

**Europe and Central Asia Region (ECAR)**

**Social Protection, Inclusion and Governance  
Sectoral and OR+ (*Thematic*) Report**

**January – December 2018**



*UNICEF/UN040288/Khetaguri*

Three-year-old Luka Kurdghelashvili (on the left) with his five-year-old brother Nika (on the right) in former School No 68 currently occupied by socially vulnerable families. Children in Georgia face a higher risk of poverty than any other population group in the country. In an effort to reduce child poverty, UNICEF supported the Georgian Government to revise the Targeted Social Assistance System that was instituted in 2015. The new methodology significantly improves targeting of poor children and introduced child benefits to 40 per cent of Georgia's children.

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## **C. Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CRC: Committee on the Rights of the Child  
ECA: Europe and Central Asia  
ECARO: Europe and Central Asia Regional Office  
EU: European Union  
MICS: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey  
NSO: National Statistics Office  
OR: Other Resources  
PF4C: Public Finance for Children  
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals  
RKLA: Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda  
RTF-SI: Regional Thematic Funding for Social Inclusion  
R-UNDG: Regional United Nations Development Group

## D. Executive Summary

In the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, all of UNICEF's work is guided by the continued importance of strategically addressing the unfinished child's rights agenda, in particular the social exclusion of the most vulnerable groups of children. UNICEF supports Governments in the region to better understand the causes and consequences of poverty and social exclusion on the development of children. Based on strong analytical work, UNICEF provides technical guidance to partners to develop effective responses to ameliorate the negative effects of poverty and to give children the best chance in life. UNICEF's priority areas for the region are Child Poverty and Social Protection, Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups, Public Finance for Children and Realizing Child Rights at Local Level.

This is the final report for Regional Thematic Social Inclusion Funds, grant number SC1499070012, covering the 2018 grant period. Thematic funding for social inclusion enabled UNICEF to advance regional knowledge and capacity on a child's right to social protection and supported improvements at the country level. Major outputs for 2018 included the publication of *Child Poverty in Europe and Central Asia region: definitions, measurement, trends and recommendations*, highlighting that at least 22 million children are living below national poverty within the region. An '*In Focus*' brief on *Ending Child Poverty* stressed the cost of child poverty to societies in the region in terms of the impacts on children's cognitive development, future incomes and health in adulthood, and highlighted the importance of reforming social protection systems to better meet the needs of vulnerable children. As part of our joint work with other UN agencies towards SDG 1.3 on Social protection floors, "*Joint Advocacy Messages on Social Protection*" was also published.

Thematic support has helped to increase the visibility of UNICEF's work in social protection at country level. In Georgia, an additional 70,000 children are now benefiting from child grants based on UNICEF's support to policy reform. In Kyrgyzstan, 2,000 additional children were able to access child benefits after a revaluation of minimum incomes, while in Uzbekistan, local level monitoring and advocacy led to an extension of social protection to vulnerable children of single parents. Countries in the Western Balkans continued to record progress in outreach and facilitating access of excluded groups to social protection, for example the extension of health insurance cover to excluded Roma families in North Macedonia. During 2018 UNICEF provided policy inputs to debates and the design of social protection reforms around the region, including in Uzbekistan, Albania, North Macedonia, and Georgia. North Macedonia announced a reform of social protection to extend coverage to 60,000 additional children while in Georgia government has decided to increase the value of child grants substantially to improve the impact. In partnership with the World Bank and the Armenian Association of Social Workers a conference on "the role of Social Protection in the Sustainable Development agenda" highlighted the important role of social protection and the potential for reform of the national system.

In the area of public finance for children, UNICEF contributed to the regional and global advocacy agenda on Financing for Development, and to the design of ongoing initiatives to address public finances for children in health in Central Asia, and decentralized financing for Early Childhood Education. UNICEF undertook public finance related work in several countries, in particular the development of the first Child Focused Public Expenditure Analysis in the region in Armenia, and policy focused public finance budget briefs in North Macedonia, Armenia, Ukraine, Kosovo, Tajikistan and Moldova. These works have so far begun to contribute to dialogue with sector ministries on revision of health sector spending in North Macedonia, and on a new formula for financing pre-school education in Moldova. In Armenia, government has committed to adopting alternative models of pre-school and has included a budget line for this purpose.

Total resources allocated under Regional Thematic Funds for Social Inclusion, grant number SC1499070012 for 2015-2018 were \$211,678. The majority of funds were utilized during 2015 to 2017, with \$85,494 spent in 2018. During 2018 the majority of funds were from global thematic and other sources.

Under the current Regional Office Management Plan (2018-2021), the Social Policy Section is building on past progress and accelerating programming to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments to ending extreme poverty, extend social protection, and track public finance for social services. This involves ramping up advocacy and knowledge generation around social protection, child poverty, and public finance for children, while extending technical support and guidance at the country level.

## **E. Strategic Context**

The Europe and Central Asia region comprises of 21 countries<sup>1</sup> of which only Tajikistan is classified by the World Bank as a Low-Income country. Six countries in the region are considered Lower-Middle Income economies while the rest are Upper Middle Income.<sup>2</sup> However, in all ECA countries, entrenched exclusion of specific population groups leads to high disparities and to increasing equity gaps. These gaps in rights realisation are compounded by income inequality. Further, issues related to conflict and migration are exacerbating the situation of socially excluded children living in poverty and those living in poverty.

Deep-set social attitudes, discrimination and prejudice towards excluded groups and weak institutional capacity at sub-national levels limit the pace and effectiveness of progressive and inclusive reforms to tackle child rights violations in the social sector. Progress in reducing child poverty in the region has been patchy, with falling poverty rates in some countries and increases in others, and the overall level of investment in social protection for children has been falling, although there are signs that trend is beginning to be reversed. Although less than 50 per cent of countries currently measure child poverty on a regular basis, the latest estimates suggest there are at least 22 million children across the region living below national poverty lines.<sup>3</sup> Those most at risk include families with four or more children, those from rural areas, children with disabilities and from ethnic minorities, such as the Roma in South Eastern Europe. Cash and social care are not adequately working together to prevent family separation, social exclusion, vulnerability and inequity. Despite the persistence of child poverty across the region, countries are not yet allocating sufficient resources towards social protection for children. Coverage of benefits among the poorest is low, the value of benefits is not adequate, and vulnerable and excluded beneficiaries face numerous obstacles to access support.<sup>4</sup>

A key consideration for all UNICEF's work in the region is the continued importance of strategically addressing the unfinished child rights agenda, in particular, the social exclusion of the most vulnerable groups of children. Social inclusion and inequities are the focus of regional strategies, which are based on the UNICEF Strategic Plans (2014-2017) and (2018-2021), contextualized for the region.

UNICEF works on social inclusion on behalf of the poorest and most marginalized children to assist countries in understanding the patterns and drivers of child poverty and exclusion and in developing effective

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSRC 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation (no UNICEF country office), Serbia, Ukraine, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on income classification please see World Bank: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2018) *Child poverty in Europe and Central Asia region: definitions, measurement, trends and recommendations*

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF (2016) *Social Monitor: Social Protection for child rights and wellbeing in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*

responses. Priority areas of focus in the region for 2018 guided by the UNICEF Strategic Plan, and the Regional Office Management Plan were:

- **Social protection and child poverty**, to ensure countries measure both monetary and multi-dimensional child poverty and address it through policies, programmes and budgets, and to help strengthen social protection systems for greater impact on child wellbeing.
- **Public finance for children**, to influence government decisions about spending on children and social services and reduce spending disparities among different population groups.
- **Realizing child rights at local level**, to support local government capacity to plan consultatively, organize services, prepare for emergencies, budget equitably and monitor the impact of what they do on children.

Conflict and political instability have affected several countries in the region. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world: over 4 million, including 1.7 million children. The protracted nature of the conflict in Syria and the large refugee population is putting a strain on the already overstretched response capacities of the government and partners alike. Some countries in the Balkans continued to be affected by migration into the European Union (EU), although the numbers have declined since 2015. Several Balkan countries experienced ongoing political instability and polarisation; there were renewed tensions and intensified fighting in Eastern Ukraine. Increasing dissatisfaction with job opportunities, stagnant incomes, and increasing mistrust of institutions are contributing to rising political and social tension across most of the region.

There are a number of international and regional commitments with implications for UNICEF's work on social inclusion, social protection and public finance for children. The SDG framework with targets on eliminating extreme poverty and reducing multidimensional poverty is bringing greater attention to child poverty in the region, while the specific targets on expanding access to social protection and monitoring of levels of public expenditure on social protection and social services will also be a platform for greater accountability. The 2016 General Comment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on Public Budgeting for Children is assisting countries in the implementation of Article 4 of the CRC covering budgets for children. The General Comment identifies States' obligations and makes recommendations on how to realize all the rights under the Convention, especially those of children in vulnerable situations, through effective, efficient, equitable, transparent and sustainable public budget decision-making. This is a strong platform for advocacy around public investment for children. The Grand Bargain agreement of 2016 between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, aims to get more humanitarian financing into the hands of people in need. First proposed by the former UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing in its report "Too Important to Fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap" as one of the solutions to address the humanitarian financing gap, one key objective of the Grand Bargain is to increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming and, where possible, use, link or align with local or national social protection systems.

## **F. Results in the Outcome Area**

### **1. Social Protection and Child Poverty**

Between 2015 and 2018, UNICEF ECARO made significant investments in Social Protection and Child Poverty. During 2018 ECARO made considerable advances in analysing child poverty, developed clear joint

United Nations advocacy messages on social protection systems, and initiated work around public budgets for children in several countries. Earlier analysis and advocacy is also beginning to filter through to policy change and, in some cases, to improvements in social protection provision for children and families. Montenegro and Tajikistan have published new child poverty figures; Georgia, Kazakhstan and North Macedonia have announced reforms to increase the number of children benefiting from social transfers or the value of transfers; and Armenia, Kosovo, Moldova, Tajikistan, North Macedonia and Ukraine have generated evidence to improve budgetary allocations and expenditures for children.

Child poverty measurement is a prerequisite to designing effective policies necessary for the realization of child rights and adhering to international legislation and standards. In 2018 [\*Child Poverty in Europe and Central Asia region: definitions, measurement, trends and recommendations\*](#) was published, highlighting that at least 22 million children are living below national poverty lines within the region. An [\*'In Focus'\*](#) brief on Ending Child Poverty stressed the cost of child poverty to societies in the region in terms of the impacts on children's cognitive development, future incomes and health in adulthood, and highlighted the importance of reforming social protection systems to better meet the needs of vulnerable children. UNICEF also contributed to two regional UN publications: The [\*Issue Based Coalition on Social Protection United Nations Development Group \(UNDG\) Europe and Central Asia: Joint Advocacy Messages\*](#); and the [\*UN Economic Commission for Europe \(UNECE\) Guide on Poverty Measurement\*](#).

2018 was a year of good progress in improving knowledge and understanding of child poverty in our region:

- In **Tajikistan**, together with the World Bank, we supported the publication of the first child poverty figure since 2009, showing that poverty has continued to fall, but also revealing the extent of seasonal poverty among children.
- In **Uzbekistan**, UNICEF worked with the World Bank on "[\*Listening to Citizens of Uzbekistan\*](#)", showing that children, and people living with a disability, are particularly vulnerable to poverty.
- UNICEF supported **Montenegro** to produce its first child poverty estimate in five years, released in December 2018.

UNICEF's partnerships with other UN agencies working on social protection were greatly strengthened through the establishment of the Regional UNDG Issue-Based Coalition on Social Protection. The objective of the group is to support coordinated engagement on social protection at country level through a joint vision of social protection, technical support and knowledge sharing. Key achievements of the group include, sharing various tools for application in analysis of social protection systems at country level, joint discussions on social protection in Ukraine, and with the drafting of a regional advocacy paper on social protection as part of regional SDG agenda. During 2018 the group participated in several UN Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) missions to Ukraine, Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A checklist on social protection was used to focus inputs on the key issues in social protection systems in relation to the SDG 1.3 targets, and the potential role of the UN agencies in support. In partnership with the World Bank and the Armenian Association of Social Workers a conference on "the role of Social Protection in the Sustainable Development agenda" in Yerevan in October 2018 highlighted the important role of social protection and the potential for reform of the national system.

The investments made by UNICEF in this area of work began to bear fruits also at country level. Several countries in the region have reported positive developments in a child's right to social protection, ranging

from increases in coverage of cash transfer programmes and approval of new legal frameworks to provision of sustainable funding for social care services, expanded outreach to excluded families and children, and expansion of approaches to adapt social protection in humanitarian situations.

- **Georgia:** The Country Office continued during 2018 to provide the Government with support to ensure that existing social protection programs are sensitive to children and their families. UNICEF especially continued support to the reform of the Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) program through Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) data analysis and preparations for a TSA impact evaluation.

As of November 2018, the number of children under 16 receiving TSA and child benefits rose to 130,200. The 2017 WMS data showed that 29.8% of all children in Georgia were benefiting from at least one of the social cash transfer programs and 43% of children below the absolute poverty line were covered by TSA and child benefits. Through the reform, in 2018 a total of 2,913 individuals received higher benefits than under the previous program, including 176 single mothers, 447 breastfeeding mothers and 47 pregnant women. Moreover, due to the increased focus of the TSA on children, 143 breastfeeding mothers, 62 single mothers and 18 pregnant women now received the full amount of TSA. Without UNICEF's support to the TSA reform, 1,628 children, 225 breastfeeding mothers, 99 single mothers and 36 pregnant women would not have qualified for child benefits.

Finally, in November and December 2018, UNICEF organized two conferences for municipalities from Eastern and Western Georgia to raise awareness and exchange experiences on the Child Protection Referral Procedures and local social assistance programmes. During a training integrated into the conferences, around 100 municipal representatives increased their knowledge and skills in the planning of local social protection programs, public finance and program budgeting.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Actioning one of the main recommendations from the 2017 Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities, UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) further promoted the 'International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth' (ICF-CY). The country's current disability categories still mostly reflect the medical model rather than the social model of disability, and therefore need to be aligned to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Through two workshops led by an international expert in ICF and organised by UNICEF together with WHO, professionals from the education, health and social protection sectors who work with or for children with disabilities gained first-hand experience in using the ICF concept and categories. Next steps will include a review of the existing assessment tools for classification and their complementarity to the ICF, as well as training for the assessment commissions at municipal level.

UNICEF BiH continued providing technical support to relevant policymakers to advance social protection policy and legislative reform, and modest progress was observed. In Republika Srpska (RS), the new Law on Child Protection (regulating cash benefits) was implemented as of January 2018. The new Law expanded the scope of cash benefits, both means-tested and universal (e.g., maternity benefits, universal cash benefits for the third and fourth child in the family, and disability-related benefits). The total budget for child cash benefits increased by an estimated US\$ 18 million from 2018 to 2019, ensured through an income tax increase from 1.5 to 1.7 per cent allocated to the RS Children's Fund.

The Management Information System (MIS) for child cash benefits was improved. While the RS Government funded the overall investment in hardware enhancement and upgrading of the existing electronic database, UNICEF BiH supported the development of a by-law regulating the data, reporting requirements and procedures between the RS Children's Fund and Centres for Social Work (CSWs). About 130 social workers and other professionals from RS CSWs were supported to develop stronger capacities for administering child cash benefit in line with the new by-law and upgraded MIS.

As part of the integrated Social Protection and Inclusion (SPI) local governance approach, UNICEF BiH maintained close partnerships with five municipalities and one Canton, with initial support provided for establishing permanent multi-sectoral platforms to strengthen cooperation across the social sectors. This resulted in joint evidence-based action planning, implementation and monitoring of social protection and inclusion interventions for children and youth. UNICEF supported local partners to identify gaps in social service provision for the most vulnerable groups, and provided seed funding to establish new social services, with the condition that local authorities sustain the new services from their budgets after the seed funding ended. Four out of six new target locations since 2017 already committed continuous funding from local budgets to sustain the services as of January 2019, and in the other two this is still under discussion.

In close collaboration with the RS Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP), UNICEF supported a cost analysis of two selected social services: day care services for children with disabilities and family counselling services. The costing analysis included a mapping of best practices from countries in the region, as well as existing practices in BiH, both in the public and non-governmental sectors. It provided a framework and guidance on standards and costing options, that will be used to guide further policy discussions as part of the development of a new Law on Social Services in FBiH and possible Social Protection Law revisions in RS.

UNICEF BiH continued policy discussions with the FBiH MoLSP about poverty and the social assistance targeting modalities, including the definition of the monetary, social security minimum for FBiH. The initial three scenarios developed in 2017 were further elaborated and fiscal projections made based on different variables and eligibility criteria, including families with children. These costing options will inform the finalisation and adoption of the Law on Social Protection in FBiH in 2019.

- **Tajikistan:** The Country Office launched a new partnership with the Government on humanitarian cash transfers. Tajikistan—being a country prone to natural disasters often affecting already vulnerable populations—will focus on investing in the national social protection system and piggyback on the existing TSA programme to provide cash to the affected population. Through South-South cooperation facilitated by UNICEF, 10 concerned national stakeholders could enhance their understanding and capacity in humanitarian cash transfer programming in Nepal, which would result in the Government's agreement to pilot a new humanitarian cash transfer programme in 2019.
- **North Macedonia:** With poverty still impacting close to 30% of children in the country, and a Gini coefficient of 32.5 percent signalling substantial inequality, there is a need for urgent action to support the right of all children to an equitable start in life. UNICEF has worked closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other partners (such as the World Bank and UNDP) on a comprehensive reform of the country's social protection system. Most particularly, a new law on



Social Protection has been developed and is expected to enter into force in early 2019. Once the reform is fully completed, it is expected that more than 60,000 children (a nearly 20-fold increase) will benefit from poverty-targeted child grants and enhanced, quality social services. Preliminary analysis suggests that the reform will make a marked contribution in the fight against poverty in the country, and particularly child poverty.

To support the full operationalisation of the new social protection system, UNICEF will continue to engage with Government to develop and adopt protocols for the implementation of cash benefits for children, and implement 'case management' in CSWs. The 30 CSWs are the country's main social protection hubs that administer all cash benefit schemes, deliver social support and care services, such as psycho-social support, and are responsible for the administration of foster care. Currently, the social welfare workforce operates on outdated procedures that are overburdened with administration and allow for very limited outreach work.

To support the overall reform of the social protection system, UNICEF commissioned an assessment on how to improve the performance of the social work profession in the country using behavioural insights. The assessment identified five motivational barriers relevant for professionals in the sector: a heavy burden of administration; invisibility of social outcomes; low salaries and little chance of progression; inadequate working conditions; and lack of discretion and rule-based culture. Specific recommendations, based on behavioural insights, were then provided for review and incorporation by the government.

UNICEF has also partnered with US-based Columbia University and developed a module to introduce case management in the country which will be introduced gradually in the next two years, expected to greatly enhance the capacity of CSW and their teams to more effectively and holistically support their clients – children and families at risk. In 2018, UNICEF worked with partners in government and civil society and made sure that every social welfare professional in the country is trained and equipped with tools to effectively manage cases involving children and families at risk.

## **2. Public Finance for Children (PF4C)**

Leveraging domestic resources in particular public budgets for children is a core role for UNICEF in the region and one in which there has been significant effort over the past years. Based on the stocktake of country office engagement in Public Finance for Children (PF4C), the region developed a strategic note to deepen engagement on PF4C based on the lessons learned and to build on new opportunities from the SDG targets related to means of implementation; the CRC General Comment on Public Budgets for Children, and other opportunities within the region.

Poverty and deprivation facing children relates to access to services, and the cost of those services for poor families, whether it is the out of pocket costs of healthcare, parental contributions for preschool education or for specialized services for children with disabilities. To start to change this and increase access for poor families, UNICEF is increasingly working with governments on the financing of these services.

In 2018, ECARO worked with country offices and with colleagues in the Regional Office to support leveraging of resources towards policies and services for the poorest children. We have supported 6 country offices to analyse budgets in health, education and social/child protection. Some of the findings, that are now being discussed with governments, include:

**In Armenia** there are many inefficiencies at primary and secondary levels, while many young children cannot access pre-school because of lack of funding.

**In Macedonia**, the country now has one of the lowest levels of public health investment, and the cost of healthcare for children is a deterrent for some parents to access healthcare. As public health spending on children has fallen, infant and child mortality has risen.

UNICEF ECARO has provided technical advice and support to **Georgia, Turkmenistan, and Armenia** to leverage resources for pre-school education through costing and cost benefit analyses. We have developed guidance notes to roll out sector public finance analysis, and in the case of child protection to support the public finance component of deinstitutionalization, to other country offices.

### **3. Realizing child rights at local level**

The Regional Office produced a multi-country study of decentralisation in the region, focusing on one area which is frequently placed under the responsibility of local governments: Early Childhood Education. The study undertook detailed research around the functions, capacities, fiscal frameworks, and monitoring of service provision and service quality in four countries in the region.

Regional thematic funding is a flexible mechanism for funding social policy interventions in the Europe and Central Asia region. The pooled thematic funding provides a critical foundation that allows UNICEF to deliver on its key commitments to children. It allows the UNICEF Regional Office to perform its core roles, including evidence generation, convening and coordinating, capacity building and advocacy. These functions are catalytic for creating change for children at the policy level. Thematic funding accounts for the vast majority of resources available to the Regional Social Policy section and thus results achieved above would not have happened without this critical funding stream.

### Results Assessment Framework

This section reviews the progress made against the Regional Office targets set in the Regional Office Management Plan 2018-2021, covering the areas of social protection, child poverty and social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

ECA Planned Results 2018-2021	Key Strategies	Key Performance Indicators			Progress to end 2018
		Indicators	Baseline	Targets	
Governments provide access to children and their families to adequate cash services to ensure minimum standard of living, and where possible, reduce child poverty.	RO will support COs to generate evidence on impact, design alternative policy and programme options, engage in advocacy and dialogue with Governments on reforms, and facilitate peer-to-peer learning	Number of COs supported to have activities that:			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enable Governments to have beneficiaries of cash transfers linked to other programs, information and services</li> </ul>	3	8	Support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Kazakhstan on integrated social protection systems.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enable Governments to increase the inclusion of excluded children into social protection</li> </ul>	0	5	Support to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and North Macedonia resulted in Kazakhstan and North Macedonia already taking policy decisions to expand coverage.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support Governments to have legislation bylaws and regulation on cash transfers and/or family benefits</li> </ul>	7	11	Supported Montenegro, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Albania on data gathering, analysis and evaluations.
Governments progressively improve the adequacy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of public spending for children	RO will support COs to develop sector and macro analyses of public spending for children, enhance regional lesson learning and sharing, and promote innovative means to enhance citizen participation for greater accountability of public spending for children at sub national level.	Number of COs supported to have activities that:			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>generate evidence on budgets and their linkages to child outcomes to improve budget allocations / expenditures for children</li> </ul>	1	21	Tools were developed to support improved PF4C integration within country programmes throughout the region, and support and mentoring was given to six country offices to produce high quality budget analyses with recommendations for governments in six countries, together with policy influencing strategies based on the analyses.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support citizen empowerment to participate in sub national budget process to improve budget transparency and accountability</li> </ul>	2	5	An initial mapping was carried out and work with ADAP team was completed, offering direct support country offices on mechanisms for engagement

Gov'ts regularly measure and monitor child poverty, and use this to inform policy and programmes.	RO will support country offices to dialogue on appropriate measures of child poverty, build regional partnerships for networking on child poverty and advocacy, removing financial barriers for child care/promoting parental leave policies and conduct policy analysis to identify effective policy responses.	Number of COs supported to have activities that:			Support given to Montenegro to publicise child poverty results.  Country Office entry points were mapped and UNECE Task Force submission completed.  The Child Poverty report was completed, translated, and published on the website.
		• Support Governments to develop national measures of child poverty using multidimensional measures	2	6	
		• Support Governments to develop national measures of child poverty using monetary measures	2	9	
		• Undertake advocacy shaped by child poverty analysis	0	6	

## G. Financial Analysis

The Regional Office created the UNICEF ECA Regional Thematic Funding for Social Inclusion (RTF-SI) as a pool of funds categorized as Other Resources (OR), soft-earmarked to support the achievement of the UNICEF Strategic Plan Outcome Area 7 (Social Inclusion), in the ECA region. The UNICEF Regional Office for ECA manages the funding and, in consultation with Country Offices, determines which country programmes within the region will receive funding. The Regional Office also implements directly small shares of these funds. Allocation of the RTF-SI is decided by the UNICEF Regional Director, upon recommendation by the Regional Social and Economic Policy Advisor in consultation with other colleagues and UNICEF offices in the region.

Any donor (public or private) that wishes to support work related to Social Inclusion in Europe and Central Asia can contribute to the fund. Funds are pooled together with other contributions for the same theme. Instead of tracking expenditures by individual donor or project, consolidated expenditure is tracked for the pool. All donors to the pool receive an annual regional narrative result-oriented report, prepared by the Regional Office, and focused on results for children made possible with contributions from the partners. UNICEF also encourages an inclusive follow-up process where partners have a chance to provide feedback. The discussion focuses on moving forward the agenda of social inclusion in the region, bottlenecks and challenges and priorities for action based on experience and evidence. A cumulative consolidated annual certified financial statement per pool is provided to all contributors. The statement shows all contributions by donor and expenditures by country.

**Table 1: 2018 Planned budget by Thematic Sector**  
Thematic Sector 8: Social Protection, Inclusion and Governance  
Europe and Central Asia Region  
Planned and Funded for 2018 (in US Dollar)

Intermediate Results	Funding Type <sup>1</sup>	Planned Budget <sup>2</sup>
Child Poverty, Public finance for children and Social Protection	RR	10,000
	ORR	183,666
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>193,666</b>

<sup>1</sup> RR: Regular Resources, ORR: Other Resources - Regular

<sup>2</sup> Planned budget for ORR does not include estimated recovery cost (only programmable amounts).

**Table 2: Thematic contributions received for Thematic Pool 8 by UNICEF ECAR in 2018 (in US Dollars)**  
Thematic Pool 8: Social Protection, Inclusion and Governance






Donors	Grant Number	Contribution Amount	Programmable Amount
German Committee for UNICEF / TELEKOM	SC1499070012	197,368	83,666
<b>Total</b>		<b>197,368</b>	<b>83,666</b>

N.B. Total contribution received in 2015 for the period to 31.12.2018 was USD 197,368. The amount remaining to be used in 2018 was USD 83,666

**Table 3: Expenditures in the Thematic Sector**  
Thematic Sector 8: Social Protection, Inclusion and Governance  
Europe and Central Asia  
2018 Expenditures by Key-Results Areas (in US Dollars)

Organizational Targets	Expenditure Amount*			
	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	All Programme Accounts
25-01 Child poverty analysis towards policy change / PF4C: Improving public expenditure effectiveness / efficiency	39,209	18,771	3,851	61,831
25-02 Cash Transfers: Technical support to government cash transfer system development and expansion / Linking cash to other programs, information and services / Technical assistance - Social protection	355,258	52,883	n/a	408,141
<b>Total</b>	<b>394,467</b>	<b>71,654</b>	<b>3,851</b>	<b>469,972</b>

**Table 4: Thematic expenses by results area**

Fund Category	All Programme Accounts	
Year	2018	
Business Area	ECARO, Switzerland - 575R	
Prorated Goal Area	25 Equitable Chance in Life	
Donor Class Level2	Thematic	


Row Labels	 Expense
Other Resources - Emergency	109,102
25-01 Child Poverty / Public finance for children	38,986
25-03 Adolescent empowerment	50,525
25-04 Gender discriminatory roles and practices	19,592
Other Resources - Regular	262,291
25-01 Child Poverty / Public finance for children	17,863
25-02 Social Protection	49,942
25-03 Adolescent empowerment	160,420
25-04 Gender discriminatory roles and practices	34,065
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>371,393</b>

Table 5: Expenses by Specific Intervention Codes

Fund Category	All Programme Accounts	▼
Year	2018	▼
Business Area	ECARO, Switzerland - 575R	▼
Prorated Goal Area	25 Equitable Chance in Life	▼
Fund Sub-Category	(Multiple Items)	▼
Row Labels	▼ Expense	
25-01-02 Child poverty analysis towards policy change (Profiling, mapping and identifying drivers of multi-dimensional and monetary poverty of children, modeling and simulation of policy options)	52,539	
25-01-06 PF4C: Improving public expenditure effectiveness / efficiency	700	
25-02-01 Cash Transfers: Technical support to government cash transfer system development and expansion (design, targeting, beneficiary selection, grievance mechanism, cash delivery mechanisms like	15,945	
25-02-05 Linking cash to other programs, information and services (information on essential family practices, livelihoods, psycho-social support, etc.)	134,209	
25-02-99 Technical assistance - Social protection	22,429	

## H. Future Work Plan

### *Social Protection & Child Poverty*

The region will continue to facilitate a programmatic environment in the region that progressively enables all children and their family or carer, with priority to those marginalized because of gender, geographic location, ethnicity, poverty and disability, to access an adequate package of cash benefits and social support services. UNICEF will step up advocacy and dialogue on social protection for children with partners and governments on the basis of evidence generated at the regional level, and detailed analyses undertaken at country level. With the launch of the global guidance on child poverty measurement, regional guidance on poverty measurement, and publication of a report on measurement and monitoring of child poverty in the region there will greater emphasis on advocating with governments to measure and monitor child poverty, and to use information on child poverty to formulate and implement policies to address it. In addition several countries in the region are undertaking Multiple Cluster Indicator Surveys which provide an opportunity for additional analysis on multi-dimensional child poverty. UNICEF in the region continues to participate in the UN's Regional Working Group on Social Protection along with ILO, UNDP and WHO.

### *Public Finance for Children*

The region will continue to build on the work of 2018, several other countries are planning budget analysis and several of those that commenced in 2018 are now moving on to support governments to address the issues identified in the briefs.

Two other pieces of analysis: on decentralized ECD including financing, and on financial options for childcare, are expected to be published in 2019.

**Table 6: Thematic Pool Area 8**  
Social Protection, Inclusion and Governance  
Europe and Central Asia

#### Planned Budget and Available Resources for 2019

Intermediate Result	Funding Type	Planned Budget <sup>1</sup>	Funded Budget <sup>1</sup>	Shortfall <sup>2</sup>
Child Poverty, Public finance for children and Social Protection	RR	175,909	80,000	95,909
	ORR	248,402	125,402	123,000
<b>Total for 2019</b>		<b>424,311</b>	<b>205,402</b>	<b>218,909</b>

<sup>1</sup> Planned and Funded budget for ORR (and ORE, if applicable) excludes recovery cost.

<sup>2</sup> Other Resources shortfall represents ORR funding required for the achievements of results in 2019.

## H. Expression of Thanks

UNICEF is grateful to Deutsche Telekom, the UNICEF National Committee for Germany, and other donors to Social Inclusion for their continued support and commitment to promoting social inclusion and equity for all children in the ECA region, particularly the most vulnerable.





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# Turkey

**Approaches to Providing Cash Based Assistance to Meet  
the Needs of Children in Protracted Crises - Lessons from Turkey**

# Introduction

**Social protection systems are increasingly being used to provide emergency assistance during times of crisis.** These systems allow for more effective, efficient and sustainable solutions in delivering aid than creating parallel responses. This report documents UNICEF's experience supporting cash-based assistance to refugees in Turkey since 2015, when it monetized its seasonal assistance package that had previously provided in-kind winter clothing kits to families. Since

then, UNICEF's cash based assistance has evolved considerably, including from restricted to unrestricted modalities, from more sector-specific to multi-purpose assistance. Use of cash transfers to support education and protection outcomes has been piloted, and UNICEF has moved from a 'project' approach to more predictable and harmonized ways of linking with national systems. This case study explores UNICEF's involvement in designing and implementing three separate initiatives and the main lessons learned including enabling factors and challenges.

## Overview & background

**Turkey currently hosts more refugees than any other country in the world.** There are nearly 4 million registered refugees in Turkey, of whom approximately 3.6 million are Syrians. Just under half of the Syrian refugees (1.6 million or 44 per cent) are children. Over 95 per cent of the refugees reside outside of camps. According to the assessments from December 2017 over 64 per cent of urban refugee households in Turkey live below the poverty line, including 18.4 per cent who live below the extreme poverty line. Increasing inflation has driven up the costs of housing, utilities and food, this has meant that vulnerable refugee households are struggling their basic needs. Given the protracted nature of the crisis and rising living costs, assets and savings of Syrian refugees continue to deplete and meeting their basic needs remains a key concern for a vast number of Syrian refugee households.

**Cash-transfer programming (CTP) has been part of the response in Turkey since 2012, initially through the World Food Programme (WFP) and Turkish Red Crescent's (TRC) camp-based food voucher programme.** The protracted nature of the crisis has created opportunities to understand how CTP can support a range of humanitarian needs among displaced persons and children in their care. CTP in Turkey, like in other countries affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, has been a testing ground for innovations, including adopting Multi-Purpose Grants at scale, coordinating joint operational systems between agencies, and linking to national social protection systems.

**The Government of Turkey has played a leading role in supporting refugees from the beginning of the crisis.** In recent years, regulatory reforms have increased refugees' access to services and created opportunities for more durable solutions. Turkey's first asylum law, the

Law on Foreigners and International Protection, came into force in 2014 to manage international protection and migration-related matters. A new agency, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) under the Ministry of Interior, was made responsible for registration of Syrian refugees under temporary protection and other nationals seeking international protection. Under article 91 of the Law a regulation was issued on Temporary Protection for Syrian nationals, refugees and stateless persons from Syria seeking international protection in Turkey. Those registering for Temporary Protection are issued with identification documents granting the right to stay in Turkey and access public services, including health, education and social assistance.

**One challenge for humanitarian actors in Turkey has been the lack of precise data on the humanitarian needs of refugees living outside camps, especially on socio-economic vulnerabilities.** Unlike in Lebanon and Jordan, between 2013 and 2016, there was no detailed profiling survey of refugees. In late 2015, in cooperation with the Turkish Prime Minister's Office, the European Commission launched a First Stage Needs Assessment for Syrians under Temporary Protection in Turkey, completed in April 2016. This showed that the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers across urban and rural settings was precarious and that economic insecurity was a key aspect of vulnerability across sectors, as refugees must access many goods and services they need through the market. The assessment also confirmed that while refugees were legally entitled to benefit from public services such as education there were economic, socio-cultural and supply side barriers to them accessing these in practice. As of the start of the 2018/19 school year, more than 640,000 Syrian children under temporary protection were enrolled in Turkish public schools and Temporary Education Centres but



over 430,000 refugee children remained out of school. More than 80 per cent of those enrolled are attending public schools. The enrollment rate is highest for children in primary school (96%), but decreases to 55% for children in middle school, and further decreases to 24% for learners at secondary level. Barriers to enrolment and attendance include: economic hardship (linked with child labour); distance from schools and transportation costs;

limited knowledge of Turkish language; limited availability of catch-up and support programmes; and a lack of information about education rights and services. Needs assessments also highlighted that refugee children faced many protection risks, including isolation and lack of opportunities to interact with their peers, limited access to basic services, discrimination, economic and sexual exploitation and child marriage.



## Interventions

**UNICEF began providing cash-based assistance in Turkey in 2015, monetizing its seasonal assistance package that had previously provided in-kind winter clothing to families.** Since then UNICEF's cash based assistance has evolved considerably, including from restricted to unrestricted modalities, from more sector-specific to multi-purpose assistance, piloting ways in which cash can support protection outcomes, and from a 'project' approach to more predictable and harmonized ways of linking with national systems.

Three separate UNICEF cash-based initiatives are considered in more detail in this case study. The first was a winterization programme to provide assistance through electronic vouchers and unrestricted cash starting in winter 2015/16. The second initiative was the extension of the national Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) programme to refugees, which began in early 2017 and is currently funded through mid-2019. Finally, the "Cash for Protection" pilot programme took place in 2017 and 2018.

## Winterization

### DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

**UNICEF's winterization programme provided assistance to vulnerable refugee families with children, living in host communities across southeast Turkey, to ensure their basic needs were met during the winter months.** In 2015/2016 the cash programme targeted those households classified as vulnerable by WFP to receive food assistance. During subsequent winter programmes (2016/17 and 2018/19) vulnerable Turkish families with children have also been included. Recipient households each received one-off payments averaging between USD \$80-250 paid in national currency (Turkish Lira), depending on the size of the household. During the first year, all payments were made using e-voucher systems implemented by various INGO partners; in 2016/17 the Government authorized part of the programme to transition to cash payments through KizilayKart (TRC ATM card). No linkages with national systems were possible as the government did not provide cash-based winter assistance for the Turkish population; rather the national system focused on coal distribution.

**Prior to 2015/2016 UNICEF provided in-kind transfers to address winter needs.** Based on these findings the emergency unit concluded that cash or vouchers would more effectively support beneficiary choice while also supporting local markets. There was also an expectation that providing cash or vouchers would be faster and cheaper for UNICEF than managing direct procurement.

**However, UNICEF had to be confident about the feasibility and appropriateness of meeting needs through cash transfers.** It was crucial to understand whether households could access markets for clothing, and whether market actors could meet this demand through adequate and timely supply of the required goods at an acceptable price. This required UNICEF to coordinate with other humanitarian actors (UN agencies and INGOs) to share the results of market assessments. Cash transfers also required acceptance from the Government, and cash provision, as opposed to vouchers, was not politically feasible prior to the winter of 2015/16. After extensive policy advocacy by both UNICEF and TRC, the Government relaxed its stance on the provision of direct cash to refugees through the Turkish Red Crescent, which became possible for the first time that winter.

### PROGRESS AND RESULTS

**UNICEF Turkey provided winter support for vulnerable Syrian and Turkish families to help them prepare for and meet their additional basic needs during winter months.** Cash transfers were delivered

to 6,700 families with children through KizilayKart (TRC ATM cards). Another 12,091 vulnerable families received support through NGO-implemented e-vouchers.

**Since the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) for refugees was launched by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (now the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services), TRC and WFP in late 2016, which provides multi-purpose grants for a range of basic needs (including winter needs), the scale of UNICEF's winter support to refugees in Turkey was reduced.** UNICEF still implemented winterization assistance in 2017/18, using unconditional direct cash assistance to vulnerable Syrian refugee and Turkish households, but the caseload was much reduced, to approximately 10,000 households, due to an increasing reach of the ESSN. A Winter Task Force ensures coordination and selection criteria coherence among all winterization partners as well as with the ESSN. The winterization assistance of UNICEF (and other partners gathered in the Winter Task Force) is intended to complement and fill gaps in ESSN support. UNICEF targets households identified as highly vulnerable but which do not receive ESSN. This may be because they do not have yet have a registered address, or their ESSN application is still in progress. In a few cases UNICEF's winter assistance is provided as a top up for households who are receiving ESSN, but still demonstrate winter-specific vulnerabilities (i.e. inadequate shelter conditions, living in very cold locations, etc.).

### LESSONS LEARNED

**Working through partnerships requires less development of internal capacities, creates efficiencies and can help UNICEF go to scale more rapidly.** Working with the cash and voucher delivery systems and procedures established by WFP, TRC and other implementing partners saved time for UNICEF. There were no direct tendering processes, as UNICEF relied on partners' established modalities. It also avoided setting up duplicate systems. In some other countries involved in the Syria refugee crisis response, where UNICEF had to establish its own delivery systems, the time required to assess, select and contract was not always conducive to the requirements of a rapid response.

**Vouchers are a more limited instrument than cash.**

Unrestricted cash was flexible enough to meet the diversity of people's needs, whereas vouchers, though better than the provision of winter kits, still constrained people's choice. There are potential risks of distributing cash (for example, fraud or diversion), but strong procedures and controls were established by partners to manage these.



## Extension of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education Programme to Refugees

### DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

**The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (formerly the Ministry of Family and Social Policies) is responsible for implementing a range of social protection schemes in Turkey.** A key area of interest for the Government was expanding cash based assistance to Syrian and other refugees through the well-established national social protection system. Before assistance could be provided through the national system, donors and international organisations assessed the feasibility of using the existing social protection programmes and underlying infrastructure. This required several months of assessments and negotiations, with government departments within and beyond the MoFLSS. Factors considered included the political will for such collaboration, existing regulatory frameworks, the strength, coverage and areas of focus of the national social protection system, programme design features, targeting criteria and processes, cash delivery processes, possible risks of

linking with national systems and mitigation measures, and institutional capacity of the national social protection system. UNICEF's pre-existing relationship with and ongoing work with MoFLSS on strengthening the national social protection system for children provided an entry point for discussions on how to deliver social assistance to refugees through the system.

**Within the context of the Syrian crisis, MoFLSS and partners (other Ministries, UN agencies, and NGO partners), initiated two complementary national cash transfer programmes aimed at supporting the refugee population.** The first programme is the Emergency Social Safety Net programme which was designed and implemented in partnership with WFP and TRC, with support from DGMM, the Directorate General of Citizenship and Population Affairs (DGCPA), and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). The second programme is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Refugees implemented



in collaboration with UNICEF, Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and TRC, again with support from DGMM, DGPCA and AFAD. To reduce duplication and to streamline assistance, both the ESSN and the CCTE for refugees were designed in close coordination to take advantage of existing processes, systems and institutions. The alignment of the CCTE and ESSN operations, and coordinated oversight of these programmes through a joint governing board, has created economies of scale and generally harmonized and simplified ways of working. The ESSN was launched 6 months prior to the CCTE for Refugees, meaning that the CCTE could make use of the same systems and support structures. This allowed the programme to go to scale more quickly.

**The national CCTE programme targets poor families, regardless of nationality, with school-aged children enrolled in Turkish public schools.**

The objective of the programme is to encourage and improve school enrolment and attendance. Payments are conditional on 80 per cent school attendance every month. The national CCTE was the first centrally organized social transfer scheme in Turkey, beginning as a donor funded project in 2003 and transitioning to full national ownership by 2007. In 2014 it reached almost 2,350,000 children. The CCTE for Refugees, which began in May 2017, is an extension of the national programme. It provides cash assistance to vulnerable refugee children attending Turkish public schools or Temporary Education Centres (TECs). As of August 2018, children enrolled in the Accelerated Learning Programme at Public Education Centers can also benefit from the CCTE. The CCTE for Refugees is aligned with the national CCTE programme and is implemented through the national social protection system, while also using additional elements of the ESSN programme.

**The MoFSP required that the CCTE for Refugees be aligned with the design features, rules and regulations of the national CCTE programme in order to reduce the potential for social conflict between the refugee and Turkish communities.**

After negotiations it was agreed to maintain the same design for the transfer value and frequency, as well as conditionality for payment. The monthly transfer value varies according to the sex and grade/class of the child; higher amounts for girls and for children in upper secondary school were intended to act as financial incentives to keep girls and adolescents enrolled in school longer. The cash assistance is delivered every two months as per a pre-determined schedule, with payments in September, November, January, March, May and July every year. Since some of these design parameters may not be the optimum for meeting the needs of refugee children, some adjustments were negotiated. For example, the transfer value on the national CCTE is insufficient to cover the income gap that most refugee families face in meeting the needs of children. On the other hand, applications for additional support on a case-by-case basis (the way vulnerable national CCTE beneficiaries can apply) would be inconvenient for beneficiaries and administratively burdensome for

implementers. It was therefore agreed with MoFLSS that those enrolled in the CCTE for Refugees receive an additional 100TL per beneficiary child at the beginning of each school term. Furthermore, when the programme was extended to ALP learners in August 2018, it was agreed that due to their additional vulnerabilities they would receive the amount entitled to upper secondary girls (i.e. highest possible amount under national CCTE), regardless of gender or grade/class.

**All families residing in Turkey, regardless of nationality, can apply to the CCTE programme through Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF)**

**associated with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services.**

The SASFs are complemented by TRC Service Centres (originally set up for the ESSN in 18 locations with large numbers of refugees), in order to diffuse the administrative burden on the national system and also provide more efficient services to refugees. The MoFLSS verifies initial eligibility for the CCTE for Refugees using the national Integrated Social Assistance Information System (ISAIS), which was adapted to integrate refugee registration data from DGMM. The eligibility criteria are: all family members must be registered in Turkey, the family must not have a regular income or social security, the family must not have high value or income-generating assets and the family must have at least one school-going child at the time of application. The Turkish social assistance system generally requires verification visit to all beneficiary households by SASF officers before benefits are received. However, it was agreed with MoFLSS that CCTE beneficiary households receive a visit within one year of enrolment in the programme, rather than before enrolment.

**As families need to apply for the CCTE, raising awareness about the programme among potential beneficiaries is vital for success.**

As refugees face challenges accessing information and services, both CCTE and ESSN have invested in outreach and communication through accessible media outlets, and distributed materials in appropriate languages through the Government and NGOs. The UNICEF website and social media pages are also used to disseminate information. The TRC call centre provides a toll-free helpline for both CCTE and ESSN, to provide information in Turkish, Arabic, Farsi and Pashto, and receive and resolve queries and complaints.

**Once enrolled, families receive an ATM card and PIN to receive their payments.**

Cash payments on the national social assistance programmes are through a partnership between MoFLSS and PTT Bank. However, social assistance for refugees -both the ESSN and CCTE - is delivered through Kizilaykarts (TRC ATM cards) issued by Halk Bank. This is the same payment system that has been used to deliver food vouchers and winter assistance to refugees in Turkey, thus emerging as a single platform or payment modality for delivering a variety of cash assistance for refugees.



**The attendance conditionality of CCTE payments is monitored through a partnership between MoFLSS and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE).**

School attendance in the Turkish public schools is monitored using the public-school system management information system (E-OKUL) which was already linked to ISAIS. To monitor attendance of students enrolled in the Temporary Education Centres (and now, in the Accelerated Learning Programme), UNICEF worked with the respective Ministries to integrate YOBIS, an education MIS for refugee students established by MoNE with support from UNICEF, with ISAIS. Furthermore, since refugees have a different vulnerability profile than Turkish citizens and face multiple barriers to school attendance, it was important to link the cash assistance to complementary social services. UNICEF has therefore supported TRC to develop a child protection outreach mechanism to follow up with families of children whose attendance drops below 80 per cent. The family is visited by an outreach team and a child protection needs/risk assessment is conducted. Families are then referred to the appropriate services, if needed. Follow-up visits are made not only to sustain education outcomes, but also to mitigate any child protection

risks and violations and reduce the damage caused by exposure of refugee children to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, and family separation. An explicit link between the CCTE cash transfer and protection outreach does not exist in the national CCTE programme. UNICEF is advocating for such integrated approaches to be adopted in the national social protection system.

## PROGRESS AND RESULTS

**By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, 368,090 children had been reached by the cash component of the CCTE for Refugees far surpassing the initial target of reaching 250,000 children by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.** Furthermore, in the 15 provinces where CCTE child protection outreach teams were established, 43,957 children were reached with child protection outreach services. Of these, 3,871 were identified as being at risk and referred to specialized child protection services. Building on the success of the first phase, it is anticipated that the program will reach over 450,000 children by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.





## LESSONS LEARNED

**The strengths of national programmes and systems should be leveraged, and their limitations accounted for and mitigated.** Linking with national social protection systems is feasible and appropriate for humanitarian response. Leveraging robust and well-established national systems (strong human resources and institutions, clear administrative procedures, and well-functioning – often automated - operating systems) has been a factor in the success of these programmes going to scale. Time was taken to understand and then address the bottlenecks in existing systems, to ensure effective response. Different elements of the national processes and systems have been used to varying degrees, and were adapted where necessary, and/or capacities built, to better achieve humanitarian programme objectives.

**Engagement and coordination with authorities presents opportunities and challenges.** There are clear advantages to working with national governments, through national systems. The Government's leadership

in the response from the beginning, their willingness to engage in partnerships with international organisations and to adapt programme design to better suit the needs of refugees has been critical in enabling the provision of cash at scale in Turkey. The direct role of MoFLSS in the implementation of these programmes has been considered crucial by international agencies and donors to guarantee longer-term ownership, sustainability and eventual integration of these programmes into the national social protection system. However, there are inevitably difficulties in setting a design that meets humanitarian needs whilst aligning with regulations or concerns of the national social protection sector, meaning compromises are needed on both sides.

**There is opportunity for strengthening long-term national programmes and systems, but this requires careful design and concerted engagement between all stakeholders.** A key benefit of this approach is the contribution these linked programmes can make to strengthening the national social protection system – both building capacity of national social transfer systems to respond to humanitarian needs, and



informing and improving the design and implementation of national social assistance in normal times. Supporting the extension of the CCTE to refugees has created opportunities for UNICEF to also strengthen certain aspects of the national social protection system.

**A coordinated approach between UN agencies is beneficial.** Close coordination and collaboration between the UNICEF and WFP interventions is proving beneficial on many levels. Firstly, having ESSN implementation and coordination mechanisms already in place meant that the CCTE for Refugees could make use of the same

systems and support structures. This helped the CCTE go to scale immediately (56,000 children received transfers in the first month of payments). Secondly, alignment of the CCTE with the ESSN has better ensured that children's needs can be met with the CCTE grant, since household's basic needs are covered through the ESSN grant. Thirdly, aligning operations on the CCTE and ESSN created economies of scale and generally harmonised and simplified ways of working. Finally, use of common platforms and partners for implementation of CCTE and ESSN has also meant shared challenges and common solutions to problems encountered.

## 'Cash for Protection' Pilot Programme

### DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

**Under this pilot programme, e-vouchers are provided as part of a larger protection response alongside counselling, case management and referrals, to support child protection outcomes.** The target beneficiaries are families identified as medium- or high-risk protection cases under UNICEF's child protection case management identification system. Assistance is provided in one to three transfers of 300TL (\$80) each, depending on household size and vulnerability score. The voucher is intended to offset the costs of accessing protection services; supporting various economic aspects of families' lives; and reducing the need to resort to harmful coping strategies.

**UNICEF Turkey's child protection unit began considering the potential of cash for achieving protection programme objectives in April 2016, following the positive experiences of its winterization programme** (see above). One of UNICEF's winterization implementing partners, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM), was also a child protection partner, and it highlighted the value, but also the limitations, of the winterization programme (a single transfer for a specific basic need) for supporting the economic needs of vulnerable families with children. Whilst longer-term predictable cash support was provided through both the ESSN and the CCTE, these programmes would only be accessible for registered refugees while very vulnerable households, including new arrivals, remained unregistered. The child protection team developed a rationale for how cash could directly and indirectly support protection outcomes and the voucher component was introduced as part of the case management process.

**UNICEF's broader protection programme set up Child and Family Support Centres in six urban areas, which are intended to reach approximately 89,000 children by the end of 2018.** The Centers are designed to

provide multi-disciplinary child protection services which are child-centred and family focused. Each is staffed with a team of child protection specialists, psychologists, family counsellors, legal counsellors, disability experts, nutritionists, nurses, case workers, monitoring specialists, social workers and translators. Outreach teams composed of social workers, child protection specialists and translators conducted assessments with refugees living in the most refugee-populated urban areas, through house visits, and the case management centres also received and assessed cases that were referred. Those cases ranked as high or medium risk were eligible for assistance. A priority of the broader protection programme is to support the registration of unregistered families, to ensure they can access relevant services. Within UNICEF-supported programmes alone, ASAM has assisted over 14,000 individuals to register under Temporary Protection. All refugee families considered eligible for the voucher first needed to become formally registered, so as not to set up perverse incentives to stay unregistered. Sixty per cent of the cases that ASAM has supported to get registered have benefited from the voucher programme.

**The e-voucher was integrated within UNICEF's broader child protection programme and was implemented alongside comprehensive and complementary protection services.** Those cases pre-identified as high- and medium-risk were visited by social workers and/or referred to the Centres for protection interviews to identify specific protection concerns. Care plans comprising legal and psychological counselling, comprehensive child protection case management and referral pathways to other necessary services (e.g. health care, social assistance, justice, education, etc.) were developed for each family. Outreach teams composed of social workers are working intensively with families, with regular visits once or twice per week. Some 45 per cent of the eligible families were enrolled in care plan in late 2017. By April 2017, a total of 4,110 children who were identified as at high risk during the voucher

assessment had received at least three individual and/or family counselling sessions delivered by professional psychologists and family consultants.

## PROGRESS AND RESULTS

Between February and November 2017, a total of 41,759 protection e-voucher cards were distributed to 18,812 Syrian families which evaluated as medium or high risk for child protection concerns, reaching 106,363 beneficiaries including 57,705 children.

On average, each family received 2.3 cards. The e-voucher delivery and redemption processes have been smooth and the payment schedule did not encounter delays. The average period in which the vouchers were to be redeemed varied between one and three months.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Capacity for CTP must be built within UNICEF's technical sectors and their partners.** UNICEF's protection unit found the voucher programme challenging to design and manage, since the team lacked technical experience and expertise in CTP and since there was a lack of global guidance and SOPs for the organization. They relied heavily on lessons learned and processes developed under the winterization programme and the CCTE for Refugees programme.

**Combining cash assistance with case management is important to overcome wider barriers to child protection and wellbeing.** UNICEF's experiences to date suggest that the alignment of cash-transfer programming with case management is crucial for addressing the broader protection risks of children. Evidence has

emerged that the voucher component has complemented other protection activities – sometimes in unexpected ways – to support protection outcomes for vulnerable. The voucher helps families to cover some of their basic needs and has a psychological effect, contributing to a reduction in negative coping strategies that can have a harmful impact on children. It also acts as an incentive for families to maintain contact with social workers, and has proved an important tool in those early stages of building trust, an essential precursor to effective discussion of children's protection needs, implementation of the care plan and referrals. Implementing these activities is resource-intensive and requires concerted investment – the wider UNICEF-supported programme is employing 80 full-time case managers, and even then, each is dealing with a caseload of over 230.

**Unrestricted modalities would be more effective than vouchers.** Monitoring to date has confirmed UNICEF's concerns that the use of vouchers restricts what families are able to use the money for, and thus limits protection outcomes compared to unrestricted cash assistance. To get around this problem, UNICEF covered the costs of some additional services (such as legal aid and assistance including for GBV survivors) directly through emergency cash assistance - a monthly lump sum available to the implementing partner NGO to support the case management system.

**A coordinated approach between sectors is needed to design more integrated programmes.** Whatever decision is made about which section takes the leads on coordination of cash-transfer programming within UNICEF, inter-departmental coordination is needed to ensure integrated programming between social policy, other technical sections and the emergency team.

# Conclusion

In light of the above lessons learned from the three programme experiences, the following conclusions can be drawn on the implications in moving forward with cash assistance to achieve outcomes for children:

- **Cash-transfer programming is a feasible and appropriate intervention that goes beyond sector boundaries** and can remove various economic barriers that families face in caring for children and accessing the goods and services needed for their survival, growth and development.
- **Cash addresses 'demand-side' barriers and can complement – rather than replace - UNICEF's work in service provision and systems strengthening**, which addresses 'supply side' barriers, to improve outcomes for children. Strong coordination between sections is essential to ensure well-integrated programme approaches as well as for identification of risks and mitigation strategies.
- **Social protection programmes and systems are a viable and appropriate mechanism** for supporting the needs of families and children during crises.
- **Efforts to link with national systems should be mindful of the realities of working with governments.** It is important to consider legal and regulatory aspects and political concerns, which may demand compromises in aspects

of design and implementation. Any efforts to strengthen national systems require careful and inclusive discussion and mediation, and a long-term perspective from the beginning.

- **The time required to understand social protection systems, identify opportunities for linking, engage with governments and develop the necessary ways of working can be extensive.** Considering these aspects for the first time after a crisis will not be conducive for effective response. Therefore, Governments, UNICEF and other partners should invest in mapping and assessing the 'shock readiness' of national systems, building political will to engage and understanding the potential and limitations of use of these systems for humanitarian response as part of its preparedness planning.
- **Effective cash-transfer programming requires investment in standard operating procedures, including guidance and tools and build**

**operational expertise in CTP.** Guidance, tools and training should support the identification of the supply- and demand-side barriers to services for children in emergencies, and align CTP with other complementary services to contribute to achieving positive outcomes for children. This must include measures to ensure that the complementary services also have sufficient capacities and expertise.

- **It is critical to invest in standardized approaches to monitoring and evaluation,** that collect evidence on how cash contributes to outcomes for children, as well as the added value of linking cash assistance with other complementary activities to address non-monetary supply- and demand-side barriers to child wellbeing. This should go beyond sector-specific expenditure to capture the range of expenditures having a direct or indirect impact on children, as well as the outcomes for coping strategies and child development and wellbeing.



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# Kyrgyzstan

Supporting National Social Protection Systems  
to Respond in Times of Crisis



# Introduction

**Social protection systems are increasingly being used to provide emergency assistance during times of crisis.** These systems allow for more effective, efficient and sustainable solutions in delivering aid than creating parallel responses. This report documents an intervention by the State Agency for Social Welfare<sup>1</sup> of the Kyrgyz Republic, supported by UNICEF, to design

and implement a horizontal expansion of the national social protection system to provide cash assistance to vulnerable households affected by inter-ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010. The case study documents UNICEF's experiences, the processes followed and the lessons learned.

## Overview & background

Following the ousting of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in 2010, riots escalated into mass violent clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the southern Osh and Jalalabad provinces. At least 490 people lost their lives in the violence and more than 4,600 were injured in the largest emergency the country had faced since independence. About 400,000 people were directly affected by the violence, with 75,000 refugees fleeing to Uzbekistan and a further 300,000 persons internally displaced. The Interim Government had limited experience of and capacity to deal with major emergencies, and also faced a governance crisis, as the violence led to a breakdown in trust between the ethnic communities and lowered confidence in the law enforcement authorities, particularly among ethnic Uzbeks. The Interim Government appealed for international assistance to deal with the humanitarian consequences of the violence. Although most of the refugees and internally displaced people returned to their homes within a month, they required extended emergency assistance, given large-scale destruction of housing, sustaining of injuries, and loss of livelihoods. Vulnerable families with children (an estimated 2,300 people) were particularly in need of support.

**By 2010, the national social protection system was already relatively well developed.** Social assistance programmes included subsidies inherited from Soviet times and two targeted cash-based social transfer programmes, both introduced in 1998. The Unified Monthly Benefit (UMB) is means-tested, targeting low-income families with children aged 1.5 to 16 years (or 21 years if still studying). It also includes a fixed birth grant and allowance for children under 1.5 years. The Monthly Social Benefit (MSB) is categorically targeted to disadvantaged groups, including children and adults

with disabilities, orphaned children, families with many dependents and older persons not qualifying for state pensions. Families meeting the criteria can receive both benefits, which are paid at household level: transfer values vary depending on family size and demographic composition. Together the programmes accounted for 0.5 per cent of GDP in 2009. Both were centrally managed by the State Agency for Social Welfare (SASW) and had fairly good coverage, reaching 346,833 child beneficiaries (around 14 per cent of the country's children and 18 per cent of all families with children) and 63,818 persons (over 6.5 per cent of the population) respectively in April 2010. The registration processes for both programmes – and especially the UMB – were rigid, bureaucratic and cumbersome. Families had to apply in the social welfare offices at district level, often over 100km from their residence. Both programmes required applicants to provide multiple documents, which could take time to collect and were not all easily accessible (some required in-person application, again at district level). For example, the UMB required copies of parents' national ID, children's birth certificates, and proof of income from workplaces or local authorities for the last three months. The MSB required caregivers' national ID, children's birth certificates, parents' death certificates, certificates for children at school, and certificates from the health authorities confirming disability. The UMB had the additional requirement of a household visit by a social welfare officer to further verify income. UNICEF had been working with SASW since 2008, supporting independent analysis of the social protection system, reforms to MSB targeting (to stop linking the categorical benefit to family income) and other efforts to reduce exclusion error. It was also involved in technical discussions and policy dialogue in 2009 on how to respond to the impacts of the global financial crisis through the social protection system.

<sup>1</sup> Now the Ministry of Labour and Social Development



**Early on in the recovery phase, it became apparent to UNICEF that humanitarian assistance was limited to sector-specific, in kind, commodity distributions according to agency mandates.** There was no analysis of the needs and vulnerabilities of low-income families and no plan to provide any income support to

households despite the fact that markets and services were not disrupted. In this context, UNICEF and SASW designed and implemented a horizontal expansion of the national social protection system to provide cash assistance to vulnerable households affected by the inter-ethnic conflict.

## Intervention

**Throughout the project, UNICEF worked in partnership with the Interim Government – both SASW and other departments – to extend the two social transfer programmes to new, disaster-affected households.** The eligibility criteria remained the same, but an extraordinary enrolment campaign was conducted and other actions were taken to reduce barriers to enrolment for new households. Social protection was

also expanded to provide support for children whose parents or caregivers had gone missing in the conflict. Children with missing parents/breadwinners and without supporting documents were covered with a monthly stipend of KGS 1,000. During that time children were assisted to restore or establish documentation in order to become eligible for the UMB or MSB. These children could receive support until they turned eighteen.



**Prior to the crisis, the SASW had never engaged in emergency response and it had not initially been clear about its role.** After physical access was restored to the affected areas, UNICEF and SASW conducted a joint rapid assessment, which confirmed that socially vulnerable groups (low-income families with many children, children with disabilities, single senior citizens and families who had lost their breadwinners) and especially children were among the most affected, that households had lost their means to earn incomes, and that this line of activity was directly relevant to its mandate.

**The feasibility of using the social protection system to respond to the needs of those affected by the crisis needed to be assessed.** UNICEF's prior engagement with SASW meant that it was already familiar with the objectives, design and operational processes of social transfer programmes in their usual development context. This sped up the assessment process and facilitated political buy in from the start. UNICEF knew the programmes' eligibility criteria, and believed that those identified in needs assessment as most vulnerable met the criteria. It also knew that the application processes for these programmes – especially the UMB – were not conducive to supporting a rapid response. It thus resolved that an extraordinary enrolment campaign targeting the communities most affected by the conflict would guarantee minimum incomes for households impoverished by the conflict while lives and livelihoods recovered.

**After the assessment, UNICEF held discussions with SASW to ascertain the political will for responding to the needs of conflict-affected families by expanding the social transfer programmes;** if it was possible to relax certain administrative processes to facilitate rapid identification and enrolment; the capacities of the administrative staff and the support they would need to rapidly scale up the programme; where registration and payments usually took place and whether these points were accessible to the affected population; and any risks or concerns the SASW had regarding expanding this programme and if they could be mitigated. A cross-governmental taskforce was established, chaired by the Vice Prime Minister for Social Affairs and including SASW, the State Registration Service, the Ministries of Finance, Education and Health, and UNICEF. The taskforce developed a plan to ensure that those affected by the conflict could access the state services they needed. Within about two weeks, a Temporary Regulation was drafted and approved by the President to accelerate enrolment to the social assistance programmes. This relaxed the proof of eligibility requirements for a six-month period – the peak of the humanitarian response – in the affected areas, and was also applied to applications that were already in the pipeline but not yet approved. Ad hoc local social commissions were established to rapidly assess applications without household visits, and decisions could be made without documented proof of eligibility being provided.



**As soon as the regulation was endorsed, leaflets were distributed in three languages in the affected territories to inform the population about the initiative, its purpose and how to apply.** UNICEF recruited additional social workers and trained them on the new Regulation, introducing points of contact for social welfare at village level in the affected areas through mobile groups. This effectively took registration to community level, increasing accessibility for the poorest. UNICEF funded these mobile groups until the end of 2011. The mobile groups and the multi-disciplinary taskforce assisted families to speedily restore their documents. The mobile social workers assisted applicants who had lost their documents to complete the required forms, and these were then fast tracked through the taskforce.

**At that time no digital management information system (MIS) existed. UNICEF set up an information support centre in Osh City Social Welfare Department, and social protection specialists were deployed there.** The centre developed a specific MIS to support the project. This created an integrated single database of affected families.

**SASW officers did not practice case management before the crisis. During the crisis, UNICEF provided training and coaching for social protection managers and social workers on additional outreach measures to ensure family welfare.** New documentation – a family care and support plan – was introduced to monitor

needs, referrals to services and progress. UNICEF covered the costs of monitoring visits by social workers until the end of 2011. The Government subsequently adopted the same monitoring approach.

**During the crisis, like previously, social transfer payments were delivered to families every month as cash payments through local post offices, as post office branches proved accessible in all villages despite the conflict.** Cash delivery was smooth, as the post offices were used to making these payments. It took about one month from the rapid assessment in July until the first payments were provided at the end of August.

**The costs of these transfers were funded through the national budget line for social assistance.** The numbers were manageable and so did not require additional measures from the Ministry of Finance. In addition, these newly enrolled cases fitted the normal eligibility criteria for social transfer programmes and so were eligible for continued, regular support (i.e. not just during the crisis period), meaning needs were met through the existing national budget rather than with 'emergency funds'. UNICEF provided technical assistance, mediated negotiations to facilitate vital regulatory changes, financed and supported increased operational capacity for the programmes during the extraordinary enrolment campaign, and monitored the programme.

## Progress and results

**The Temporary Regulation ensured speedier enrolment of eligible cases to social transfer programmes while it was in force.** During the six-month 'grace period' applicants could be enrolled and begin receiving their transfers without providing all the necessary documents. Given the displacement, it was also possible to enrol eligible households outside their places of residence, so that they could receive support in their temporary location. A total of 254 new conflict-affected households (including 764 children) were enrolled on the UMB, while 645 children were enrolled in the SMB.

**Taking registration to people not only speeded up enrolment of those made vulnerable and impoverished by the crisis, but also identified persons who had previously been eligible but had not known about the programmes or had been unable to apply.** In both programmes enrollments increased substantially while the eligibility requirements were relaxed (UMB increasing by over 18,500 children and MSB by 3,346 cases). The households enrolled in the programmes (those already in the pipeline, and new cases arising from

the emergency) became part of the regular beneficiary caseload on submission of their restored documents. They continued receiving assistance after the emergency response and recovery ended.

### LONGER-TERM EFFECTS

UNICEF's experiences provide tangible evidence that supporting emergency response through national social protection systems can have longer-term impacts for the underlying social protection system in the country:

- **UNICEF's partnership with SASW during the emergency was a useful entry point to negotiate reforms to the value of the UMB benefit, leading to provision in 2011 of a Guaranteed Minimum Income of appropriate size and linked to national poverty indicators.**
- **The status of social protection within government increased, as senior officials came to**

**understand the importance of social protection for meeting household needs.** This led to the reinstatement of social protection at ministerial level, with the creation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) in 2011. Under this new Ministry, social protection was managed through the newly created Department for State Benefits. Until that point no single ministry had owned child protection, and distinct functions were spread across the portfolios of different departments. After the MoLSP was established, child protection was formally integrated as a component of social protection services.

- **Social protection professionals received ‘hands-on’ experience of implementing such a programme.** Thirty of the social workers trained by UNICEF were subsequently mainstreamed into the Department, and funded by the state budget. Others were employed by NGOs supporting social welfare service provision. The Department also continued following the case management procedures introduced during the crisis after UNICEF’s exit.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Several lessons can be learned from UNICEF’s experience of linking to national systems to provide assistance to conflict-affected families in Kyrgyzstan. These include enabling factors that supported effective implementation, along with challenges faced.

**UNICEF’s early engagement with SASW generated the understanding and political will to support the response.** Thanks to participating in the rapid assessment, the SASW saw the impact of the crisis on families and children, and better understood its mandated role. UNICEF’s previous working relationship with SASW also helped, as trust and understanding had already been established.

**Early establishment of the interagency taskforce with senior leadership was crucial.** The group worked quickly and productively to elaborate actions, required procedures and provisional normative acts, and endorsed the Regulation on behalf of the Government, and facilitated its sign off by the President. Besides the legal necessity, the Regulation had a catalytic effect by ensuring efficient collaboration among the concerned governmental entities, and between central and local authorities.

**Speedy design and approval of the Temporary Regulation was critical for enabling the social transfer programmes to be used for the crisis response.** The Interim Government lacked certain statutory powers, meaning the President had to approve decisions directly, rather than their approval in cabinet committees. These interim measures made the approval process faster than could be expected in normal times.

## Conflict-Sensitive Design and Implementation

**The ethnic nature of the conflict required a conflict-sensitive response.** The inter-ethnic dimension was sensitive and SASW was unsure how to respond. The Government was not a party to the conflict but there were political sensitivities, as it had to be seen to be impartial. The conflict most heavily affected Uzbek communities, while most officials were Kyrgyz. The staff were somewhat reluctant to respond, partly on grounds of personal safety, and partly because they were also part of the community and not immune to the long-running tensions between the two ethnic groups.

- **UNICEF’s engagement and the idea of providing support through the social protection system helped to mobilize stakeholders in government, at national and sub-national levels, behind the concept of ‘support for children’.** This gave the national Government a clear and neutral role, as the programmes were open to both ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz citizens and assisted all children and vulnerable groups affected by the emergency. This also helped with communicating the initiative to frontline staff and the affected communities, as everyone could find common ground around assisting children. This demonstrates how an appropriately designed cash intervention can promote humanitarian principles in a conflict context. While the payments were insufficient to cover all humanitarian needs, Uzbek communities perceived them as a sign that the Government supported reconciliation and solidarity.
- **To ensure that the initiative was inclusive of both communities, UNICEF recruited both Uzbek and Kyrgyz social workers for the programme.** The social commissions’ membership reflected the communities’ ethno-demographic composition and included respected elders from both ethnic groups. These informal, traditional and trusted channels were a first entry point into some communities. This approach to community mediation avoided any inflammation of tensions and helped with peacebuilding and reunification of communities.



**Institutionalizing shock-responsive social protection requires coordination and support across government.**

The 2010 initiative – and the required regulations, procedures and activities – was developed ex-post. To leverage similar approaches effectively in future disasters requires the mechanism to be agreed and institutionalized into the social protection system ex-ante. UNICEF and the Department of Social Benefits under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (the successor to the SASW) have both advocated for this, but to date approval has not been granted. Between 2012 and 2014 a new social protection strategy was

elaborated, which included an action point to establish an emergency unit or structure within the MoLSP and to formalize standby arrangements for similar deployments. However, this was never implemented. The high changeover of ministers and deputy ministers in the MoLSP and other departments has not helped. UNICEF could play an important role in bridging this gap between the social protection and emergency sectors by facilitating dialogue and joint planning between the relevant ministries, for more effective and efficient emergency cash interventions in the future.



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**SCORING:** 5 indicates “highest level of satisfaction” while  
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