

## PROVIDING ASSISTANCE AND LEGAL SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE MIGRANTS IN TÜRKİYE (PALS II)

### Project Summary

Foundation Caritas Luxembourg (FCL) and Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (ASAM) are addressing protection needs and facilitating access to available services for vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants, including unregistered and undocumented migrants through the PALS project.



Map 1: PALS Implementation provinces: **Ankara, Antalya, Balıkesir, İstanbul, İzmir, Van.** EQR Response in Hatay, Project coordination in **Ankara**.

## NEWSLETTER

### Project Update – Increasing controls.

In recent months, authorities have increased their controls on irregular refugees or migrants, who have reduced their movements through fear of arrest and deportation.

The mobile migration points, initiated in Istanbul as a pilot scheme by the MoI, have now been implemented in Izmir and other cities and constitute a challenge for protection case management as migrants restrict their movements.

Migration points are mobile stations set up to check the documents of people in the streets, if individuals are found to be in violation of the law, they are transferred to removal centers.

Identity checks are also performed increasingly randomly in many places, including in areas like public transport hubs and neighborhoods where migrants live. Controls also take place in houses where smugglers are suspected of housing irregular migrants before transporting them to the border provinces.

Refugees who are not in their province of registration, whose residence permits have expired or who are without ID cards are arrested – men are taken to removal centers, while women and children are often released.

In Istanbul and Izmir, PALS teams have expanded their outreach activities through collaborations with local organizations.

### Developing collaborations

**İstanbul:** PALS team continues to develop collaborations with local associations in order to increase access to irregular migrants.

The **Mavi Kalem Association** is one of these, located in the **Esenyurt district** 35 km northeast of PALS' Istanbul office.

Esenyurt district hosts the largest migrant population in Istanbul province, offering job opportunities and low-cost accommodation.

Mavi Kalem focuses primarily on vulnerable women and disabled migrants and received many requests for legal assistance. PALS lawyers, social workers and interpreters provide counselling and assistance to their beneficiaries once per week.

### Updates from Van – Cases of frostbite and deaths

Irregular crossings, in groups of 100 to 300 people, continue on the Eastern borders especially in less hilly terrains but where harsh conditions prevail in the winter with snow and blizzards. By crossing in these conditions, people risk getting frostbite, leading to loss of limb, and even loss of life.

Since December, twelve cases of frostbite-induced deaths have been identified and support for burial has been provided to seven families of deceased migrants by the project team. This support covers costs such as interpretation, assistance for forensic medicine, prosecution and transfer of the body to their country of origin or provides psychological support or e-vouchers for food or clothing.

Individuals in need of treatment for frostbite were assisted in accessing treatment, some injured people were prevented from being pushed back, the beneficiaries were visited in the hospital, interpretation assistance was provided for their communication with health workers and medical assistance was provided to individuals in need of medical supplies. E-voucher assistance was provided to meet their clothing and food needs during the treatment process.



## PALS Summary in Numbers

*Number of incidents in which PALS teams have intervened:*  
Achieved: **979** / Target: **240**

*Number of individuals who have received protection response according to their needs and vulnerability:*  
Achieved: **33.433** / Target: **19.780**

*Number of targeted vulnerable migrants whose critical needs have been identified and met through basic assistance, legal information and referrals:*  
Achieved: **24.528** / Target: **12.600**

*Number of individuals with increased/ appropriate information on relevant rights and/ or entitlements:*  
Achieved: **28.191** / Target: **18.780**

*Number of individuals who have obtained appropriate documentation/ legal status:*  
Achieved: **117** / Target: **188**

*Number of individuals who have received assistance:*  
Achieved: **1.663** / Target: **2.950**

*Number of individuals who have received assistance at borders:*  
Achieved: **13.077** / Target: **5.494**

## PALS Agenda for next period

Distribution of clothing e-voucher cards from LCW company started early February. E-vouchers are welcome by migrants as they have often lost their belongings on the way or they are so damaged that they need to be changed.

How the PALS project perceives the new institution "GÖKSEM", established on 1 February 2024 by a circular issued by the Ministry of Interior as Migrant Pre-Admission and Referral Centres (GÖKSEM) in 81 provinces across Türkiye, as part of their actions against irregular migration.



## PALS Stories from the field

### **Mohamed from Afghanistan**

During an intervention in a gendarmerie station in Van, the team met Mohamed, an unaccompanied child in a group of irregular migrants.

Mohamed had frostbitten hands and feet wrapped in plastic bags and bruised knees and elbows from crawling since he could not walk or use his hands. The officials wanted to send the whole group back through the border.

Thanks to the team's intervention and negotiation, Mohamed was quickly transferred to the hospital where he stayed for a month. Thanks to the early intervention, only two toes had to be amputated. The team continues to assist Mohamed and he was then placed in Van Children's Centre (ÇODEM). Mohammed was registered and issued an ID card at Van ÇODEM.

As Mohammed later turned 18, the institutional care was terminated and he was transferred under the scope of family reunification to Bolu where his uncle lives.

### **Aziza from Afghanistan**

Aziza, a 6-year-old girl, entered Türkiye through illegal routes to Van with her older sister's family to escape the Taliban in Afghanistan. Aziza was released from the Removal Center (RC) with Ahmed, who was allegedly a distant relative, and they were transferred to Erzurum with a T6 document.

Ahmed and Aziza requested travel assistance from the PALS team in Van, but the team became suspicious of Ahmed's statements and the child's anxious behaviour. As a result, Aziza and Ahmed were interviewed separately by PALS staff and contradictions were found in their statements. It appears that Ahmed was misleading everybody and using Aziza to avoid deportation.

Considering the best interests of the child, the RC was contacted and Aziza was reunited with her sister.

RC officials thanked ASAM's team for their attention and sensitivity. Negotiations are ongoing with the RC for the release of the family in the near future.

## EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE (EQR) IN TÜRKİYE

### Projects Summary

Fondation Caritas Luxembourg (FCL) and Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (ASAM) are pursuing their response to the February 2023 earthquakes with two ongoing projects for the most vulnerable survivors in Hatay province:

**Earthquake Response (EQR):** providing emergency relief and protection assistance with the support of ECHO and the MAEE Luxembourg.

**Assistance and Early Recovery** providing WASH, shelter and livelihoods assistance with the support of Caritas Germany, Caritas Austria, NIN Austria and the MAEE Luxembourg.



Mobile team conducting assessments on protection, WASH, shelter and needs in Gunduz-Kirikhan ITS with residents.

## NEWSLETTER

A year after the earthquakes of 6 February 2023, Hatay province is still devastated and over 205,000 people are now living in containers<sup>1</sup> and 85,000 living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS)<sup>2</sup>. Almost 65% of heavy damaged buildings and debris have been removed but little reconstruction has taken place so far.

### Changing shelter situation

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, many local families established themselves in informal settlements made of tents next to their dwellings. This included over 300,000 Syrian refugees who were living in Hatay prior the earthquakes.

Since the establishment of “containers cities”, most people have been relocated from ITS into containers camps, but segregation has taken place and Syrian refugees have been transferred to specific camps, such as Hilalkent, accommodating over 11,500 people in 2,000 foldable containers.

### Expansion of Syrian Camp

In camps for Syrian refugees, people were housed in foldable containers that are smaller than the standard containers provided by the authorities (AFAD). These foldable containers have no internal partition or kitchen/ sanitation space, instead common sanitation units are provided in the camps but these lack hot water.

For social and privacy reasons, residents have started to create private sanitation in the spaces between containers by covering them with tarpaulins, however poor water and sewage connections in these spaces lead to leaks, bad smells and stagnant water, and increases the risk of water-borne epidemics.

### Operational Updates

In post-earthquake period, project has shifted from blanket distributions to more targeted assistance within an integrated response that includes protection, PSS, WASH and shelter activities, targeting ITS and Camps for Syrian refugees displaced by the earthquakes.

### ASAM WASH and Shelter

Intervening in the WASH and Shelter Sectors were new activities for ASAM. Architects, engineers and specialised workers were recruited. Training and coaching of the new staff for WASH and Shelter were ensured by monthly support missions by a Caritas consultant.

The team has advanced its interventions far beyond the initial maintenance of facilities. It now addresses problems of water and sewage connections or drainage, responds to specific needs such as the installation of septic tanks or the adaptation of sanitation units for elderly people or PWD, and mobilises communities on good hygiene practices and the need to maintain their own facilities.



WASH team supervising septic tank installation in an ITS.

Under the shelter component, cash grants are provided for the repair of lightly damaged houses allowing families to leave container camps and return to their homes.

### Mental health review

In December 2023, a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support evaluation was also carried out in Hatay – under ECHO/ MAEE Luxembourg funding, through field observations, focus group discussions, individual interviews and a survey. The report concluded that stress and trauma are still very prevalent, but no mental health improvement can be expected if living conditions remain poor.

<sup>1</sup> [sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Kahramanmaras-ve-Hatay-Depremi-Yeniden-Imar-ve-Gelisme-Raporu-1.pdf](https://sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Kahramanmaras-ve-Hatay-Depremi-Yeniden-Imar-ve-Gelisme-Raporu-1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Shelter Cluster meeting minutes, 13 February 2024

### EQR - Human-interest story from Hatay

Hayat E. was born in the Defne district of Hatay. She married in 1978 and has four children. Like her husband, she worked in seasonal agriculture for years but suffered from health problems. She has no social security to cover medical costs.

On 6 February 2023 and two weeks later, Defne was struck by multiple earthquakes and was one of the most affected neighbourhoods in the province. Hayat lost her mother and many relatives in the earthquake and was deeply affected psychologically. The house, where Hayat's family was living, was damaged but only needed light repairs.

Out of fears of further earthquakes and because of damage to the house, the family lived in a tent next to the house for months. Hayat's children lost their jobs and the household income decreased significantly.

Hayat's family was selected for housing repairs, an assessment was conducted and a grant was provided with necessary technical counselling. Hayat and her family are now back in their house and their living space has become their home again.

"I am glad we have you, without you we would have continued to live in a tent during the winter. Our baby is sleeping in a warm place thanks to you," she said and thanked ASAM.

