



Emergency Safety Net (ESSN) - Focus Group Discussion Series

Gender-adjusted dependency ratio and newly eligible recipients: Perspectives and experiences

Background

On July 2022, the new ESSN criteria has been introduced to minimize inclusion/exclusion error under programme targeting. To do so the demographic criteria has been changed so that the ESSN can address vulnerabilities depending less on the demographic profile of households. Instead of the three demographic criteria that had been in effect until July 2022, one single "gender-adjusted dependency ratio" criteria was introduced which welcomed new recipients to the programme. In this regard, it is critical to understand how the impact of the criteria change is on social-economic behaviors of newly eligible individuals, and their perspectives on ESSN. In this regard, the current focus group discussion aims to explore:

1. To what extent newly eligible ESSN recipients are aware of the ESSN criteria
2. The role of ESSN on recipients' social-economic behaviors
3. Individuals' suggestion to improve ESSN

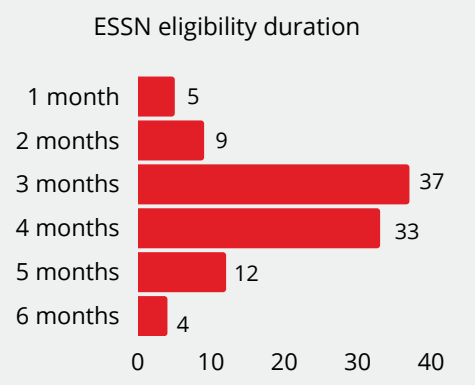
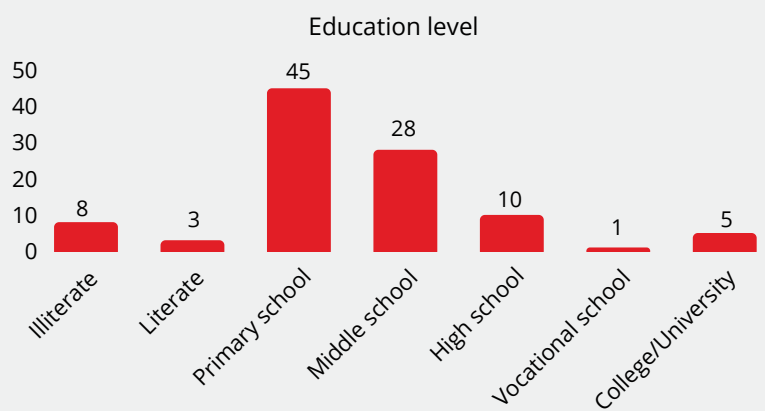


Figure 1. Map of the study area.



Demographics

50 Males
 50 Females
 15 sessions



Key Findings

Awareness on ESSN criteria

- When asked whether ESSN criteria are easy to grasp for everyone, most respondents stated that the criteria are easy to understand. However, as discussions develop, a general lack of knowledge of criteria and a common confusion between ESSN and C-ESSN eligibility conditions came to the surface, as participants tend to mention C-ESSN criteria instead of ESSN.
- Participants had very limited knowledge about the gender-adjusted dependency ratio and its calculation. When asked whether they knew about the new criteria, only few participants confirmed that they were aware, while others, mainly women, indicated that they did not hear about the recent modifications.
- For participants who were aware of the criteria change, most common information sources were social media and their relatives, friends and neighbors. Analyses revealed that participants followed official account of KIZILAYKART on Facebook, and disseminate knowledge among themselves.

Knowledge on transfer value and expenditure trends before and after ESSN

- Most participants knew the transfer value amount before becoming an ESSN recipient, majority of them mentioned it as their motivation to apply for ESSN. However, some respondents also cited that they did not consider the transfer value for ESSN application because they were already in a dire situation, and support in any amount was needed. Participants predominantly learned transfer value from their relatives, friends, and neighbors, followed by social media.
- Participants had difficulty in meeting with their expenses before the ESSN. Analyses indicated that debt, cutting from basic needs, and working in additional jobs were used as common coping strategies to meet expenses.
- The majority of the respondents mentioned that after receiving ESSN their ability to cope with expenses increased to some extent, yet considering the recent economic conditions, the amount is not sufficient to make a significant difference in their lives.
- In line with the findings of the previous FGDs, respondents shared that they utilize ESSN support to pay their rent and utilities. Although it does not lead to a direct change in the spending trends, some participants mentioned that thanks to ESSN, they are able to reach some food items, such as meat and milk, that they previously could not afford. Additionally, children's needs, such as diapers, baby formula, and education expenses, are also covered by ESSN support.



I heard about the transfer value from my friends and people around me, and it affected my decision to apply for ESSN because I cried out for the money. Apart from the regular payments, top-ups are also very good. But, I think, instead of us receiving these additional payments, everyone should receive the assistance.

Female, ESSN recipient, İzmir

ESSN assistance especially helps with rent expenses. I used to worry when it was time to pay rent, now I'm better thanks to the card. Apart from that, our food consumption has increased and we started to consume more meat and vegetables.

Male, ESSN recipient, Gaziantep

Suggestions to improve communication channels and ESSN

- Most of the respondents are content with the communication channels used to disseminate updates and information on ESSN, while only a few suggested increasing the number of informative text messages.
- The most common suggestion to improve ESSN Programme was increasing the transfer value. Almost all participants mentioned that the transfer value amount is insufficient to meet their needs, and an increase would improve the programme. The second most common suggestion was changing the eligibility criteria to include families with two parents and one child to the programme. Respondents mentioned that regardless of family size, all families are vulnerable under current economic conditions; thus, expanding the programme's scope to these families would be critical. In addition, participants recommended that individuals with work permit and insurance should also receive ESSN support. They emphasized that having a work permit and insurance is critical, so as receiving ESSN assistance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- According to the discussions, there is a general lack of knowledge on gender-adjusted dependency ratio and its calculation. Participants also seemed to be confused about ESSN and C-ESSN criteria.



- Efforts should be directed to explain criteria and its calculation to the target population. In this regard, encouraging community engagement and accountability activities focusing on explaining ESSN criteria would help to reach out target population.

- Findings suggest that social media is an essential tool used by the target population to receive news on ESSN. Once official information is released on social media, individuals disseminate it through informal communications with their relatives, friends, and neighbors.



- Considering the role of social media on target population's access to news, frequency of informative posts on ESSN in social media platforms can be increased. Additionally, to prevent and understand circulation of misinformation, being in regular contact with the community representatives is essential.

- Discussions indicated that, although ESSN helps recipients afford some food items they could not reach previously, even though there is still a tendency to prioritize rent and utilities over food expenses.

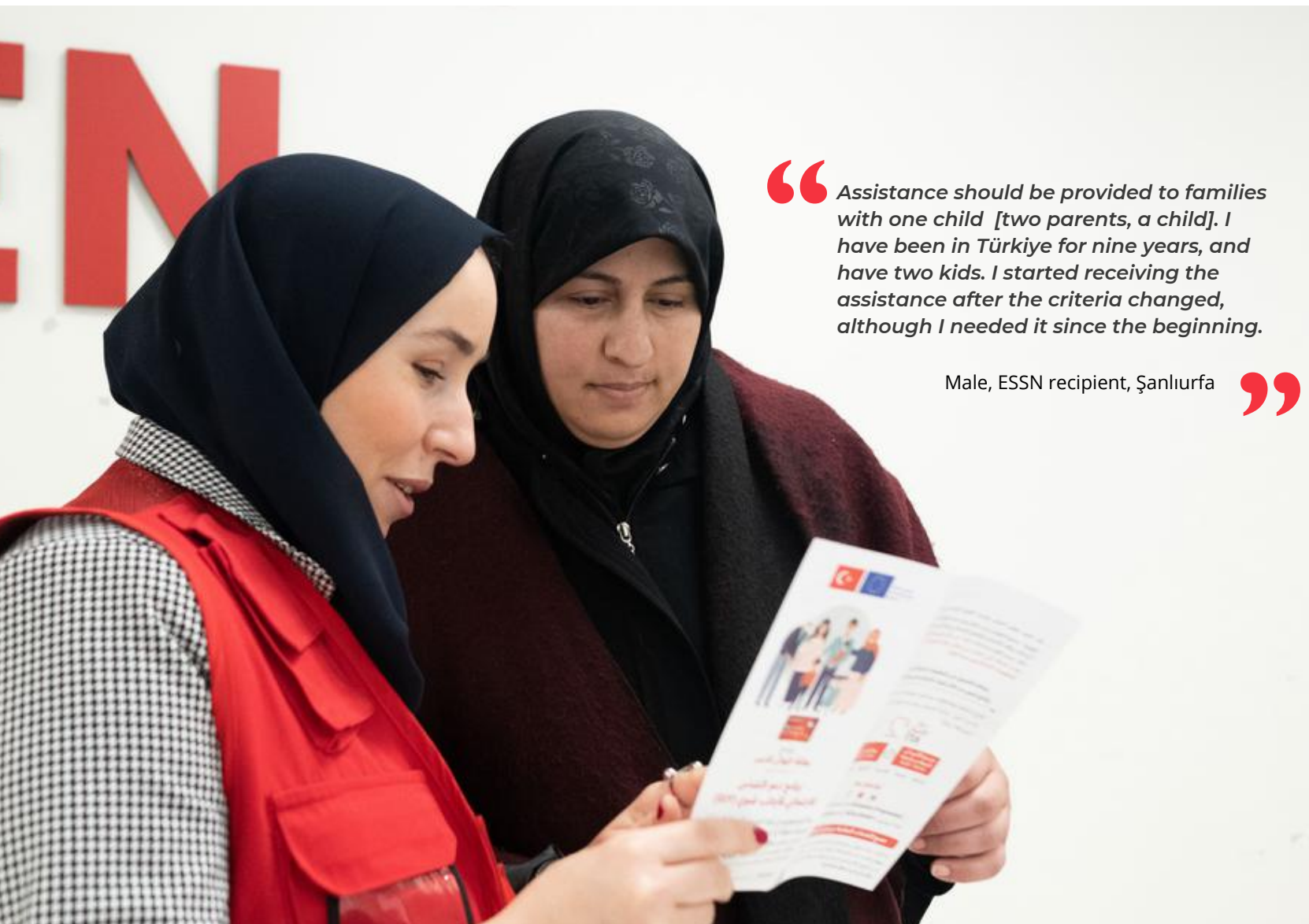


- Food insecurity is a serious concern that should be addressed. Rent and utility prices need to be closely monitored at the refugee populated areas to be able to take preventive action regarding food security, such as providing top-ups contingent upon food expenses, if needed.

- Participants mentioned that the transfer value amount is insufficient to meet their needs. They also stated that under current economic conditions, all families are vulnerable regardless of their size.



- Referrals of economically vulnerable yet not eligible households to the SASF's is very important to decrease exclusion errors. The transfer value amount needs to be reviewed under current economic circumstances.



“ Assistance should be provided to families with one child [two parents, a child]. I have been in Türkiye for nine years, and have two kids. I started receiving the assistance after the criteria changed, although I needed it since the beginning.

Male, ESSN recipient, Şanlıurfa ”

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PHOTO CREDITS

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TÜRK KIZILAY (TURKISH RED CRESCENT)

The largest humanitarian organization in Türkiye

Türk Kızılay is the largest humanitarian organization in Türkiye, to help vulnerable people in and out of disasters for years, both in the country and abroad. Millions of people currently receive support through our programmes in cooperation with the Government of Türkiye. We are supporting vulnerable people impacted by disasters and other groups in need of humanitarian assistance.



THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)

The world's largest humanitarian network

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 192 National Societies, including Türk Kızılay, through the work of 13.7 million volunteers. Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. The IFRC has been leading large-scale cash programmes for decades in response to a broad spectrum of disasters around the globe, including its largest programme ever – the ESSN in Türkiye with Türk Kızılay.



THE “KIZILAYKART”

Türk Kızılay is a humanitarian cash leader in Türkiye and has the well-established “KIZILAYKART”, which allows them to provide millions of people cash assistance through a debit card. The KIZILAYKART initially provided cash assistance to Turkish citizens and has now transformed into a large-scale cash-based assistance platform that has integrated refugees into the existing national social assistance network, providing different programmes such as education, basic needs, vocational training and language courses in order to meet the needs of vulnerable people. The KIZILAYKART implements the largest cash programme in the world and the largest in the European Union's history, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN).



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