



ESSN LEARNING CONSOLIDATION

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Disclaimer

The data collection, analysis and findings of this report was prepared by Trust Consultancy and Development.

This summary report has been prepared by TRC and IFRC Learning Team based on the final TRUST Consultancy report

A. INTRODUCTION

1. TÜRKİYE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Türkiye stands as a remarkable host to approximately 5.1 million foreign nationals, 3.8 million of whom are seeking international protection. The vast majority of those (3.4 million) are Syrians who have been granted temporary protection status¹. Entering the thirteenth year of conflict in Syria as of March 2023, the sheer number and diverse needs of refugees in Türkiye necessitate the implementation of efficient humanitarian assistance, protection, and migration management strategies². With that in mind, over the last couple of years, the humanitarian sector in Türkiye has found itself at the very center of an ongoing series of shocks - In early 2020, the outbreak of global COVID-19 pandemic triggered an array of hardships. COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye had far-reaching socio-economic consequences, beyond its immediate health impacts, on already vulnerable groups, including refugees³. Just as the humanitarian sector in Türkiye had been striving hard to adjust its strategies

to contend with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy suffered a significant lira crisis in December 2021, pushing inflation rates to over 85%⁴, placing additional strain on the economy and cost of living. Further in 2023, another substantial and tragic shock profoundly impacted the country.

A pair of successively occurring earthquakes struck southern Türkiye and north-western Syria on February 6, 2023, causing catastrophic consequences. In Türkiye alone, the earthquakes resulted in a tragic loss of over 50,000 lives, leaving in excess of 100,000 individuals injured. These unforeseen shocks have imposed immense pressures and demands on the humanitarian sector necessitating organizations to undertake adjustments in their response strategies to effectively address the emerging needs and challenges within the country.

2. ABOUT THE ESSN

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme was designed by the Directorate General of Social Assistance (DGSA) of the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), Türk Kızılay. UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the European Union Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) in 2016. Since 2020, ESSN has been handed over from UN WFP to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and continued to be delivered in cooperation with Türk Kızılay and MoFSS, with the support of DG ECHO funding.

The objective of the programme was to support people living under temporary protection, international protection, or humanitarian residence permit in Türkiye to meet their basic needs through unconditional cash transfers. To date, the project has provided more than 1.8 million people with cash transfers facilitated by the Türk Kızılay digital KIZILAYKART Platform.

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), Apr 04 2023. DTM Türkiye — Migrant Presence Monitoring - Situation Report (March 2023). IOM, Republic of Türkiye. Available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/Türkiye-migrant-presence-monitoring-situation-report-march-2023>

² IOM (2021) Türkiye Country Strategy

³ UNICEF (2021) Türkiye Humanitarian Situation Report, <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/documents/details/953944>

⁴ Reuters (2023) Turkish lira down 7% in biggest selloff since 2021 crisis. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-lira-down-7-biggest-selloff-since-2021-crisis-2023-06-07/>

3. ABOUT THE ESSN LEARNING CONSOLIDATION

a. Learning Consolidation Objectives

The learning consolidation took a deep dive into three key areas identified by IFRC: a) Data-driven approach, b) Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), and c) Shock responsiveness. The objectives are to uncover ESSN's unique approaches, best practices, and lessons learned in each area, emphasizing their independent and collective contributions to the program's success as a large-scale cash initiative.

b. Methodology

Data collection was entirely qualitative, comprising 12 key informant interviews with IFRC staff, ECHO, and a Basic Needs Working Group representative, five group discussions/mini-workshops with Türk Kızılay, IFRC, and MoFSS staff, and a key findings validation workshop. In addition, an extensive list of ESSN documents was reviewed. The data collected from interviews and workshop proceedings underwent a thematic analysis process informed by two main frameworks - the Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC) Network's guidance on Information Management for Communication, Community Engagement, and Accountability to Affected People and the Oxford Policy Management (OPM) Shock-Responsive Social Protection Toolkit.

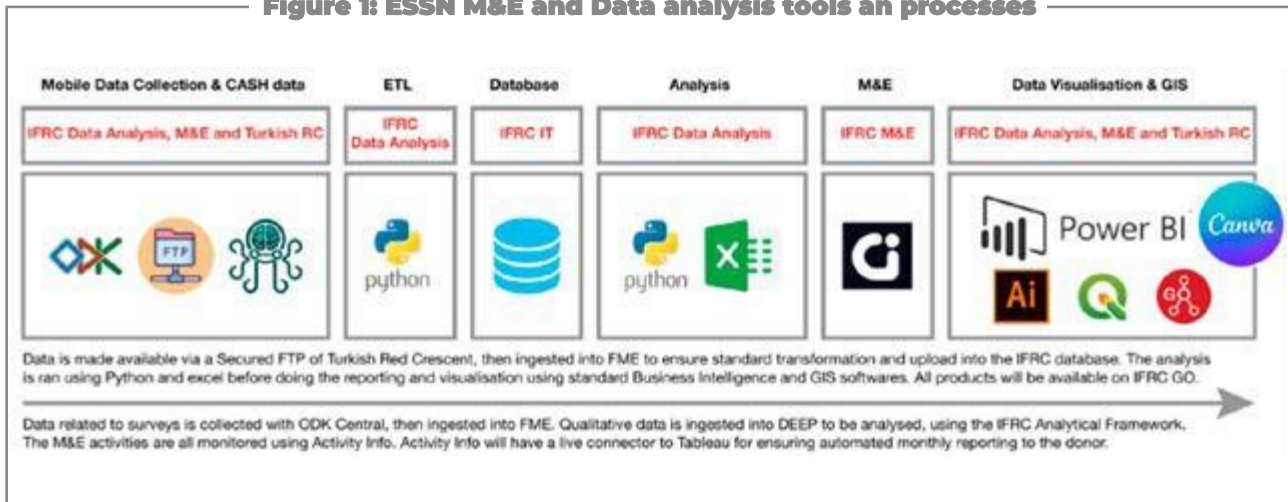


B. KEY FINDINGS

1. DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

a. The approach

Figure 1: ESSN M&E and Data analysis tools and processes



The programme embraced a comprehensive data-driven approach to support evidence-based programming. It encompassed the gathering, processing, analysis, and utilization of data to inform decision-making, enhance operational efficiency, and increase accountability. Data teams at IFRC and Türk Kızılay collaborated closely with multiple workstreams to meet their data needs. ESSN also integrated its systems with financial service provider and the government. This integration facilitated efficient cash transfer mechanisms with increased data security, reduced duplication, and ensured that financial assistance reached the right beneficiaries. The approach is summarized below.

Data analysis and the Cash programme cycle

Türk Kızılay took the lead in meticulous data collection, with IFRC providing an additional layer of quality assurance through thorough reconciliations, cross-checks and verifications. The data driven approach was used in the following Cash programme cycle phases and processes:

Verification: An integrated system with governmental partners was established which enabled cross-checking of registration.

Reconciliation: The online reporting platform developed by the financial service provider (FSP) enabled regular monitoring of the card and cash assistance distribution processes. Reconciliation checks were carried out in the Göçmen system, which is the in-house system of Türk Kızılay then Python was used for the same reconciliation checks for cross-checking purposes.

Sweepbacks: Funds were swept back from accounts where ESN-eligible individuals did not collect their cards for three months or collected their cards but did not use them in six months (dormant accounts). The FSP online reporting platform facilitated sweepback processes.

Projections: Projections of beneficiary caseloads involve a comprehensive methodology using features in the datasets of applications to project future caseloads for financial planning



“The beneficiaries’ payments have remained consistently uninterrupted. Even during the COVID-19 lockdown when most people stayed at home, fieldwork was carried out with the necessary permissions. This allowed for the continued processing of applications and payments without causing any disruptions.”

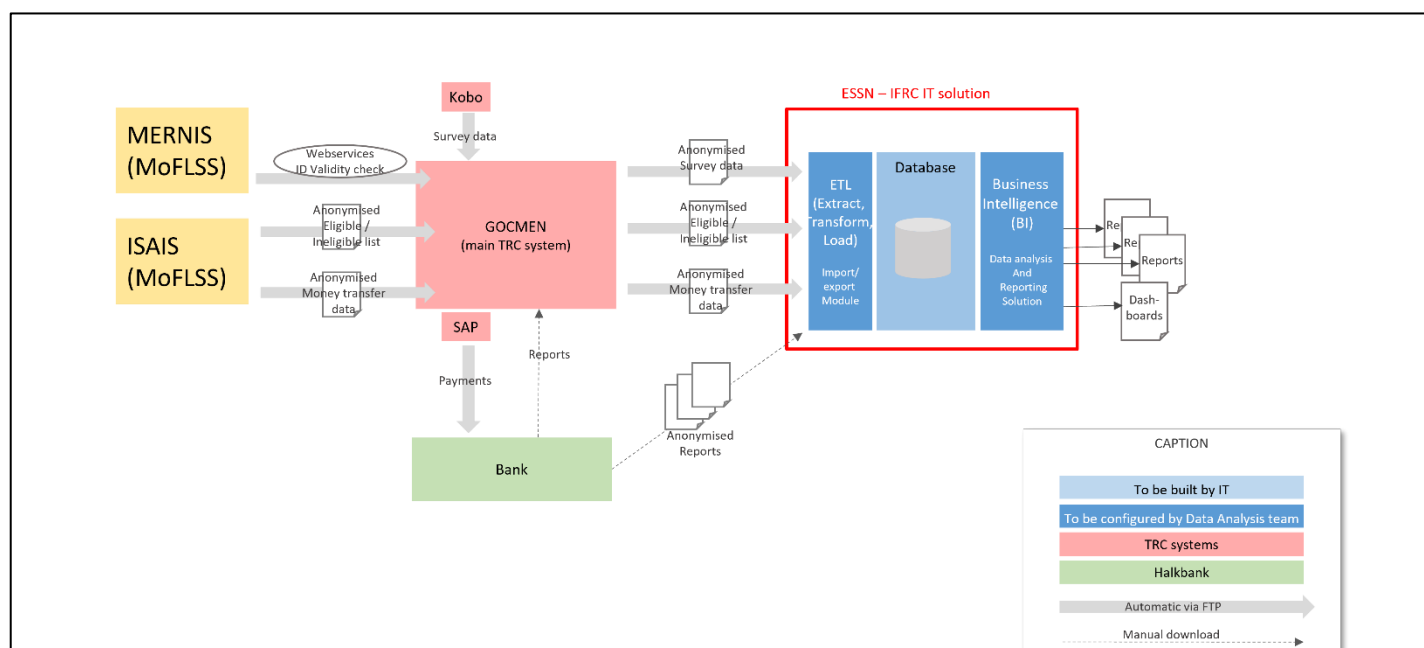
MoFSS Staff

Systems and Tools

ESN recognised that robust data and information management systems are the cornerstone of successful CVA programmes. The programme heavily relied on tools and systems – including open source tools for various functions, from beneficiary data collection to the creation of analytical reports and interactive dashboards. These provided the technological infrastructure necessary for achieving the programme’s goals.

The tools and systems employed by ESN were a result of a constant learning process, acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Figure 2: ESN System



b. Impact of the Data-Driven Approach

Targeting Adaptations - ESSN made critical adjustments to targeting and eligibility criteria based on data analysis. Through rigorous data analysis, the programme identified a marked increase in exclusion cases, which underscored the need for a comprehensive review of eligibility criteria. Subsequently, the team initiated a series of targeting and profiling studies and developed a vulnerability metric using machine learning algorithms based on fieldwork data within the M&E framework, leading to the establishment of new criteria. Targeting adaptations considered gender-based dependency ratios, intrahousehold targeting, and the removal of formal employment as an exclusion criterion.

Programme management and decision-making - Through meticulous data analysis and forecasting of beneficiary numbers, ESSN gained the ability to strategically allocate its budget, ensuring that resources were optimally distributed to meet the expected demand for assistance leading to improved outcomes. Beneficiary density assessment guided decision-making, using past distribution data to plan future operations, particularly in crowded locations.

Data visualization especially dashboards, provided a dynamic tool for monitoring performance, fostering discussions, and facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the programme's intricacies for both internal teams and external stakeholders, including donors.



“I think I really enjoyed the dashboard because I could look and see the strength especially when it comes to looking at the outcome and the result level indicators. Just to see the performance and to trigger discussion either internally or with Türk Kızılay and IFRC.”

Male ESSN non-recipient, Istanbul

Transfer value adjustment - Data collected from communities and through M&E activities was analysed and used to make transfer value increases and top-ups.

Knowledge sharing and synergies with other programmes - The skills and experience gained were extended to relevant National Societies and organizations through trainings, deployments and engagement in learning activities with other partners to further strengthen the collective knowledge base in the humanitarian sector, including the creation of the largest refugee library in Türkiye

At the national level, the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) Programme piggybacked on pre-existing systems established under ESSN.

c. Lessons from the ESSN Data-Driven Approach

Digitalization - In the ESSN Programme, Cash was digitally transferred from Türk Kızılay to beneficiaries through an electronic card system (KIZILAYKART) and can be withdrawn from ATMs or spent through POS machines throughout the country. This provides a convenient and secure way for beneficiaries to receive their cash assistance.

IFRC through the ESSN Programme further contributed to this global trend by conducting a global payment solutions study to investigate new payment solutions, including those offered by emerging fintech companies, to determine their suitability for a diverse range of activities and operational settings.

Digitalization of targeting to increase the speed of CVA response, especially in hard-to-reach areas - ESSN exemplifies how remote targeting can be used to supplement other targeting methods. In response to the earthquake in February 2023, ESSN's IM team used satellite imagery to identify areas most severely affected by the earthquake and complemented it with programme data to create analytical maps used in targeting for Collective Kindness CVA Programme.



Data Responsibility – Türk Kızılay put in place several measures including; masking personal information and systematic categorization within a secure and restricted-access environment to ensure data privacy and protection; data sharing with IFRC through a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) for storage in their long-term database and established protocols with FSP to set up a reporting platform responsible for tracking financial processes related to the assistance.

Data Interoperability - ESSN demonstrated effective interoperability by seamlessly transferring data between ministries and FSPs. In addition, the implementation of the Kızılaykart Information Exchange Mechanism facilitated the exchange of critical information and data among stakeholders for a coordinated response. In addition, ESSN adopted a network model for data sharing, allowing data generated and/or analysed by the programme to flow through virtual platforms.

Holistic data-driven approach - Recognising IM as an integral part of the programme. Programmes should ensure that data is not just collected but systematically processed, cleaned, analysed, and utilise to inform decisions and address informational needs e.g. in the case of ESSN in adapting targeting criteria. Given the data-intensive nature of large-scale cash programmes, continuous monitoring of data is essential to facilitate rapid responses to emerging needs or unexpected developments, enhancing agility. Finally, it is critical to and ensure data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis processes and scripts are well-documented and regularly updated.

Investment in partnerships, human resources, systems, and tools and capacity exchange - It is crucial to have a strong local partner who has extensive experience in both the local context and cash programming, allowing for the blending of expertise, systems, and reach. International actors may have more resources and budgets to spend on qualified personnel, systems, and tools, while local actors possess local knowledge, systems, and linkages with the government and other actors on the ground. Thus, it is important to exchange capacity between partners to enhance programme success. Capacity support and data preparedness activities, spanning training sessions to Mapathons and Datathons, promoted hands-on engagement and skill development across various functions and partners were implemented in ESSN, fostering a holistic exchange of expertise.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

a. The approach

The evolution of CEA within ESSN was marked by significant changes in its approach from a somewhat extractive approach to CEA - primarily focused on gathering human interest stories as part of its communication activities to introducing a more nuanced and adaptable way of understanding and engaging with affected communities.

The new ESSN CEA approach encompassed a holistic approach, extending its influence beyond individual workstream to become an integral and inseparable component of ESSN's operations with dedicated CEA teams responsible for implementing and overseeing the CEA strategy while involving all staff. The approach had a high level of transparency and accountability to the program's recipients through timely clear, relevant,

and actionable information sharing to people in need emphasizing a two-way communication and promotion dialogue.

The ESSN CEA Framework drew from lessons learned on diversity, inclusion, and accountability to affected people in IFRC and Türk Kızılay ESSN operations and was developed in conjunction with the ICRC's 'Accountability to Affected Populations Institutional Framework,' and the 'Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability.' The framework outlined how power is used responsibly, taking into account and being accountable to those affected by the exercise of such power and the importance of recognizing affected populations as partners in all stages of programme.



The framework is guided by a set of principles, ensuring a comprehensive and effective approach to addressing the needs of the affected population:

Principle #1:

Understanding the context, people's needs, and local capacities.

Principle #2:

Maintaining proximity to people affected by conflict.

Principle #3:

Effective two-way communication channels.

Principle #4:

Enabling participation.

Principle #5:

Inclusive and accessible programmes.

Principle #6:

Working to minimise the negative, unintended consequences of actions.

Principle #7:

Coordination and partnerships.

Principle #8:

Learning and adapting based on evidence.

Principle #9:

Multidimensional response.

The CEA process consisted of several elements, each playing a critical role in enhancing communication and promoting transparency. These were:

1. Listening through information gathering using various channels such as social media, website, local media, feedback mechanisms, and direct communication with recipients through 168 Türk Kızılay call center and service centers.

2. Verifying the source and accuracy of information or rumors collected during the listening phase.

3. Identifying where or with whom to verify the facts and understanding the reasons behind any rumors or concerns.
Engaging with affected populations to provide verified information, update frequently asked questions (FAQs), tailor new contents in line with the information gaps and address concerns effectively.



b. Lessons from the ESSN CEA Approach

Communication with Communities, Participation, and Feedback

Clear and transparent communication with communities is a prerequisite for becoming people-centred. However, the humanitarian sector faces several challenges in this area including; Information gap, lack of proactive communication with communities and lack of responsiveness to feedback.

The ESSN Programme managed to tackle some of these shortcomings and holds valuable lessons to share.

The programme's CEA framework has two principles to ensure effective communication and inclusion (principles #3 and #4). By ensuring two-way communication and enabling the participation of communities, CEA played a pivotal role in shaping critical decisions within the ESSN program. Feedback from the community significantly influenced key programme decisions. It unveiled inclusion and exclusion errors, prompting further investigation through a comprehensive targeting study.

The steady increase in the percentage of people using the ESSN complaints and feedback mechanism, from 15% to 27% across survey periods, indicated a growing engagement with the system. High satisfaction levels among recipients who filed a complaint (ranging from 49% to 77%) demonstrated the effectiveness of the response and resolution process.

Valuable insights gained from satisfaction surveys, for example, aided in the identification of preferred communication channels, making it possible for

programme information to reach recipients more efficiently. Moreover, community feedback informed the creation of new CEA materials, such as ATM manuals and COVID-19 protection measures, enhancing programme relevance.

The analysis of data from social media platforms, particularly Facebook, and website's contact form allowed the programme to better understand the concerns and opinions of the target population and language preferences, in turn, improving communication with recipients to address any rumours and clarify misconceptions.

Inclusion

ESSN extended its commitment to inclusiveness by introducing top-up provisions catering to the needs of especially vulnerable groups, including households with severely disabled members and larger households. During emergency situations and crises, the programme further amplified its efforts to enhance accessibility. This entailed facilitating access to cards and payments to ensure that even the most vulnerable recipients, including the elderly and persons with disabilities, could obtain their cash assistance.

Furthermore, field teams engaged in advocacy activities targeting local and central authorities to remove barriers during the ESSN application process as well as barriers in reaching assistance with the support of the data gathered by CEA activities. This proactive approach helped minimise risks and ensure that the target population could access assistance promptly and impartially.

Establishment of a comprehensive CEA strategy

CEA strategy should go beyond simply having channels for communication. A well-defined CEA strategy, integrated with beneficiary input throughout the program's duration, is essential for effective programme implementation. CEA should be integrated into the programme cycle and be supported by adequate resources. The strategy should be supported by:

Long-term financing and budgeting to maintaining a robust CEA system that provides the necessary resources for its sustained operation. The financial investment in CEA also translates into the development of tools, mechanisms, and capacities that improve overall programme effectiveness.

Investment in data-driven CEA gathering and analysing data to understand the needs, perspectives, and experiences of affected communities and use this data to inform programme design, implementation, and evaluation. Adopting rumour tracking measures to effectively manage and address misinformation within communities is key in mitigating potential harm.

Prioritization of Inter-departmental and inter-organisational collaboration on various tasks, such as tool design, data collection, and analysis, resulting in better community engagement and more responsive programming. Collaboration between partners including government, is also crucial as it ensures a unified approach to programme implementation.

Preparedness and adaptability to crises and adapting CEA activities accordingly. Organisations should be prepared to swiftly adapt their communication channels in times of crises to accommodate new realities and enable ongoing communication with affected communities.

Strong identification and referral of protection cases striking a balance between acknowledging and identifying protection concerns and ensuring effective referral mechanisms are in place to connect recipients with the appropriate services.

Enhanced information sharing and transparency between partners and with community members by sharing information in accessible formats, such as video, to improve understanding and accessibility, especially among communities with low literacy rates. Decisions on communication channels should also consider informal communication, and how communities prefer to engage with the programme to ensure better engagement.

3. SHOCK RESPONSIVENESS AND ADAPTABILITY

a. The approach

ESSN's primary objective was to assist refugees in meeting their basic needs, as well as foster long-term, development-oriented outcomes, even during times of crisis or shock. The ESSN's approach to shock responsiveness was characterized by the following key features, allowing it to effectively adapt to varied shocks, associated contextual changes and related evolving needs.

1. Data-driven

The approach was grounded in the dynamic use of data, enabling the programme to make evidence-based adaptations to shocks whilst at least maintaining efficiency and effectiveness.

The approach was underpinned by a process of analysis and diagnosis that allowed the programme to address the diverse challenges that unfolded in the context of the humanitarian crises. These considerations included;

Shock Analysis: This involved a detailed examination of the various shocks, ranging from the magnitude of their impact to their effects on both ESSN and non-ESSN beneficiaries. Understanding the nature and severity of each shock was critical in devising tailored responses.

Vulnerability Analysis: Vulnerability was a pivotal consideration in ESSN's shock responsiveness. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, monitoring and evaluation findings illuminated the high vulnerability and significant financial challenges faced by ESSN recipient households. In the context of cost-of-living inflation, ESSN was equally proactive in assessing vulnerability. Findings demonstrated the substantial difficulties faced by beneficiary households in meeting their basic needs, as well as the prevalence of debt, inadequate food consumption, child labor, and cutbacks on education and health-related expenses.



Targeting and profiling studies: ESSN revised the targeting criteria twice to enhance responsiveness and effectiveness due to increasing gender-based vulnerabilities, and to minimise inclusion and exclusion errors. In July 2022, a gender-adjusted dependency ratio was introduced as the single eligibility criterion, allowing the programme to target a significantly larger number of vulnerabilities and thereby resulting in a larger horizontal expansion than anticipated during the economic crises. Furthermore, two phases of targeting within households were implemented in February and July 2023. This approach prioritized the vulnerability of households over their size, as a result, a smaller household in greater need began to receive more assistance compared to a larger household that was considered less vulnerable. The earthquake response saw an expansion of selection criteria to identify households affected by the earthquake, drawing from various databases and sources to ensure a comprehensive targeting strategy.

2. Systems-based

ESSN was implemented in an environment with a mature social protection system. This system enabled programme implementation and shock response while leveraging existing well-established systems, frameworks, and processes. In the face of an unexpected shock such as the earthquake, SMS modality was introduced in order to enable recipients to withdraw their assistance via an SMS code. The programme closely monitored and adhered to government announcements and policies, maintaining a positive relationship with government authorities.

ESSN ability to leverage existing systems and mechanisms to enhance its shock responsiveness was not limited to a specific type of shock but encompassed a broader perspective of adaptability and inclusiveness. One key aspect of this approach involved the use of the Decision Support Mechanism Algorithm (DSMA) of the ISAIS. The DSMA uses artificial intelligence to assess household vulnerability based on a regional socio-economic algorithm. Within the DSMA, targeted households had to match Category A, which represents the most vulnerable group. However, it was noted that some households in specific districts of particular provinces and regions were automatically classified outside Category A, regardless of their actual vulnerability level. As a result, the SASF Discretionary Allowance (SDA) was introduced and expanded to minimise exclusion errors and provide ESSN support to households not meeting demographic criteria, allowing for horizontal expansion and the targeting of Category B in the DSM.

3. People-centred

Complementing data- and systems-based elements, the programme relied heavily upon field teams and social workers, given their extensive experience and proximity to affected populations. Their feedback, particularly regarding vulnerability, was instrumental in influencing adaptive decision-making.

The programme also employed various delivery mechanisms that ensured appropriate access by all ESSN recipients in response to distinct crises. In the case of COVID-19, for example, card delivery to homes was initiated to address access issues stemming from lockdown restrictions.

In addition, various communication routes, were employed throughout the different crises to maintain active engagement with communities and to keep them informed about programme updates, such as top-ups and changes to targeting criteria.

4. Reactive

ESSN's approach to shock responsiveness was primarily reactive, with analysis and action following the occurrence of a shock. In its approach, ESSN prioritised operational flexibility and readiness for prompt adaptation over a rigid systematic approach. The focus was on maintaining the capacity to adapt when a shock occurred, rather than attempting to predict every possible scenario in advance. This approach acknowledged the inherent diversity and unpredictability of shocks, making it challenging to prepare for every potential situation. It allowed stakeholders to collaboratively assess the implications of a shock, prioritise response actions, consider practicality, and make necessary adjustments to the programme to effectively address the emerging situation.



Despite being principally reactive, the ESSN still incorporated elements of preparedness, in particular pre-analysing different shock types and related response options as follows:

Seasonal shock-responsiveness: this option encompasses regional variations in transfer values, increased payments during periods of limited job opportunities, and adjustments based on refugees' duration in Türkiye. However, it was not prioritised as it posed implementation challenges e.g budget and unexpected population movements.

Rapid- or slow-onset shocks-responsiveness: considerations revolved around ensuring equity in the response, acknowledging that host communities are equally affected, and recognizing that financial support alone may not suffice. There was a need to prevent refugees from being excluded from ESSN, which could happen if they were displaced due to a disaster. The scale of the response was also a vital consideration. The recommendation was to maintain a stock of "blank" cards with additional electronic wallets, which could be rapidly deployed in response to such crises.

Vertical expansion: this option considered various factors, including social cohesion and the response of host communities. It has been proven possible through the successful implementation of economic top-ups and could be delivered to any individual with an active Kizilaykart card, including CCTE and in-camp support beneficiaries. However, this expansion required additional financing or the reallocation of funds, alignment with Government of Türkiye payments, determining transfer amounts based on need, and pre-existing agreements to ensure swift support from both the GoT and ECHO. It was recommended to consider vertical expansion as a viable option, especially if additional top-ups were needed.

Horizontal expansion: This option centered on extending assistance beyond the traditional ESSN criteria. While challenging, this expansion was made more feasible through the adaptable Kizilaykart Platform, which could be swiftly scaled up for short-term cash disbursements. However, it still necessitated digital registration and physical verification and required securing additional financing or reallocating funds, mapping alternative financial service providers to integrate with the delivery platform (potentially utilizing multiple FSPs), defining transfer amounts based on need and maintaining a higher level of risk appetite.



5. Needs Based and Aligned

In response to various shocks, including COVID-19, cost of living inflation, and an earthquake, the programme adjusted transfer values to address the unique challenges posed by each crisis. Transfer amount adjustments and top-ups were coordinated with MoFSS and aligned with other programs to avoid discrepancies in aid and duplication.

COVID-19: transfer values were adapted based on rapid assessments, introducing additional top-ups to counter economic vulnerabilities.

Cost of Living Inflation: In response to the widening disparity between the provided amount and the essential expenses of households as a result of inflation, modifications were implemented to the transfer value. Transfer values were aligned with the government's social support systems and took into account ongoing analyses of vulnerability trends, market conditions, and the MEB.

Earthquake: Following the earthquake, ESSN, in consultation with stakeholders, proposed to provide a smaller top-up to ESSN and C-ESSN households outside the earthquake-affected areas, and a larger top-up to ESSN and C-ESSN households living in 11 earthquake-affected areas. This option was deemed suitable because:

- It allowed IFRC to fulfil its programmatic commitments by allocating the majority of the repurposed EUR 30 million to the earthquake-affected area.
- It aligned with DGSA's recommendation for a more universal approach, offering additional support to all ESSN and C-ESSN recipients
- It ensured consistency by providing ESSN and C-ESSN recipients affected by the earthquake (as per the AFAD list) with support similar to that given to Turkish households in the same situation.
- It was rooted in a needs-based approach that took into account both the overall financial stress experienced by the country and the additional stress faced by people residing in the 11 provinces affected by the earthquake.

a. Recommendations from ESSN's shock responsiveness and adaptability

1. Maintain long-term assistance but adapt to varied crises: CVA implementers are advised to design programs with a long-term perspective, ensuring sustainability, but maintain flexibility to adapt swiftly to different crises. This involves striking a balance between providing ongoing support and having the capacity to respond effectively to diverse and evolving challenges. For instance, during COVID-19 crisis, the programme faced the challenge of making trade-offs between shortening the programme duration and providing immediate assistance to those in need. In response to the significant earthquake disaster and the sudden loss of assets and resources for both Turkish citizens and refugees in Türkiye the ESSN allocated EUR 30 million surplus, primarily from foreign exchange gains due to the devaluation of the Turkish Lira to the response.

2. Design with flexibility in mind but adapt to changing contexts and needs: CVA programmes should be inherently flexible and capable of adjusting to shifting contexts and evolving needs. This adaptability ensures that interventions remain relevant and effective in the face of dynamic situations.

3. Adopt a learning-oriented approach leveraging a dynamic use of data from various sources to inform evidence-based adaptations. This involves not only collecting data from several primary and secondary sources but also actively seeking feedback, analysing successes and shortcomings, and integrating lessons learned into programme to inform evidence-based adaptations that address emerging challenges.

4. Prioritize locally-led approach and coordination leveraging national organizations' capacities and nurturing partnerships with other humanitarian groups, local governments, and community-based organizations which is crucial in sharing information and resources, and teaming up to fill any gaps in assistance.

5. Advocate for flexible funding with a specific emphasis on allocating a higher proportion to enhance shock preparedness and response flexibility.



CONCLUSION

Synergy between the Three Key Areas – is the main factor setting ESSN apart from other large-scale cash programs is the interplay between all three key areas covered in this learning consolidation.

The ESSN Programme ensured **the data-driven approach, CEA, and shock responsiveness** were **interconnected**: This cross-functional alignment enabled the programmes to maximise their impact by leveraging the synergy between these essential practices. The data-driven approach provided valuable analysis of data including data from CEA activities which informed CEA strategies, enabling the program to engage more effectively with affected communities and gather their feedback. In turn, CEA strengthens the relevance and legitimacy of data-driven approach efforts, ensuring that data collection and analysis align with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. Additionally, the data-collected and analysed informed shock responsiveness and adaptability decisions.

This report was prepared by the **TRC and IFRC Learning Team**

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