

Fostering Resilient Socio-Economic Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and the Host Community in Türkiye

The Challenge

Over 5.5 million Syrians have sought refuge abroad since the outbreak of the Syrian war. Türkiye hosts the most significant portion of the Syrian refugees worldwide, of which 3.2 million have been provided with temporary protection status since 2014. The south-eastern region of Türkiye is facing numerous socio-economic challenges, intensified by hosting the majority of the country's large refugee population, and the severe impact of a series of earthquakes in February 2023. These issues have stretched the region's infrastructure and services to their limits. The resultant mismatch between the supply and demand sides of the labour market, specifically workforce capabilities and employers' demands, coupled with the devastation of crucial infrastructure and business ecosystems, has put the livelihoods of over 15 million people, including 1.7 million refugees, at risk. The situation has wide-ranging socio-economic repercussions, such as limited income opportunities, rising unemployment, underemployment, and informal employment, increasing poverty rates, slowed local economic growth, and hence, additional strain on social protection systems, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups.

Our Approach

The Promotion of Economic Prospects for Refugees and the Host Community in Türkiye (PEP) project, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, aims to enhance the employment prospects of Syrian refugees and members of the host community.



A woman employee working at a metal production company in Adana.

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| Project Name | Promotion of Economic Prospects for Refugees and the Host Community in Türkiye (PEP) |
| Commissioned by | German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) |
| Project Regions | Türkiye (Adana, Adıyaman, Aksaray, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Hatay, İstanbul, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Mersin, Osmaniye, Şanlıurfa, Tekirdağ) |
| Lead Executing Agency | Vice-President's Office of the Republic of Türkiye |
| Duration | January 2019 to June 2024 |

The project, operating within the framework of BMZ's Partnership for Prospects Initiative (BONO) and BMZ's Special Initiative for Displaced Persons and Host Countries (SIGA), ensures the integration of sustainable, 'do no harm', conflict-sensitive, and inclusive practices, in accordance with the imperatives of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It promotes gender equality per BMZ's Feminist Development Policy, while also embracing social cohesion. PEP's multifaceted strategy involves three main outputs: enhancing access to skill development and employment prospects, strengthening the capacities of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and fortifying the broader business environment.

Oriented towards the labour market's needs, the project assists its participants in securing decent, formal employment by assessing and matching their knowledge and experience with employment opportunities. Work permit fees, salary subsidies, and social security contributions are covered in concert with implementing partners to promote conditions for decent employment. Furthermore, employability is supported through the provision of language and vocational training courses, which are complemented by workshops on work ethics, legal rights, life skills, and occupational health and safety.



MSME representatives attending the business-to-business event in Gaziantep.

To safeguard and increase demand for labour force, the project provides business development services to Turkish and Syrian-led MSMEs, start-ups, cooperatives, and social enterprises. These measures cover, among others, trainings in legal business environment, financial and business literacy, business Turkish and aim at fostering companies' sustainable growth and job creation potential. To promote formal economic activities, unregistered companies in Türkiye are guided through the business registration process, encompassing work permits, licensing, and chamber registration. In cooperation with Turkish chambers of industry and commerce, demand-driven business development services such as training and coaching in foreign trade development, digitalisation, and green transformation are provided, focusing on increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs. Moreover, the capacities of private sector actors, including chambers, are enhanced to deliver better services to their members.

Central to the project's strategy is a balanced focus on the dual aspects of the labour market: The supply and demand side. By fostering skillsets through language and vocational courses, PEP streamlines pathways in the supply side to decent employment within diverse sectors. On the demand side, employment creation is enhanced through business development services for MSMEs and start-ups, as well as support for informal businesses during the registration process. This harmonised approach ensures that as the labour force becomes more skilled and employment-ready, there is a parallel increase in the quality and quantity of job opportunities available, driven by a more competitive, innovative, and resilient private sector.

Operationalising its mission, the project collaborates with an array of stakeholders, including national and local governments and the private sector—encompassing chambers and business associations—alongside a network of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This collaborative force is concentrated but not limited to the provinces of Adana, Gaziantep, and Istanbul.

The Benefits

The project bolstered the socio-economic resilience of refugees and the host community in Türkiye by matching their skills with market needs, equipping them with the needed skillset for improved employability. It also fortified MSMEs and enhanced partner competencies in providing customised business support services, thereby stimulating job demand and invigorating the overall private sector dynamics. The integration of Syrian refugees into Türkiye's economy advanced their self-reliance, reduced aid dependency, and provided stable incomes, especially post-earthquake. This approach promoted social inclusion and cooperation, enhancing community fabric and shared prosperity.



Participants learning new skills in a Turkish Gastronomy class in Istanbul.

Success Factors

Since January 2019, cooperation has been undertaken with 52 different implementing partners across 18 provinces in Türkiye. To date, 77 distinct projects have been executed in conjunction with a diverse array of partners, spanning ministries, chambers, business associations, and an assortment of local and international NGOs. Presented here are several of the accomplishments as of November 2023:



11,300+

individuals and their families have directly benefitted from the PEP activities



48%

the overall women participation rate



62% 38%

Syrian & Others Host Community



5,700+

participants have benefited from employment opportunities within public works and the private sector, with salaries paid conforming to national standards alongside the provision of social security



3,200+

work permits have been issued to Syrians



5,850+

participants have attended skills development courses



5,800+

participants have improved their Turkish skills



7,500+

individuals participated in occupational health and safety trainings



9,780,000+

meals were prepared and distributed at Municipal Soup Kitchens to support vulnerable groups among refugees and the host community



1,060+

companies finalised the registration process. 200 companies received additional business development services and/or access to finance



78

start-ups were provided with training, coaching, business development, and seed funding



13

cooperatives were provided with tailor-made mentorship and capacity-building services. 300 women were business partners in cooperatives



500+

industrial and trading companies (with an average of 120 employees each) received mentorship and training on foreign trade, green- and digital transformation



165

import and export companies from the food sector were matched in a business-to-business event to facilitate trade relationships



1,300+

participants from 420+ organisations have attended Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) meetings



700+

social cohesion activities attended by 26,000+ participants were held to improve connectedness and solidarity among Syrians and host community members

As part of the earthquake emergency response



24,000+

pre-paid food vouchers will be distributed to refugees affected by the earthquake



4,450+

farmers and participants of the suspended contracts will receive unconditional cash support



105,000+

meals have been prepared and distributed across various provinces



“I was so excited to hear about this project through a friend. I never had the chance to work before. I immediately applied.”

She eagerly embraced the opportunity to be trained specifically in healthcare through the PEP Project after she had completed an A2 level Turkish language course and received her certificate. Enhancing her language skills enabled her to interact with the community more effectively, boosted her confidence, and paved the way for her future.

Upon completion of geriatric and patient care vocational training courses, PEP arranged a job placement for her lasting six months. She is currently providing care to patients in an intensive care unit of a public hospital, working under the guidance of nurses.

“Each morning, I have a reason to wake up, aiding others inspires me immensely. It’s a way of giving back to the community that once embraced us. With my earnings, I support my family back in Syria, purchase new clothes for my dear ones, and cover my rent.”

An Example from the Field

Sibah, 24, spends her days working in an intensive care unit. It has been a six-year journey from Syria to a hospital in Istanbul. Fleeing her home due to the civil war, Sibah has been searching for a place where she can serve the community that opened its arms to her.

PEP Project adheres to Sustainable Development Goals



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Project Promotion of Economic Prospects for Refugees and the Host Community in Türkiye (PEP)

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

In the text, the term 'Syrian Refugees' refers to Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTPs).