

Situational Briefing

Istanbul | October-November 2020

Recommendations

1. The accessibility and the closeness to the home address are the significant factors that facilitate the access to education services. Therefore, the increase in the number of the Education Informatic Net (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı: EBA) support hubs will ease the access of more students and serve for the prevalence of school participation among the refugee communities.
2. The implementation of state supported transportation services to enhance the easy and safe access of children, especially traveling from far distances or execution of cash assistance programs to cover the transportation fees could be alternative solutions to ameliorate the equality of opportunity.
3. The increase of the number of people allowed in the EBA support points in line with the COVID-19 regulations could help for the even distribution of the population among the centers and thus, could prevent the transportation of the children to long distance hubs.

Refugee Overview in Turkey

According to the data of the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) by September, Turkey hosts **3,612,891** Temporary Protection Identity Card holder Syrian refugees among which **59,877** are registered in temporary refugee centres and **3,559,041** reside outside of state facilities. The same applies to approximately **330,000** registered non-Syrian refugees or asylum seekers. The **47%** of the Syrian refugee population, approximately **1.7 million** in numbers, are children under 18 years old. According to the data of Lifelong Learning Directorate General (Hayat Boyu Öğrenme Genel Müdürlüğü), the schooling rate among the Syrian refugees is **64.22%**. In İstanbul, where International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation's (IBC) project activities are being held, the Syrian refugee population is recorded at more than **500,000**. According to informal resources, Esenyurt district hosts approximately **127,000** Syrian refugees while **16,000** reside in Sancaktepe district.

Recent Developments

As a result of the project activities and field observations conducted by International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation (IBC) in October, the implementation of Education Informatic Net (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı; EBA) Hubs, as part of the distance learning system and operational scope of this state facility, are one of the most significant context developments reported.

The EBA Hub system was initially announced by Ministry of Education, Ziya Selçuk, in the beginning of the new school year in 2020 and opened for the public use on the 2nd of September. The prospective number of the Hubs was initially determined at **1,420** support centres. These were to be active in all of **81** provinces and later, due to the excessive need, the number of active service points has been increased throughout the months and lastly recorded at **13,431** by October. According to the data extracted by the end of the month, there are **131** mobile EBA Hub service points in rural areas which were brought into service in order to ensure equal access for all to the distance education modality.

EBA support points are the spaces reserved inside the public schools or other institutions to provide access to distance learning platforms. EBA is used for the disadvantaged members of the society who do not have the necessary technological devices such as computers, tablets or internet access in their homes. The people could find the closest EBA support centre through the list of addresses declared on the [official website](#). The capacity of the rooms is maximum up to **10 persons** at once and the students are allowed to use the room up to **two hours**. The centres are open from **9 A.M. to 18 P.M.** on weekdays and from **10 A.M to 18 P.M.** at weekends.

The number of EBA support points at the locations where the project activities are carried out is: **25** in Sancaktepe and **17** in Esenyurt, out of **605** hubs in İstanbul.

With the start of the 2020-2021 school year, during the months of September and October, IBC field team informed the beneficiaries who have limited access to distance learning education on the working mechanism of the EBA Hubs, guided them to find the closest hub to their home and encouraged them to benefit from the facility in order to ensure continuous education of refugee children. Some of the referrals done to these centres were successfully established while some were not despite the efforts of IBC staff. According to the observations and field visits conducted by the IBC field teams, EBA Hubs do not have enough capacity to offer a healthy environment for the students' educational development. Even though time extensions are occasionally enforced in less crowded hubs, the limitation of EBA common area usage only up to two hours per person, is a mere reflection of the inequalities of opportunity in education.

IBC team presented its findings and observations on the implementation of EBA support hubs, its infrastructural and operational flaws and the obstacles related to the access of the beneficiaries and their feedbacks in written format to the attention of Child Protection Sub-Working Group in order to attract the attention of the authorised bodies to the existing problems and influence them to adopt policy changes as an advocacy initiative.

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Humanitarian Concerns

1. The inadequacy of the mandated state organs to fulfill their obligation and responsibilities on the equal, safe and free access to education threatens the economic and social development of refugees and non-refugees. This can have long-term impacts on the communities' labour force.
2. Considering the intensification of economic hardships under COVID-19 conditions, the access problems of the formal education may increase the child labour cases.
3. The lack of access to education negatively impacts the psychosocial development of children and hereby, results in social withdrawals and problems in social adaptation and integration. The mental health of children is of critical concern and one of the main secondary impacts of COVID-19.
4. Due to the health concerns related with COVID-19 disease and the financial difficulties, the families are hesitant to use transportation services on daily basis to reach the centre.
5. In some cases, the children at younger ages are needed to be accompanied by their parents or legal guardians. However, the multi-child families who are also responsible of caring pre-school children at home cannot regularly accompany their school aged children as the mothers, mostly accepted as the caregiver in refugee communities, need to stay at home to fulfill child care and domestic work.
6. The families are also concerned with sanitary conditions of the common areas. Therefore, they seek for aid mechanisms to enable their children's access from home and are in shortage of technical tools such as computers, tablets, internet, etc.

IBC Response

By the end of October 2020, International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation's (IBC) Esenyurt and Sancaktepe Info Hubs have provided protection assistance to more than **2,600** refugees; **1,400** in Esenyurt and **1,258** in Sancaktepe. IBC provided support to access rights and services to **2,600** registered Syrian and **58** non-Syrian refugees. The beneficiaries consist of **1,432** female and **1,226** male individuals. Moreover, out of **2,658, 621** individuals are under 18 years old, **1,951** individuals between 18 and 60 years old and **86** individuals above 60 years old.

About IBC

International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation (IBC) Refugee Information and Psychosocial Support Centres are operating in Istanbul (Esenyurt and Sancaktepe) under the project of 'Providing Information and Protection Assistance to Vulnerable Refugees in Turkey and Enhancing Community-based Protection,' funded by European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO).

About World Vision Syria Response

World Vision is a humanitarian and development organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. We serve all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

The World Vision Syria Response, based out of Amman, covers programmes in Syria, Jordan and Turkey. We also have national offices in Lebanon and Iraq, responding to both domestic development/humanitarian needs and the Syrian refugee crisis. Since 2013, the Syria Response has been at the leading edge of World Vision's work in fragile contexts, delivering innovative and evidence-based programming across three diverse countries. Directly and through partners, we support protection, health, education, livelihoods, water & sanitation, and food security projects to vulnerable families. Our approach focuses on the holistic needs of the child, embedded within their community structures.



“ I feel safe and more confident about myself. I appreciate the attention that was given to me. Now I know that I have a place to return to whenever I face any problems. ” - Hamad*, 17

*Name has been changed to protect identity.

For more information, please contact:

Özgü Küçük, Project Officer, IBC
okucuk@ibc.org.tr

Yusuf Avcı, Turkey Portfolio Manager, World Vision International
Yusuf_Avcı@wvi.org

Alexandra Matei, Syria Response Advocacy and Communications Director,
World Vision International
Alexandra_Matei@wvi.org



Visit IBC's ECHO Project Webpage:
<https://bit.ly/2Kg5Mi0>

Visit World Vision's Website:
www.wvi.org/syria-response