints under which the system was designed, the ratio of only 1 nonpoor eligible person out of every 4 eligible refugees seems in principle like a relatively good performance. Holding the budget constant, if the program had been allocated at random within the applicant population, the inclusion error would have been 33 percent. The targeting strategy was able to reduce it to 24 percent.

The exclusion rate stands at 34 percent of the poor, and the inclusion error reaches 24 percent of the eligible. The fact that these typical

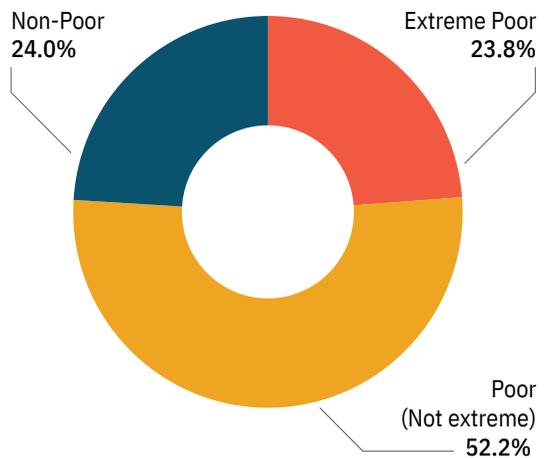
Figure 17: Coverage of ESSN, by poverty status (individual level)



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

Figure 18: ESSN beneficiary incidence and inclusion error

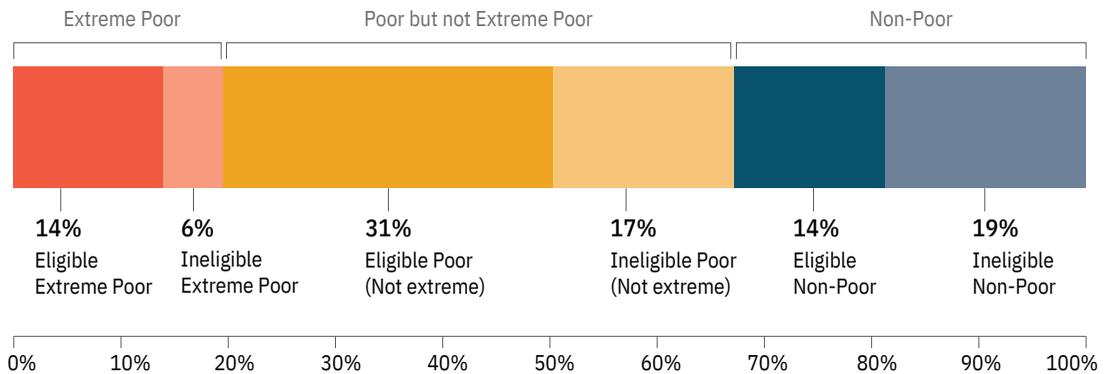
Beneficiary Incidence



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

markers of performance are calculated among different populations (different denominators), makes it difficult to compare its magnitudes. To get around this, it is useful to look at coverage

Figure 19: ESSN eligibility and poverty status across applicant refugee population



Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

rates by poverty groups in a mutually exclusive format, as a percentage of the overall refugee population. This approach yields that 6 percent are extreme poor and ineligible, 17 percent are poor (but not extreme poor) and ineligible, and 14 percent are nonpoor and eligible. Two policy implications can be taken from this. First, it means that even if the perfect targeting tool was available, a budget neutral reallocation would not be able to cover all the poor. Second, complementary targeting efforts, perhaps using community leaders' knowledge, should be deployed to reach the 6 percent of the applicant population that does not meet any ESSN eligibility criteria but is in dire need.⁴⁴

Adequacy of transfers

Benefit adequacy represents the total value of transfers that eligible households will start

⁴⁴ In November 2018, the SASF 'discretionary allowance' was rolled out nationwide. This permits the local SASF offices to identify and include extremely poor households who are ineligible by the demographic criteria.

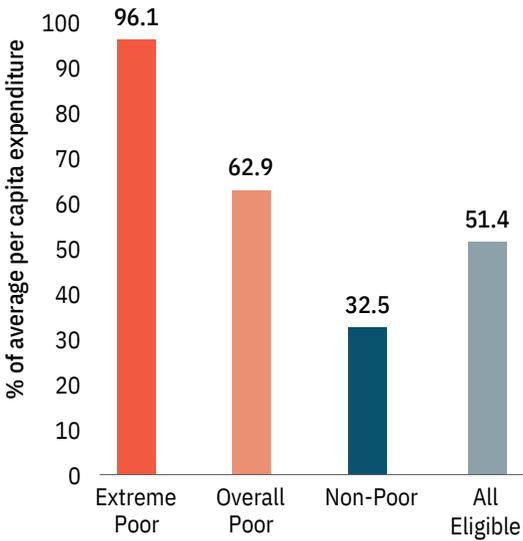
receiving as a share of their total pre-transfer expenditure.⁴⁵ Adequacy figures portray the capacity of the program to adequately support basic needs. In other words, even if targeting was perfect, a program would have low adequacy if it made cash transfers that were too small to make a difference in people's lives. Helping refugees meet basic needs is a core programmatic objective of ESSN.

In the case of ESSN, the adequacy ratio is 96 percent among the extreme poor and 63 percent among all poor. The size of the ESSN cash transfers is sufficient to significantly raise beneficiaries' budgets, measured as a proportion of pre-transfer expenditure levels.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The adequacy indicator is sometimes also called generosity, alluding to how generous a program is with the size of its transfers.

⁴⁶ One limitation of these magnitudes is that the PAB data likely underestimate household expenditures due to the phone-based limited-length expenditure module. Alternatively, these can be interpreted as an upper bound of the estimate of the adequacy ratios.

Figure 20: Adequacy of ESSN transfer size (as percentage of per capita expenditure)



Note: Calculated as the ratio of TL 120 to average per capita expenditure per month of each group. **Source:** PAB data, authors' calculations.

Benchmarking performance to international experience

To value ESSN's targeting and adequacy performance, it is helpful to contextualize it in terms of global experience. The World Bank's ASPIRE database (Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity) provides information on the performance of a variety of social assistance programs across the world.⁴⁷ The database includes performance indicators of unconditional cash transfer schemes, offering a valuable opportunity to benchmark the ESSN program to a comprehensive set of comparators around the world.

⁴⁷ See Ivaschenko et al. (2018) and ASPIRE (World Bank 2018b).

The first benchmark is how well programs cover the poorest 20 percent of the population (the bottom quintile). The ASPIRE database shows there is ample variation across countries, with the median coverage rate at about 16 percent and the average at 24 percent of the bottom quintile. A conservative estimate of ESSN coverage of the poorest 20 percent of the population is 36 percent.⁴⁸ This places the coverage performance of ESSN above the median among international experience.

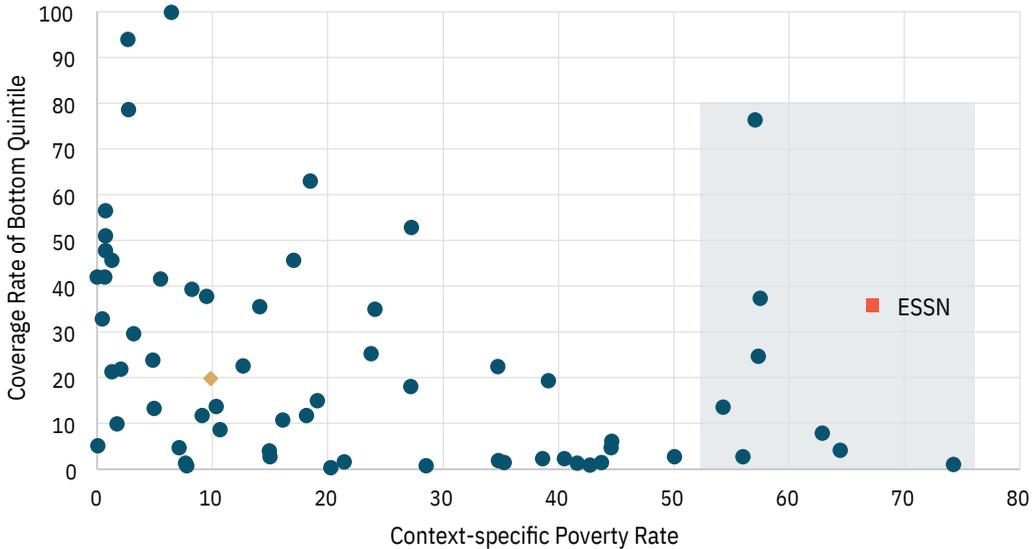
Cross-country comparisons can be difficult to interpret given that poverty rates vary from country to country. The coverage of a cash transfer program will need to be larger or smaller depending on how high the incidence of poverty is. For example, a coverage rate of 50 percent among the poorest 20 percent cannot be interpreted the same way in a country with a poverty rate of 10 percent as in a country with a poverty rate of 60 percent. For the former, that coverage rate would mean a good performance, but for the latter the opposite would be true.

Therefore, the analysis brings context-specific poverty rates into the mix. ESSN, compared to countries with poverty rates similar to those

⁴⁸ At the time of the PAB survey, there were 3.2 million refugees in Turkey. Half of them applied to ESSN. The coverage of the bottom quintile in the applicant population in the PAB is 71.5 percent. If the income distribution of non-applicants is similar to the applicants, the coverage of the bottom quintile in the overall population is calculated as $71.5 / 2 = 35.75$ percent. It turns out this is a conservative estimate (a lower bound) since (a) a survey shows indicative evidence (not representative) that poverty among non-applicants is lower than among applicants (CVME Survey, WFP 2017) and (b) it assumes none of the 1.6 million that had not applied at the time of the PAB would apply later on.

Figure 21: Poverty and coverage rates of unconditional cash transfer programs across the world

ESSN has high coverage rate among programs for populations affected by high poverty rates



Note: Context-specific Poverty Rates use the following lines: For low-income countries (LICs) US\$1.90, for lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) US\$3.20, for upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) US\$5.50 (all in per capita per day PPP 2011 terms). Coverage is measured as share of the poorest 20 percent of the population included in the program. **Source:** PAB and ASPIRE data, authors' calculations.

of the refugee population, shows a relatively high coverage. ESSN's coverage of the poorest 20 percent stands at 36 percent, higher than most programs serving populations with poverty rates in the neighbourhood of 60 percent reaches. In turn, ESSN's targeting does a relatively good job in reducing exclusion error.

In terms of beneficiary incidence of the bottom quintile, the share of eligible that come from the poorest 20 percent of the population, ESSN shows a modest performance compared to other countries. A conservative estimate of beneficiary incidence in ESSN sits at 24 percent, which implies a larger inclusion error.⁴⁹

Compared to programs that serve populations affected by poverty rates in the vicinity of 60 percent, ESSN ranks low in reducing inclusion error. This is driven, in part, by ESSN's high coverage rate. In a 'perfect world', if ESSN covered all poor applicants (67 percent), and none of the nonpoor, the share of eligible that come from the poorest 20 percent would be equal 30 percent ($20/67 \times 100$), which is moderately higher than the 24 percent attained by ESSN.

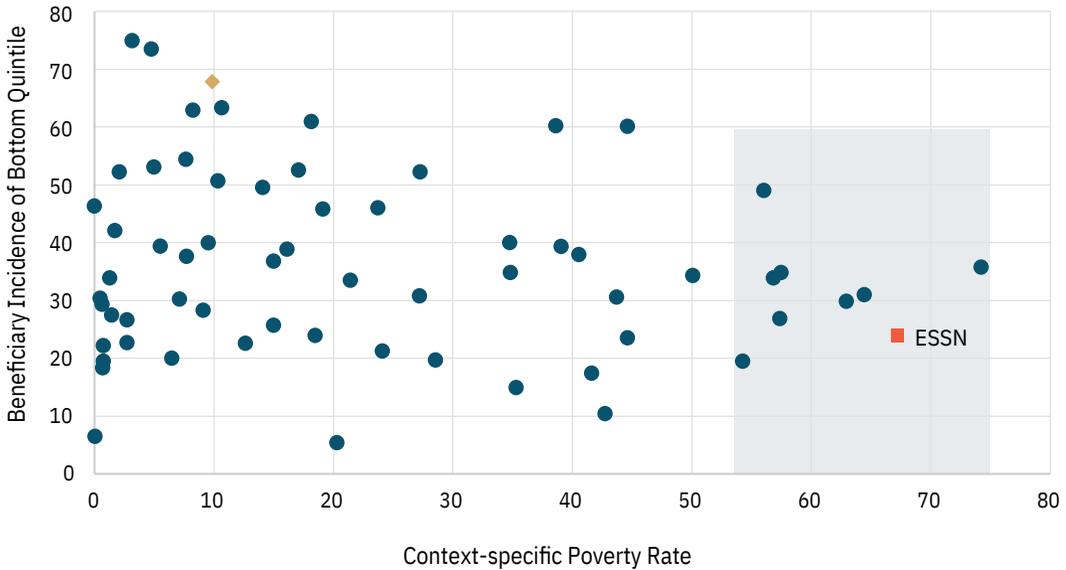
In sum, in the trade-off between being more inclusive versus being more accurate, the ESSN

⁴⁹ It is a conservative estimate because the PAB only includes the applicant population, and a survey of non-appli-

cants shows they have lower poverty and higher expenditures than beneficiaries and applicants (CVME Survey, WFP 2017). This is indicative, since the CVME survey is not representative and that is why it was not included in the analysis.

Figure 22: Poverty and beneficiary incidence of unconditional cash transfer programs across the world

ESSN has low Beneficiary Incidence among programs for populations affected by high poverty rates



Note: Context-specific Poverty Rates use the following lines: For LICs US\$1.90, for LMICs US\$3.20, for UMICs US\$5.50 (all in per capita per day PPP2011 terms). Beneficiary Incidence is measured as share of beneficiaries that belong to the poorest 20 percent of the population.
Source: PAB and ASPIRE data, authors' calculations.

targeting performance is balanced toward inclusion, while the majority of unconditional cash transfer programs in the global context are tilted toward more accuracy. ESSN's performance can be characterized by a 'lower exclusion error-higher inclusion error' balance within the set of possible combinations delimited by international experience.

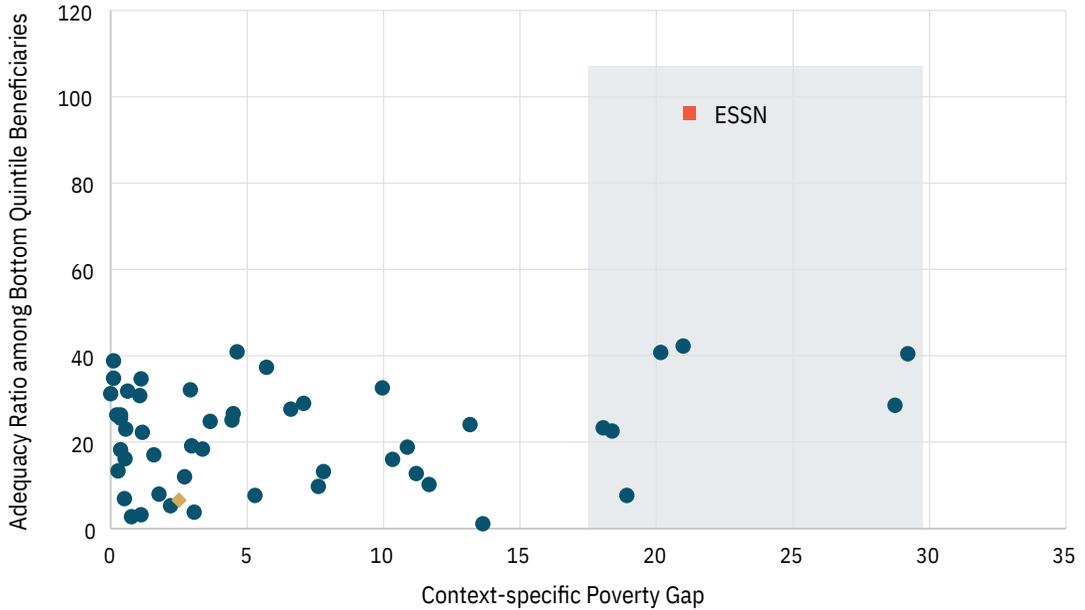
In the context of humanitarian assistance to refugee populations, prioritizing coverage and inclusion at the expense of accuracy is perhaps the preferred balance, since after all, the nonpoor population that contributes to the inclusion error are relatively vulnerable. About 30 percent of nonpoor beneficiaries live with a budget that is within 10 percent of the poverty line.

The final benchmark is in regard to adequacy of support, the size of the transfer as a proportion of pre-transfer expenditures. The ESSN adequacy ratio is significantly above all other unconditional cash transfers. This comparison is indicative; since the report analyzes ESSN performance before transfers start, the ESSN adequacy ratio is calculated *ex ante*. In the ASPIRE data, adequacy is computed after transfers start, so it reflects the *ex post* situation.

The larger the poverty gap—which captures how far below the poverty line are the budgets of the poor—the higher the transfer and the adequacy need to be. This is confirmed by international practice across cash transfer programs. The theoretical, that is, pre-transfer, performance of ESSN in this regard is positive.

Figure 23: Poverty and adequacy of unconditional cash transfer programs across the world

ESSN has high adequacy ratio among programs for populations with high poverty gaps



Note: Context-specific poverty gaps use the following lines: For LICs US\$1.90, for LMICs US\$3.20, for UMICs US\$5.50 (all in per capita per day PPP 2011 terms). Adequacy is measured as transfer value as a share of pre-transfer welfare, among the poorest 20 percent of the population.
Source: PAB and ASPIRE data, authors' calculations.

Benchmarking performance to alternative untargeted design

If instead of the current targeted design, ESSN had gone for an untargeted, universal transfer to all refugees, while keeping the budget constant, how would it perform? This counterfactual, hypothetical question does not have a straightforward answer. Because of the policy relevance of the untargeted versus targeted question and despite the methodological difficulties, this section makes an informed attempt to contribute to a better understanding of the issue.

If the program distributed transfers in an untargeted, universal form, the pool of appli-

cants would likely be different than the existing one. First of all, more people would apply if they knew everyone was eligible. Second, the composition of the applicant pool would likely change in terms of vulnerability. In the first months of operation, it may be that the population that applies to the program under either targeted and untargeted scenarios is similar. But as time goes by and it becomes known that everyone applying can get a cash transfer, the marginal applicants under the untargeted design would be less vulnerable than under the targeted scenario.

To simulate the performance of an untargeted, universal transfer design, the analysis makes use of bounds, as explained in the methodology

Table 8: Performance indicators of simulated untargeted transfer (%)

	Coverage of the poor	Exclusion error	Inclusion error	Adequacy among the poor
Current targeted design	66	34	24	63
Simulated untargeted design - lower bound	100	0	33	37
Simulated untargeted design - upper bound	100	0	>33	20

Source: PAB data, authors' calculations.

section. In the lower-bound scenario, the untargeted design would achieve full coverage of the poor, exclusion error would be eliminated, and inclusion error would be maximized and equal to 33 percent, that is, the share of the applicant population in the PAB that is nonpoor. The untargeted transfer's adequacy among the poor would be 37 percent.

Under the upper-bound scenario, exclusion error would also be fully addressed, and inclusion error would be at least 33 percent, depending on the share of the population that is not poor among the refugee population at large. With a monthly per capita transfer of TL 39, the adequacy of the untargeted transfer among the poor would just be 20 percent.

For a given budget, the untargeted design presents clear contrasts with respect to the existing targeted design. Its most important advantage in terms of protection is that it would address the exclusion error borne by any targeted design. Currently, the ESSN targeting criteria miss 34 percent of the poor. But the price paid by the untargeted transfer is maximizing inclusion error and, more importantly, significantly reducing the support given to the poor. An untargeted transfer would increase the resources of the poor by 20 to 37 percent of their pre-transfer

expenditure levels. In contrast, the current targeted transfer would increase the resources of the poor by 63 percent of their pre-transfer expenditures. The adequacy of the untargeted transfer is much lower than the adequacy of the targeted transfer.

7. Policy Discussion and Way Forward

ESSN is the largest humanitarian assistance program in support of refugees and forcibly displaced populations across the world. The program confronted the challenge of supporting the most vulnerable refugees residing in Turkey with a given budget. This report analyzes the rollout of the program, its coverage, and targeting, as well as the vulnerabilities of its eligible population, before transfers get distributed. What can be learned from its choices and experience?

ESSN uses demographic-based targeting criteria chosen as proxy for being poor and unable to meet basic needs. The current design of ESSN is able to identify and cover 66 percent of the poor, and 76 percent of its eligible population lives within a budget below the poverty line. Relative to pre-transfer household expenditures, ESSN is designed to raise the budgets of the poor by 63 percent. However, the current design misses a third of the poor, and a quarter of its beneficiaries are nonpoor. Overall, ESSN does relatively well when compared to unconditional cash transfers programs around the world.

The first policy lesson that emerges is ‘yes we can’. ESSN shows a relatively positive coverage and targeting performance within the range of results observed in the global arena, especially considering that comparator programs have been in place for longer. In a context con-

strained by data and time, ESSN achieves good performance marks. Among the key drivers of this have been the complementarities in design and implementation capacity of the WFP-TRC-MoFLSS partnership, which made it possible to receive, process, and validate thousands of applications across the country.⁵⁰

The second policy lesson is that in the universal versus targeted debate, the report shows that ESSN’s targeting already looks more ‘universal’ than other cash transfer programs while at the same time avoiding the low-adequacy drawback that untargeted transfers suffer from. Benchmarking with international experience and a simulated untargeted transfer shows that ESSN achieves relatively high coverage, at the expense of higher inclusion error, but provides meaningful support to its poor beneficiaries. An untargeted transfer would compromise the ability of each household to meet their basic needs, which is the main programmatic objective of ESSN.

While ESSN decision makers gave priority to the advantages of the targeted design over the untargeted one given ESSN’s programmatic objective and budget constraints, **a third policy implication** of the analysis is that some form of

⁵⁰ See Maunder et al. (2018) for a thorough description of the ESSN process and how it builds on government systems.

support is needed for the ineligible population, since poverty is still high among them. A promising space for policy action could be found in improving access to economic opportunities. After all, the eligibility criteria are closely related to the lack of capacity to work, which implies that the ineligible have relatively better prospects for employability and income generation with the right support, such as Turkish language skills.

As a **fourth policy implication**, the report suggests that something needs to be done to decrease exclusion error. If the budget constraint cannot be relaxed, complementary actions need to be put in place to increase inclusion of the poor. The SASF Allowance, implemented as of November 2018, presents a promising way to reduce the exclusion error. It is recommended that this allowance finds a way to incorporate knowledge of community leaders, *Muhtars*, and local organizations, who could make referrals into the SASFs for consideration within the allowance to foster equitable access.

An alternative design, in pursuit of balance of the two protection objectives of coverage and adequacy, that is, to reach the poor and meaningfully support them, could be to have a compromise solution between the targeted and untargeted cases. That is, to offer cash transfer support to anyone who applies and allocate top-ups to provide additional cash assistance to those in more vulnerable conditions. This would incorporate the advantages of both approaches, although it would still require considering a moderate increase in the available program budget.

The evidence presented here intends to inform the humanitarian community of key lessons from the largest humanitarian cash transfer

program in the world. Ongoing data collection and analysis will be fundamental for improvements in ESSN. Moving forward, on the analytical front, the WFP and the World Bank will conduct an evaluation of the impacts of the ESSN assistance on beneficiary lives.

Additionally, on the operational front, as the conflict underlying the refugee influx becomes more protracted, ESSN should transition from a humanitarian-type to a development-type response to promote a sustainable exit from poverty and vulnerability. In that regard, ESSN stakeholders are starting to focus on designing strategies to transition beneficiaries toward income opportunities going forward. The FRiT Office of the Presidency of Turkey and MoFLSS have recently outlined a strategy to guide these efforts.⁵¹

Future developments in ESSN should be documented and made publicly available, to ensure the ESSN experience can be productively used for policy discussions and programming responses in other humanitarian challenges and contexts. This report is a building block toward that larger, longer-term objective.

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⁵¹ Refer to FRiT Office of the Presidency of Turkey and MoFLSS (2019) for details.

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Vulnerability and Protection of Refugees in Turkey: Findings from the Roll-out of the Largest Humanitarian Cash Assistance Program in the World assesses the targeting performance and benefit level design of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program for refugees in Turkey. It also provides a comprehensive look at the vulnerability of ESSN eligible households using a multidimensional lens, drawing from novel representative data.

The ESSN provides monthly cash transfers to help the most vulnerable refugees meet their basic needs, and complement Turkey's response to the crisis. With near 4 million refugees, Turkey hosts more refugees than any other country in the world. The program is funded by the European Union member states, and implemented nationwide in partnership with the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, the World Food Programme, and the Turkish Red Crescent.

The study finds that the vulnerabilities of the ESSN refugee population are multiple and complex. Refugees in the ESSN program suffer from a shortage of resources today, but also resort to coping strategies that cripple their resource-generating capacity tomorrow. The ESSN targeting criteria are relatively effective in selecting the most vulnerable refugees, but exclude a share of the poor. This issue is starting to get addressed by decentralized allowances targeted with community-level information. The ESSN cash transfer value, is found to be adequate to support basic needs. An untargeted design would have minimized exclusion errors, but would reach everybody with smaller transfers, insufficient to meet basic needs. Future analysis will focus on the impact of the transfers on household welfare.



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