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## Adaptive role of (universal) child benefits in emergency responses in Turkey

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# SOCIAL POLICY IN DEMAND

A Working Paper Series

2024/02

## ADAPTIVE ROLE OF (UNIVERSAL) CHILD BENEFITS IN EMERGENCY RESPONSES IN TURKEY

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## Abstract

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Social Protection strategies aim to build resilience against various shocks and risks. Adaptive social protection incorporates shock responsiveness to foster adaptive capacity through preparedness, coping mechanisms, and adaptation strategies. Safety nets and universal child benefits are recommended as essential schemes within a crisis context. The Kızılaycard, comprising the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and conditional cash transfers for education (CCTE), emerged as national European Union-funded schemes expanded to accommodate refugees following the influx of the Syrian population into Turkey. These programs strive to achieve adaptive capacity outcomes for refugee children by addressing social, economic, physical, and institutional vulnerabilities.

A context-specified adaptive capacity outcome framework assesses how the Kızılaycard contributes adaptively to building resilience among children, informing policies on universal child benefits. The content analysis examines 50 policy documents, impact evaluations, 2 intersectoral vulnerability studies, and 4 expert interviews. In the development of multi-stakeholder cooperation, partners engage in policy dialogues, produce learning documents, and conduct evidence-based impact evaluations. While the programs demonstrate positive impacts on basic needs and education, their efficacy in fostering lasting positive coping strategies resilient to the economic crisis remains limited, with children's outcomes inadequately specified. Policy discussions take place within Steering Committees consisting of international agencies, with recommendations from The World Bank and UNICEF advocating for Turkey's adoption of universal child benefits to enhance adaptive capacity in policy frameworks, transforming institutional vulnerability into effective support and capacity for children. However, institutional vulnerabilities persist in multi-crisis environments, hindering the adoption of adaptive, child-responsive benefits for vulnerable children.

**Keywords:** Resilience; Shock; Adaptive; Capacity; Universal; Vulnerability; Children Outcomes.

## 1. Introduction and rationale

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Social protection ensures economic inclusivity by securing income, fostering resilience against risks, and reducing inequality. It encompasses social transfers, security systems, healthcare, child protection, and labor policies. Responsive to risks, it addresses idiosyncratic issues, such as disability and old age, as well as covariate challenges such as epidemics and earthquakes.<sup>1</sup> Vulnerability to shocks is country-specific. Effective protection involves schemes, policies, and early warning systems to mitigate the impacts of unpredictable events on the most vulnerable. Therefore, it requires the social protection system to adapt to shocks.

Turkey, experiencing earthquakes, refugee inflows, and financial crises, institutionalized shock response coordination with the establishment of AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) in 2009. Subsequently, Turkey joined the European Civil Protection Mechanism.<sup>2</sup> The Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), established in 2013, handles refugees' legal status and rights. Prompted by social protection reforms funded by the EU, Turkey responded to the refugee crisis. Cash transfers administered via Kızılaycard are rolled out with a child protection component for poverty reduction and educational support. Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) and Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), initially for citizens, were expanded to refugees.

The study examines how the ESSN and CCTE influence policies on child benefits. It assesses adaptive capacity outcomes for recipient refugee families and children affected by multiple crises. Using the framework from Sengupta and Costella (2023), referencing UNICEF and World Bank's frameworks, it evaluates the multidimensional resilience of refugees experiencing inflation, the pandemic, and the earthquake following displacement. These programs are chosen for their response to a globalized crisis via a multi-stakeholder structure with foreign donor funds and potential influence on national policies.

The study aims to analyze the policy-level influence of refugee cash transfers on universal child benefits. It highlights Turkey's efforts in targeting children but notes controversies in coverage and adequacy. The next sections cover the study's rationale, adaptive social protection, methodology, and policy analysis on the adaptive role of universal child benefits in Turkey, focusing on ESSN and CCTE.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank (September 2000). World Development Report: Attacking Poverty. Chapter 8: Helping Poor People Manage Risk © Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> AFAD. Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Interior. AFAD Strategic Plan 2019- 2023.

## 1.2. Family and Child Benefits in Emergency Responses in Turkey

The Kızılaycard is a cash delivery mechanism containing two main cash transfer programs analyzed in this study:

- **CCTE:** Designed to respond to the 2001 economic crisis with World Bank support.<sup>3</sup> Beneficiaries, including refugees, must meet conditions of school enrollment and monthly 80 percent attendance. Follow-up occurs with the child protection component. Payment amounts vary by age and gender, with girls receiving slightly higher amounts, ranging from 60 to 90 TL. Boys receive 50 TL at younger ages and 70 TL in high school.<sup>4</sup> An accelerated learning program (ALP) is integrated as a transitional education support for out-of-school children for three or more years. ALP students receive 90 TL.
- **TRC:** Is the implementing partner, facilitates delivery and caregiver engagement through sensitization activities. Payments are made bi-monthly, with an additional lump sum at each school semester's start for school-related expenses. Eligibility extends to families without regular income or social security. Partnerships involve the Ministry of Social Services, the Ministry of National Education, the Turkish Red Crescent, and, formerly, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). In late 2022, the funding agency European Commission Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO) was replaced by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) by removing its partnership with UNICEF. Over 2.5 million children are enrolled, including 1,840,304 Turkish and 695,556 non-Turkish children<sup>5</sup>, predominantly Syrian, followed by Iraqi, Afghan, and Iranian.<sup>6</sup>
- **ESSN:** Expanded for refugees in 2016 with ECHO funds, launched in 2011 for citizens. Different eligibility criteria apply to refugees, relying on demographic indicators rather than socioeconomic data due to verification challenges.<sup>7</sup> Each person receives a transfer value of 250 TL, aligned with

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<sup>3</sup> Global Conference on Conditional Cash Transfers, The World Bank (2006)

[http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01363/WEB/0\\_-11637.HTM](http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01363/WEB/0_-11637.HTM)

<sup>4</sup> Kızılaykart Platform (2017) Conditional Cash Transfer for Education Programme (CCTE).

<https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/sey.html>

<sup>5</sup> CALP, The Cash Learning Partnership (May 2021). Linking Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) And Social Protection. Turkey: Country Summary. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CalP-Curated-Case-Study-Turkey.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Kızılaykart Programmes (September 2023). Monthly CCTE Project Infographics

<sup>7</sup> Barca, V. and Kukrety, N. et al (2019) Programme Guidance: Strengthening Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems, UNICEF.

the Minimum Expenditure Basket by the World Food Program (WFP), aiming to supplement employment earnings for refugees' basic needs. Eligibility is based on six demographic criteria: elderly-headed households, single females, families with four or more children, and those with a high dependency ratio (children, elderly, disabled).<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1. Timeline of the (E)SSN and CCTE**

2011	2012	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023
ROLL OUT OF THE KIZILAY CARD	EXPANSION OF THE ESSN TO THE REFUGEES	OFF-CAMP PROGRAM LAUNCH	LAUNCH OF THE ESSN - PHASE 1	EXPANSION OF THE CCTE TO REFUGEE CHILDREN	STEPPING IN THE ESSN PHASE 2	HANDOVER OF WFP TO IFRC - END OF ESSN PHASE 2	LAUNCH OF THE C-ESSN	PHASE OUT THE (E)SSN	LAUNCH OF THE SSN (PHASE 3)
Kızılcard was launched for Turkish citizens to meet their basic needs	On 5 October, Kızılcard was piloted to expand to Syrians at a temporary accommodation center in Kilis. In October 2012, in-camp food voucher was initiated in partnership with WFP and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC)	In July 2015, a program was designed for refugees out of camps	In November 2016, Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) was launched with a 100 TL transfer amount and funded by the DG ECHO. Phase 1 rolled out between 2016-2017, and Phase 2 between 2018 – 2020 with WFP and TRC	Following the 2001 Economic Crisis, CCTE was launched for Turkish children to meet their education needs. In May 2017, CCTE was scaled towards refugee children. ESSN transfer value is modified to 120 TL	In January 2018, the ESSN Phase 2 started. In August 2018, a severe disability allowance was launched. In December 2018, the SASF started to operate in 63 with a discretionary allowance	IFRC replaced WFP in the implementation partnership. In Phase 2, DG NEAR also collaborated for funding and policy pollination.	C-ESSN was piloted for the most vulnerable households. The transfer amount of the ESSN is adjusted from 120 TL to 155 TL per person	1,400 top-up payment for COVID-19. The transfer is adjusted from 155 TL to 230 per person. UNICEF handed over the CCTE fully to the Ministry of Family and Social Services	Over 2 million is covered. ESSN becomes an SSN as a social safety net with DG NEAR with a 250 TL transfer amount. Three top-up payments for relief to the economic crisis

Source: Author's own illustration (illustrated from TRC's Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme Technical Analysis Report and Evaluation of The Emergency Social Safety Net Program, January 2018- March 2020 (ESSN-2) and Kızılcard Platform

Table 1 outlines key points of Kızılcard's evolution:

- In 2020, the partnership with WFP was handed over to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). DG NEAR started to fund Complementary ESSN (C-ESSN) and began targeting the most vulnerable group; disabled, single parents, and elderly.<sup>9</sup>
- The ESSN transfer value is adjusted for inflation; the recent is 230 TL.<sup>10</sup>
- Top-up payments were delivered for the pandemic and economic shock.
- By September 2023, ESSN and C-ESSN reached over 2 million refugees.
- Women are considered in the dependency ratio due to low employment.<sup>11</sup>
- An additional 2 percent ineligible for the programs receive support via the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> FRIT Office of the Presidency of Turkey, Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services. (2018) Exis Strategy from the ESSN Program <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/3725/essn-exit-strategy-1.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> IFRC (July 2021) Issue 15: ESSN Monthly Report. [https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/ESSN\\_Monthly\\_Report\\_July\\_2021.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/ESSN_Monthly_Report_July_2021.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> IFRC (June 2022) Issue 26: ESSN Monthly Report. [https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/2022-06\\_ESSNMonthlyReport\\_0.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/2022-06_ESSNMonthlyReport_0.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> ECHO (2023). The Facility Results Framework: Monitoring Report. No.11. Results Achievement Progress EU Support to Refugees in Turkey

<sup>12</sup> Kızılcard Platform. Kızılcard Programmes Reports and Fact Sheets: ESSN and C-ESSN Infographics September 2023.



The Kızılaycard aims to enhance the ability of its recipients to adapt to shocks, fostering positive behavioral changes and thereby contributing to the well-being and resilience of refugee children.

### 1.3. Rationale and Relevance

Turkey faces significant challenges with poverty, particularly among children at 22.4<sup>13</sup> percent and refugees at 64 percent poverty rates.<sup>14</sup> Refugee children comprising 1.7 million of the population, experience adverse child poverty.<sup>15</sup> Low funding for family and child benefits exacerbates this issue, with only 0.5 percent of GDP allocated, and 4.2 percent of total social protection spending. Poverty-targeting spending is only 1.37 percent of GDP, rendering child benefits from tax-financed and social insurance programs negligible.<sup>16</sup>

In such a poly-crisis environment with earthquakes following inflation, the resilience of the social protection system must be fortified especially for vulnerable populations like children. The 'Child on Move' Report of the World Bank evaluates the impact of the ESN, leading to advocacy for universalization and tailored support.<sup>17</sup>

As part of adaptive social protection recommendations on the linkage of humanitarian and social protection benefits, the Kızılaycard presents a practice of humanitarian social protection for refugee children. It is carried out within a strategic partnership with the European humanitarian and development funding agencies based on the EU-Turkey Agreement. The partnerships have assisted Turkey in easing the burden of providing aid to refugees, but analyzing the coherence of policies on child benefits for refugees with the prevailing structure and policy-level implications of the partnership are essential. The impact of the programs in a poly-crisis context guides policy discussions in the committees. Therefore, an important part of the analysis for adaptive social protection is assessing the role of these programs in developing adaptive capacity for children.

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<sup>13</sup> OECD (2021), Poverty rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/0fe1315d-en (Accessed on 13 April 2022)

<sup>14</sup> Munajed DA, Ekren E. Exploring the impact of multidimensional refugee vulnerability on distancing as a protective measure against COVID-19: The case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey. *J Migr Health*. 2020 Dec 7;1-2:100023. doi: 10.1016/j.jmh.2020.100023. PMID: 34405174; PMCID: PMC8352139.

<sup>15</sup> UNICEF Turkey Humanitarian Situation Report No.43, July-September 2021

<sup>16</sup> TURKSTAT (2021) Social Protection Statistics, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Social-Protection-Statistics-2021-45744&dil=2>

<sup>17</sup> Ozler, Berk & Celik, Cigdem & Cunningham, Scott & Cuevas, Pablo Facundo & Parisotto, Luca, 2020. "Children on the Move: Progressive Redistribution of Humanitarian Cash Transfers among Refugees," Policy Research Working Paper Series 9471, The World Bank.

The Kızılaycard assists refugee families through collaborative programs with global organizations like UNICEF, WFP, World Bank, Turkish Red Crescent, and IFRC. These actors are involved in assessments and evaluations to guide policies, including the suggestion of universal child benefits by the World Bank. Impact evaluations, conducted by partners such as WFP, UNICEF, and ECHO, offer insights into the effectiveness of cash transfers. With input from international partners via outsourced evidence production, Kızılaycard aims to address vulnerabilities among refugee children, informing policy decisions for resilient social protection schemes. However, the realization of policies recommended to insure children's long-term resilience as a response to the poly-crises remains limited.

#### **1.4. Contribution to Literature by Testing Adaptive Capacity Outcome Framework**

To better respond to shocks, social cash transfers, particularly safety nets and universal benefits, are recommended, but their adaptive role is not adequately assessed. Sengupta and Costella (2023) developed and tested the adaptive capacity outcome framework,<sup>18</sup> applied in this study to assess the role of cash transfers in Turkey's humanitarian efforts using secondary analysis of impact evaluations, assessment reports, and data from key informants utilized in this study.

The policy analysis exploring the dynamics of multistakeholder refugee assistance with rigorous impacts found in the literature helps understand the dynamics of building adaptive capacity outcomes in Turkey. It is a particular analysis delving into the linkage between humanitarian and social protection benefits for children.

## **2. Adaptive capacity outcomes framework and universal child benefits**

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Human experiences encompass a spectrum of events, both known and unknown, impacting various aspects of life such as income stability and resilience. Social protection systems, rooted in risk and rights-based frameworks, aim to mitigate these risks. While actuarial-based insurance addresses known risks, unforeseen events originate unpredictability, for which proactive policy planning for adaptive capacity building is necessary.

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<sup>18</sup> Sayanti Sengupta & Cecilia Costella (2023) A framework to assess the role of social cash transfers in building adaptive capacity for climate resilience, *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*, 20:1, 2218472, DOI: 10.1080/1943815X.2023.2218472

Social protection schemes, including safety nets and universal programs, prioritize income security and poverty alleviation, albeit facing challenges of policy coherence and sectoral fragmentation. Adaptive social protection is a means and approach to develop synergies between social protection, disaster risk management, climate adaptation, and food security.<sup>19</sup> In that respect, adaptive social protection is not a separate unit. Adaptive social protection builds resilience by addressing vulnerability and enhancing adaptive capacity to endure shocks. It focuses on achieving outcomes that integrate into social protection programs, like social cash transfers and universal benefits. This chapter navigates to the framework, beginning with an overview of these prominent schemes by zooming in their functions against shocks.

### 2.1. Understanding Social Protection

There is no universally accepted definition of social protection, and it is interpreted differently by organizations such as the ILO, the World Bank, and UNICEF. UNICEF views it as a collection of policies and programs aimed at addressing economic and social vulnerabilities, emphasizing “national leadership” and “progressive universal coverage.”<sup>20</sup>

The ILO focuses on establishing social protection floors with basic income guarantees and healthcare access, aiming for coverage against life cycle risks.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, according to the World Bank, social risk leads to instability and poverty. To overcome them, it categorizes the main elements as asset-building programs, social insurance schemes for risk-sharing, and safety nets for poverty reduction.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, these approaches seek to mitigate vulnerabilities and enhance resilience across populations. Vulnerability entails a potential decline in well-being and the fragility induced by exposure to shocks. In reverse, capacity refers to the ability to withstand risks.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the risk equation points to external threats related to the vulnerability of the target population by leveraging their capacity to mitigate the risks.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jorgensen, Steen Lau., Paul B Siegel. 2019. "Social Protection in an Era of Increasing Uncertainty and Disruption: Social Risk Management 2.0." Social Protection and Jobs Discussion Paper; No. 1930. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31812> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF (2016) UNICEF's Approach to Social Protection. Social Inclusion Summaries. <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/851/file/Social-Inclusion-Summaries-%20UNICEF%E2%80%99s-Approach-to-Social-Protection-2016.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> International Labor Office. World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future. Geneva: ILO, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Jorgensen, Steen Lau., Paul B Siegel. 2019. "Social Protection in an Era of Increasing Uncertainty and Disruption: Social Risk Management 2.0." Social Protection and Jobs Discussion Paper; No. 1930. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/31812> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

<sup>23</sup> Ludi, E / K. Bird (2007): Risk & Vulnerability: Overseas Development Institute (Wellbeing Brief No. 3). <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/5680.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> DG ECHO (2016) Thematic Policy Document n° 8: Humanitarian Protection: Improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises

It informs the design of programs, such as social assistance and insurance designed for the needs of the population.

## **2.2. Adaptive Social Protection**

Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) is the incorporation of shock sensitivity into the social protection system. It underlines the importance of combining the traditionally separate domains of social protection, disaster risk management (DRM), and climate change adaptation, aiming for a collaborative strategy to diminish vulnerability and enhance household resilience.

According to the World Bank<sup>25</sup>, the key characteristics of ASP are government-initiated investment, adaptability of social protection's building blocks to sudden shocks with developing design typologies, and building capacities for preparedness, coping, and adaptation. Preparedness means socioeconomic readiness with savings and schemes. Coping enables the stimulation of positive coping mechanisms to avoid negative ones by maintaining savings and staying informed. Adaptation requires a long-term plan to deal with the impact of exposure to shocks, like income security, and sustainable livelihoods.

The four building blocks are programs, financing, institutional arrangements, and partnerships. These components can be adjusted to better respond to sudden shocks and crises, such as through expanding social cash transfers. Under institutional arrangements, integrating humanitarian assistance with social programs and aligning funding with development and peacebuilding efforts is crucial. It can be possible by utilizing strategies like design tweaks, vertical and horizontal expansion, piggybacking, and shadow alignment.<sup>26</sup> Humanitarian assistance should work alongside existing social programs, expanding them as needed. It is important to align humanitarian efforts with development and peacebuilding goals, as outlined in the Grand Bargain of 2016. Instead of shifting funding from development to humanitarian aid, it is better to collaborate and strengthen social protection schemes for long-term resilience.<sup>27</sup>

## **2.3. Universal Child Benefit and Social Cash Transfers**

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<sup>25</sup> Bowen, Thomas, Carlo del Ninno, Colin Andrews, Sarah Coll-Black, Ugo Gentilini, Kelly Johnson, Yasuhiro Kawasoe, Adea Kryeziu, Barry Maher, and Asha Williams. 2020. Adaptive Social Protection: Building Resilience to Shocks. International Development in Focus. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1575-1. License: Creative Commons

<sup>26</sup> Ulrichs, M. and Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2018) Social Protection and Humanitarian Response: What is the Scope for Integration? IDS Working Paper 516, Brighton: IDS

<sup>27</sup> Grand Bargain. 2016. "The Grand Bargain: A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need." World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul

Poor people and some segments of the population experiencing life cycle risks are more vulnerable to shocks, especially if they lack access to social protection schemes. To help them prepare and cope, it is essential to leverage the resilience of social protection systems. Policy choice can be based on the gaps and needs within the consideration of system adaptability through typologies classified for shock adaptiveness. However, the trade-off between child benefits and social cash transfers should consider their distinct functions, which are insurance with basic income for child benefits while it is poverty reduction for cash transfers.

As outlined by Gentilini et al. (2020), during COVID-19, interventions in 195 countries encompass expanding current programs both in scope and reach, modifying the existing programs to enhance accessibility and efficiency, and introducing new initiatives through the administrative system.<sup>28</sup> Safety nets cover 60 percent of the measures, 50 percent of which are cash transfers. The World Bank states that social safety nets have evidence of their effectiveness in shock response.<sup>29</sup> However, low coverage of the most vulnerable hinders effectiveness as stated in the World Bank's framework.

Life cycle risks, as outlined by the ILO in "Social Protection Floors Recommendation No.202"<sup>30</sup>, include challenges encountered at various life stages, with childhood being a crucial phase due to children's dependence on socioeconomic support. This recommendation emphasizes ensuring basic income and access to essential services to mitigate these risks, advocating for social insurance coverage until children transition into the productive workforce. Providing a universal basic income to specific demographic segments, particularly those vulnerable due to life cycle circumstances, serves as an anticipatory measure against potential risks and offers a safety net during unforeseen crises.

#### **2.4. Conceptual Framework: Adaptive Capacity Outcomes Framework**

Shock can provoke vulnerability and put vulnerable categories of the population into the more vulnerable positions. To safeguard the immediate welfare and consumption following a sudden impediment, less prosperous households can resort to negative

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<sup>28</sup> Gentilini, U., M. Almenfi, I. Orton, and P. Dale. 2020. "Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures." Living paper version 11

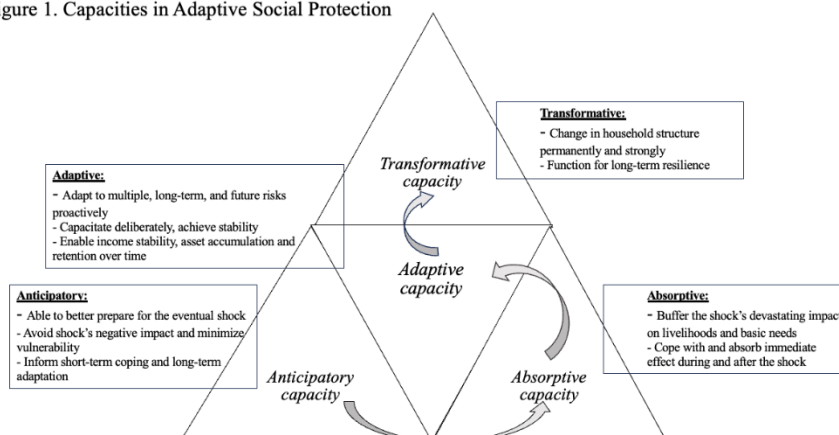
<sup>29</sup> Smith, Gabrielle Ruth; Bowen, Thomas Vaughan. Adaptive Social Protection: The Delivery Chain and Shock Response (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/799281603376140118/Adaptive-Social-Protection-The-Delivery-Chain-And-Shock-Response>

<sup>30</sup> ILO (2012) R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)I. National Social Protection Floors

coping strategies. It is categorized into 3 groups: stress, crisis, and emergency coping mechanisms. Stress leads to borrowing, using up savings, and selling assets. Crisis causes less consumption and avoidance of access to services. At worst, the emergency strategy pushes people to withdraw children from school to send them to work, begging, and returning country of origin.<sup>31</sup>

Capacity and resilience building are crucial for reducing children's exposure to unforeseen events and their detrimental effects. This involves recognizing initial reactions and vulnerabilities that hinder positive coping mechanisms. Adaptive capacity refers to the ability of community members to become more resilient by developing behaviors and actions fostered by social protection programs.<sup>32</sup> This includes absorptive and anticipatory capacities along with adaptive capacity, which work together to enhance stability and reduce vulnerability, as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Capacities in Adaptive Social Protection



Source: Author's illustration from Bowen et al (2020) the World Bank's framework on 'Adaptive Social Protection: Building Resilience to Shocks', page: 120

To assess the adaptive role of a universal child benefit through their impact on children's adaptive capacity, it is important to first define childhood. UNICEF's framework for social protection across the life course categorizes childhood into five groups: pregnancy and the first 1000 days, the 3-5 age group, the 6-10 age group, the 11-14 age group, and adolescents and youth.<sup>33</sup> Each age group has unique needs, and social protection aims to address both economic and non-economic

<sup>31</sup> Bowen, Thomas, Carlo del Ninno, Colin Andrews, Sarah Coll-Black, Ugo Gentilini, Kelly Johnson, Yasuhiro Kawasoe, Adea Kryeziu, Barry Maher, and Asha Williams. 2020. Adaptive Social Protection: Building Resilience to Shocks. International Development in Focus. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1575-1. License: Creative Commons

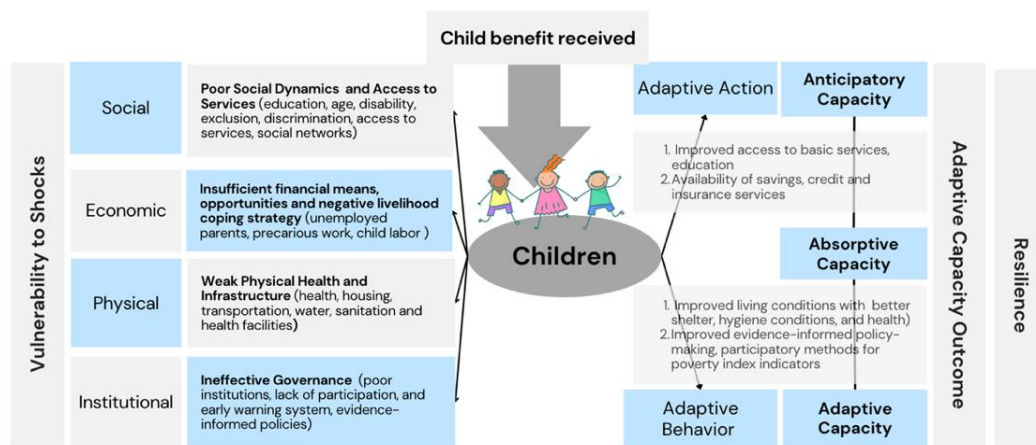
<sup>32</sup> Sayanti Sengupta & Cecilia Costella (2023) A framework to assess the role of social cash transfers in building adaptive capacity for climate resilience, Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences, 20:1, 2218472, DOI: 10.1080/1943815X.2023.2218472

<sup>33</sup> UNICEF (2019) UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework.

requirements, including access to child benefits, education, healthcare, and childcare. Ensuring universal coverage for children in social protection schemes is central to both UNICEF's and the ILO's recommendations.

Adaptive social protection aims to enhance the resilience and adaptive capacity of individuals and communities. In the realm of adaptive social protection, recognizing vulnerabilities is crucial for building resilience. Sengupta and Costella<sup>34</sup> utilize GIZ's multidimensional resilience index to address vulnerabilities. Extracting the ecological dimension from Sengupta and Costella's Adaptive Capacity Outcome Framework for the context of assistance for refugee children in Turkey, the framework focuses on social, economic, physical, and institutional vulnerabilities. Social vulnerability relates to discrimination and exclusion. Economic vulnerability is regarding financial barriers and poverty. Physical vulnerability interacts with inadequate infrastructure and health facilities. Institutional vulnerability is associated with governance failures and policy gaps in addressing children's needs.

Figure 2. Adaptive Capacity Outcome Framework



Source: Author's illustration (Adapted from UNICEF, (2019) UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework, p.15, and Sayanti Sengupta & Cecilia Costella (2023) A framework to assess the role of social cash transfers in building adaptive capacity for climate resilience, *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*, 20:1, and the World Bank's framework on 'Adaptive Social Protection: Building Resilience to Shocks', page: 120

Social cash transfers aim to mitigate these vulnerabilities, fostering adaptive actions and behaviors. Recipients are expected to demonstrate resilience through a change in their behavior in their actions when they react to the crisis. It happens by utilizing transfers effectively, leading to long-term coping mechanisms like seeking employment. Ultimately, such programs aim to cultivate resilience, enabling

<sup>34</sup> Sengupta, S. & Costella, C. (2023) A framework to assess the role of social cash transfers in building adaptive capacity for climate resilience, *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*, 20:1, 2218472, DOI: 10.1080/1943815X.2023.2218472

households to withstand and recover from various challenges. The adaptive capacity outcome framework assesses the adaptive capacity that refugee children and families develop upon receipt of the ESSN and CCTE. In the poly-crisis environment, even though they are expected to develop adaptive capacity, the capacity can be disrupted. The process of adaptive capacity building can reflect the adaptive role of cash transfers. Then, it can have a role in policy development for universal child benefits.

### **3. Methodology**

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The Kızılaycard, Europe's the largest poverty-targeting cash transfer program, presents a significant opportunity for policy analysis concerning child poverty in Turkey. This program operates under a multi-level governance structure linking humanitarian assistance with social protection and it is developed in partnership with European agencies. This involvement of multiple stakeholders, including transnational agencies, aims to influence policy at international levels, advocating for children's right to social protection.

This study examines the adaptative role of the Kızılaycard within Turkey's poly-crisis environment to explore its impact on national child benefit policies. It aims to ease the burden of aid provision to refugees and evaluates the program's coherence with existing child benefits policies, focusing on its effectiveness in reducing poverty. Using qualitative methodology, the study examines the program's adaptive role in emergencies, considering household vulnerabilities, coping strategies, and the potential for negative impacts. It also evaluates Turkey's responsiveness to emergencies like earthquakes to understand how well programs adapt to the needs of the children.

As the Kızılaycard develops an exit strategy, the research aims to understand its role in enhancing children's adaptive capacity and how it informs policies regarding universal child protection. Based on established guidelines and frameworks, the study recommends integrating humanitarian cash transfers with social protection, establishing a robust social protection system, and advocating for universal child benefits. Therefore, this study acknowledges the universal child benefit as an ultimate policy to achieve shock resilience for children in vulnerability and poverty. Correspondingly, the study identifies the lack of institutional capacity enlargement and political will to implement universal basic income for all children, especially those



below the poverty line, as institutional vulnerabilities.

### **3.1. Research Question and Design**

The research aims to explore how the Kızılaycard's contributes to enhancing children's adaptive capacity during emergencies to inform policies on universal child benefits in Turkey. It examines Turkey's approach to universal child benefits through child-sensitive strategies. By utilizing qualitative methodology, the study investigates how the Kızılaycard addresses vulnerabilities to build adaptive capacity and informs policies on universal child benefits.

The study identifies a gap between recommendations and Turkish policies, potentially leaving children vulnerable. Qualitative research, including content analysis and expert interviews, examines Kızılaycard's role in adaptive capacity development by analyzing findings from evaluations of impact on vulnerable children. The study develops a framework, based on existing frameworks, to comprehensively assess Kızılaycard's adaptive role.

### **3.2. Data and Empirical Analysis**

Qualitative research methods are used to explore how humanitarian child benefits can bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and social protection cash transfers, influencing child benefit policies. The methodology involves content analysis that systematically codes program and policy documentation such policy/legal documents, action plans, strategy papers, impact evaluations, reports, and academic papers. A total of 50 policy and program documents were reviewed, including 4 impact evaluations, 2 intersectoral vulnerability studies of TRC and IFRC, and 5 comprehensive vulnerability monitor exercises of WFP, which structure the analysis. Academic papers add a narrative background to the contextualized analysis.

Primary data is gathered through key informant interviews with experts in child protection, field implementation, partnership management, and program advising. These interviews offer insights into building adaptive capacity for children through cash transfers, thereby informing policies on universal child benefits. Methodological limitations include challenges in reaching experts and political implications due to high turnover during ministry handover procedures. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted, focusing on addressing vulnerabilities and institutional gaps in child coverage. Questions were clustered around adaptive capacity outcomes, actions, and behaviors fostered by cash transfers about the elimination of social, economic,

physical, and institutional vulnerability. It aimed at understanding the cash transfers' role in developing universal child benefits. This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of integrating humanitarian child benefits into broader social protection and aid, thereby guiding universal child benefit policy development.

## 4. Results

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Analyzing the adaptive role of child benefits in Turkey in influencing policies on universal child benefits has a twofold focus: assessment of the Kızılaycard in developing adaptive capacity outcomes and policy-level influence of Kızılaycard's multistakeholder structure for universal child benefit in Turkey. This section elaborates on the adaptive capacity outcome Kızılaycard has achieved, followed by its policy-level influence on universal child benefit, emphasizing adaptive capacity development for emergencies in Turkey.

### 4.1. Assessment of the Kızılaycard in Developing Adaptive Capacity Outcome

To measure the adaptive role of universal child benefits (UCBs) in Turkey, it is crucial to assess to what extent the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) initiatives reinforce the resilience of recipient households in managing and adjusting to multifaceted crises and vulnerabilities. This study applies an adaptive capacity outcome framework to these programs. The assessment reveals whether recipient families and children of the cash transfer can develop adaptive capacity in an environment where a conflict-induced crisis is followed by high inflation, the pandemic, and an earthquake.

The ESSN and CCTE were initiated at the time of crisis. The ESSN was launched after the refugee influx peaked in 2014 and the CCTE was first kicked off to respond to the economic crisis in 2001 and expanded for the refugee crisis. These programs aim to meet the basic needs of children and prevent negative coping mechanisms related to consumption. However, the newly emerging and ongoing shocks exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities of the population targeted. Besides, institutional choices about transfer value, eligibility, and coverage have implications for the extent to which vulnerability and poverty reduction are realized. Therefore, it is important to start the analysis by presenting the refugees' situation when they arrived in Turkey. It can then follow how the program is designed. The last part utilizes

rigorous impact evaluation reports and policy documents of the programs to apply the assessment on the ESSN and CCTE.

The situation when many Syrians arrived in Turkey was very dire socioeconomically and concerning the physical and institutional vulnerability of refugees. There was no sufficient data about their profile, clarity on the status to be given to them no registration system for refugees.<sup>35</sup> Integration of refugees into social assistance occurred with the institutionalization of refugee registration first via establishing the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) established in 2013.<sup>36</sup> Then, the DGMM data is integrated into the Integrated Social Assistance System (ISAS), which provides integrated data for social assistance and security programs.<sup>37</sup>

Governmental institutions faced capacity issues due to the refugee influx, which led to social tension. Refugees, predominantly living outside camps, faced poverty and social barriers, exacerbating vulnerabilities.<sup>38</sup> Refugee children encountered obstacles accessing vital education and health services due to discrimination and registration issues. Malnutrition become more prevalent especially among Syrian refugees in Turkey, while child labor and marriage have escalated as coping mechanisms for livelihoods.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Emergency Social Safety Net aims to alleviate these challenges through the collaboration of WFP, TRC, and relevant Ministries in addition to the provision of free health and education services.

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<sup>35</sup> Note from the key informant interview

<sup>36</sup> Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Interior, Presidency of Migration Management <https://en.goc.gov.tr/about-us>

<sup>37</sup> Turkey's integrated social assistance system (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/515231530005107572/Turkey-s-integrated-social-assistance-system>

<sup>38</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), Position Paper on Refugees from Syria 2014, 20 June 2014, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/56fcc234.html> [accessed 3 November 2023]

<sup>39</sup> Sahin E, Dagli TE, Acarturk C, Sahin Dagli F. Vulnerabilities of Syrian refugee children in Turkey and actions taken for prevention and management in terms of health and wellbeing. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2021 Sep;119(Pt 1):104628. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104628.

**Table 2. The Social Protection System: Programs, Objectives, and Types of Social Protection Programs in Turkey**

<b>SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>TARGETTING</b>	<b>TYPES OF PROGRAMS</b>	<b>PROGRAM</b>
<b>Social safety nets/ social assistance Noncontributory</b>	Poverty	Refugee and citizen children	Conditional cash transfers	CCTE (Conditional Cash Transfer for Education)
	Poverty	Refugees	Unconditional Cash Transfers	ESSN (Emergency Social Safety Net)
	Poverty	Maternity Benefit,		Citizen mother and blue card holders (obtained by being born in the country)
	Poverty	Multiple Birth Assistance (0-24 months aged)		Mothers in poverty with multiple births (two and above)
	Poverty	Conditional Health Assistance		Citizen children till 2 months and pregnant months
	Poverty	Women Citizens		Cash assistance for widowed women
	Poverty	Citizens with disabilities and the elderly		Home Care Cash Transfer
	Public Reward	Citizen Veteran Families and Military Child Benefit		Cash Assistance for Needy Veteran Families and Children
	Insurance	Elderly and People with Disabilities - Citizens	Social Pensions	Disability and Elderly Benefits
	Poverty	Earthquake Survivors (in or out-Camp)	In-kind and Food Support, child benefit	Kızılaycard for earthquake survivors
Poverty	People in Need - Citizen		Educational Supply Assistance	
<b>Other</b>	Disaster Resilience Vulnerability	Earthquake Survivor and at-risk people	Other Interventions	Housing allowance
		Elderly and People with Disability - Citizens		Home Care Assistance
	Poverty	Poor People		General Health Insurance
<b>Social insurance Contributory</b>	Insurance		Short-Term	Accident at Work and Occupational Disease Insurance Sickness Insurance and Temporary Incapacity for Work Allowance Maternity Insurance (Maternity Benefit & Breastfeeding Grant)
			Long-term	Old Age Pension (Old Age Single (lump-sum) payment) Invalidity Pension Survivor Pension (with Death Grant & Marriage Benefit & Funeral Benefit)

Source: Author's illustration (prepared by reviewing relevant Ministries' documents)

Conditional Cash Transfer for Education in Turkey aims to support low-income families, ensure children attend school regularly, and provide additional social services for child protection after the economic crisis in 2001. A study on poverty trends in the early 2000s reveals despite improved living conditions and access to household items, poverty rates increased due to persistent unemployment and limited education access.<sup>40</sup> The program addresses child protection risks with an emphasis on the social and physical vulnerabilities more than a substantial reduction in economic vulnerability. Table 2 shows that CCTE aims to support school-age children and those in accelerated learning programs (ALP) in child protection and education. However, while Turkish children receive conditional health assistance, and Turkey

<sup>40</sup> Metin, B. (2011). The Trend In Poverty Rates From The Period Of Economic Crises In 2000 And 2001 Up To Nowadays In Turkey: A Field Research Regarding Absolutely Poor In Ankara. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 3 (2), 59-72. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ijsshs/issue/26222/276144>.

provides a wide range of assistance to citizens, refugees cannot receive these benefits. This creates a segmented support structure where veteran children are targeted, but not all refugee children. Consequently, refugee children's adaptive capacity is influenced by the patchwork of support they receive.

The programs involve three main steps: targeting vulnerable households through means-testing, providing financial assistance via Kızılaycard for education-related expenses, and enforcing conditionality through ISAS to ensure school attendance for the CCTE. Monitoring and evaluation are conducted through impact evaluations and post-distribution monitoring to refine program design and effectiveness by the TRC, IFRC, and outsourced consultancies.

The study applies the Adaptive Capacity Outcome Framework to (E)SSN and CCTE programs using rigorous impact evaluations by referring to "The Facility Results Framework Monitoring Report No.11"<sup>41</sup> as the primary source with indicators and the latest progress report of the programs. Additional resources include TRC's vulnerability studies and WFP's comprehensive vulnerability monitoring exercises (CVMEs). It focuses on recent shocks in Turkey and their impact on adaptive capacity, highlighting the need for both adaptation and coping strategies. While the refugee crisis is protracted, recent shocks like inflation have challenged resilience-building efforts, necessitating a focus on coping and preparedness. Impact evaluations reflect pre- and post-pandemic effects, but the recent earthquake's impact is not yet quantified in rigorous evaluations. TRC's documents illustrate how vulnerability and poverty are considered in program decision-making. The study also addresses refugees' current adaptive capacity, emphasizing their ongoing exposure to shocks like COVID-19 and the recent earthquake, particularly in regions with high refugee populations.

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<sup>41</sup> ECHO (2023). The Facility Results Framework: Monitoring Report. No.11. Results Achievement Progress EU Support to Refugees in Turkey.

**Table 3. The Adaptive Capacity Outcomes Framework (ACOF) of the Kizilaycard (CCTE, C-(Emergency)Social Safety Net, (ESSN) for refugee families/children in Turkey**

Adaptive Capacity Actions and Behaviors that ESSN can contribute to:	Adaptive Capacity Outcomes Achieved:			Vulnerability Dimensions
	Preparedness	Coping	Adaptation	
Attending school regularly for children No attempt to increase educational capacity of adults in the household. Decreasing hostility to refugees with foreign-funded assistance	(1.2) Lack of Adult Education <sup>1</sup>		(1.1) Improved School Enrolment* and Attendance by 62% <i>(larger impact of enrolment on older children with higher opportunity cost)</i> <sup>2</sup> (1.3) Strengthened Social Cohesion <sup>1</sup> (1.4) No significant impact on child marriage <sup>1</sup> to meet eligibility (underage marriage is less likely to happen in eligible HHs with no significant impact)	<b>Social</b> (1.1) Educational attainment (1.2) Adult Learning (language course, vocational trainings) (1.3) Social Cohesion (1.4) Child Marriage
Not generating income (decent or not) Enrolling children to study instead of sending to work Acting with "stress" livelihood strategies but not with "emergency" strategies Activating and empowering economy		(2.1) Negative Livelihood Coping Strategy <sup>2</sup> in the high inflation: - Buying basic needs on credit - Borrowing Money  (2.2) Increased deprivation in income <sup>1</sup> - No income (51% of HHs are income poor, and significantly fewer households have any members who have worked in the last 30 days) - No impact on ability to generate income	(2.1) Positive Livelihood Coping Strategy in displacement: - Less indebted <sup>5</sup> - Reduced child labor by 88% <sup>2</sup>  (2.3) Empowered Economy <sup>1</sup> : - Generation of around 2 TL worth of economic output of every 1 TL (contribution to host society) - Positive impact on business creation and a decrease in unemployment insurance claims in the ESSN locations	<b>Economic</b> (2.1) Livelihood Coping Strategy (2.2) Income Generation (2.3) National and Local Economy
Applying negative food consumption coping strategies by a change from positive food consumption strategy due to inflation and pandemic Benefiting from healthcare services less and Consuming to increase living standards, especially for winter	(3.2) Reduced Access to Healthcare (2016-2020) <sup>3</sup> : - No significant effect on the number of those reporting sick - Reduction in the number of people receiving treatment when sick ** - No significant impact on fertility despite higher fertility rate than ineligible HHs	(3.1) Negative Food Consumption Strategies <sup>4</sup> : <i>(increased by 2022 due to food prices, the pandemic and earthquake)</i> : - Consumption: less expensive and preferred food, reduced portions, and number of meals, restricted adult portion	Food security <sup>5</sup> ****: <i>Positive Coping Strategies in protracted displacement by 2020:</i> - Consumption: frequency, quality - Dietary diversity  Improved Living Standard: - Improved consumption over winter assets <sup>3</sup> - No significant impact on household overcrowding, access to WASH facilities <sup>3</sup> - Movement of children from worse-off to better <sup>5</sup> *****	<b>Physical</b> (3.1) Food Security (3.2) Physical Health and Fertility (3.3) Living Standards (WASH, household composition, winter
Outsourcing impact evaluation and evidence production for policymaking on children Gradually integrating employment policies to the Kizilaycard programs	(4.1) Lack of Inhouse Evidence-Production with Rigorous Impact Evaluations		(4.1) Lack of evidence of such multi-purpose programs <sup>3</sup> (4.2) Exclusion of households without registration and identity card (14% of the non-applicants registered in another city) <sup>1</sup> (4.3) Possibility of disincentivizing beneficiaries for employment <sup>1</sup>	<b>Institutional</b> (4.1) Rigorous Impact Evaluation (4.2) Civil Registry (4.3) Policy Coherence with Employment Policies

<sup>1</sup> OPHI and WFP (2022). *Meta-Analysis of the impact and lessons learned for implementation of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme in Turkey (2016–20). Part 2: Focus Areas 2 and 3, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and World Food Programme (WFP).*

<sup>2</sup> Aysun Hiziroglu Aygun & Murat Guray Kirdar & Murat Koyuncu & Quentin Stoeffler, 2021. "Keeping refugee children in school and out of work: Evidence from the world's largest humanitarian cash transfer program," Koç University-TUSIAD Economic Research Forum Working Papers 2106

<sup>3</sup> Robson, M., Vollmer, F., Dogan, B., and Grede, N. (2022). "Distributional Impacts of Cash Transfers on the Multidimensional Poverty of Refugees: The ESSN Programme in Turkey," OPHI Working Paper 142, University of Oxford.

<sup>4</sup> IFRC & Kizilay (2022). *Intersectoral Vulnerability Study Round 2 2022 Living on Bare Minimum: An Exploration of The Vulnerability of Refugees in Turkey*

<sup>5</sup> Ozler, Berk & Celik, Cigdem & Cunningham, Scott & Cuevas, Pablo Facundo & Parisotto, Luca, 2020. "Children on the Move: Progressive Redistribution of Humanitarian Cash Transfers among Refugees," Policy Research Working Paper Series 9471, The World Bank.

\* Improved School Enrolment and Attendance are better achieved in the cities supported by the child protection component of the CCTE based on the findings from the report "Programme Evaluation of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Syrians and Other Refugees in Turkey Final Evaluation Report."

\*\* While 2020 CVME estimates 95% of ESSN beneficiaries seek treatment when sick, the impact evaluation of OPHI with the data between 2016-2020, there is a slightly significant reduction is observed.

\*\*\* The proportion of households applying moderate and severe coping strategies is 16 to 18 percent at the highest historical level, but there is still a positive impact on food security from baseline

\*\*\*\* Compared to the baseline, the proportion of beneficiary households with acceptable food consumption increased from 77% to 84%

\*\*\*\*\* OPHI states that change in HH composition by moving children from worse-off HHs to better-off eligible families found by the World Bank for food intake could be due to unobservable variables

Source: Author's own based on Özler et al.(2020), Aysun et al. (2021), Robson et al. (2022), OPHI, WFP (2022)

The Kizilaycard's adaptive capacity framework assesses the impact of ESSN and CCTE on vulnerability and poverty across 4 dimensions. Derived from 4 reports, including an intersectoral vulnerability study, the findings highlight:

1. The World Bank's Policy Research Working Paper "Children on Move" in 2020<sup>42</sup> examines the impact of cash transfers on various factors, revealing an interesting dynamic of ineligible households relying on eligible ones. This study uses inverse probability weighting to gauge how cash transfers affect various factors like spending, debt, food habits, coping strategies, and child education. A notable discovery is that ineligible households sometimes send their 6-17-year-olds to eligible households to manage poverty and food needs. However, OPHI's meta-analysis suggests causality might also stem from unseen factors.

<sup>42</sup> Ozler, Berk & Celik, Cigdem & Cunningham, Scott & Cuevas, Pablo Facundo & Parisotto, Luca, 2020. "Children on the Move: Progressive Redistribution of Humanitarian Cash Transfers among Refugees," Policy Research Working Paper Series 9471, The World Bank.

2. OPHI and WFP<sup>43</sup> conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis with the indicators of the Refugee Multidimensional Poverty Index developed by OPHI and WFP grounding CVME of the WFP in 2022, showing similarities with the adaptive capacity framework. The robustness originates from applying propensity score matching to measure the causal impact of fertility, differences in difference for local economy, and regression analyses for education, health, labor market, food prices, and housing outcomes.

Efforts to promote self-reliance<sup>44</sup> through Kızılaycard, aligned with the Global Refugee Compact, have not significantly increased employment among beneficiaries. There is a concern that Kızılaycard might discourage recipients. However, those ineligible for cash assistance are more likely to experience hazardous employment, such as exploitative jobs, and begging.

3. OPHI's<sup>45</sup> paper on the distributional impacts of cash transfers on the multidimensional poverty of refugees indicates significant improvements in food consumption, meal diversity, education, and living standards, particularly among the most vulnerable populations. However, education only measures school enrolment and retention, but not adult education. Further, the income-related result indicates a deprivation in household labor force participation. The conclusion remark is that cash transfers alone may not be the most effective modality for long and medium-term improvements.
4. Koc University's TUSIAD Economic Research Forum paper highlights the positive impact of unconditional cash transfers on education outcomes, particularly in reducing child labor and improving schooling, dependent on school infrastructure and education policies.

The Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT)<sup>46</sup> aims to meet basic needs and improve education, with the biggest impact seen in food security, living conditions, and education. To enhance outcomes, the focus should be on policies combining income generation and adult education. However, the ESSN falls short of fostering sustainable income and adult engagement in lifelong learning. Cash transfers

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<sup>43</sup> OPHI and WFP (2022). *Meta-Analysis of the impact and lessons learned for implementation of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme in Turkey (2016–20). Part 2: Focus Areas 2 and 3*, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and World Food Programme (WFP).

<sup>44</sup> TRC (2019) Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme Technical Analysis Report: Transition from Basic Need Assistance to Livelihood Opportunities. The First Quarter of 2019

<sup>45</sup> Robson, M., Vollmer, F., Dogan, B., and Grede, N. (2022): 'Distributional Impacts of Cash Transfers on the Multidimensional Poverty of Refugees: The ESSN Programme in Turkey', OPHI Working Paper 142, University of Oxford.

<sup>46</sup> FRIT is a coordination mechanism for managing funding pledged to Turkey as part of EU Support to Refugees in Turkey.

struggle to address long-term needs, such as decent employment and education for refugees. While some improvements in employment referrals and work permits are noted, refugee participation in the formal labor force remains low, with many engaged in the informal economy. In conclusion, while cash transfers have a role in the provision of immediate needs, additional strategies are necessary for long-term improvements in recipients' lives and conditions. That's why, the human development of refugees with social investment is also essential for long-term contribution to the economy and children's lives.

#### **4.2. Role of Multistakeholder Cooperation of the Kızılaycard in Policy Influence on Universal Child Benefit for Emergencies in Turkey**

For constructing the analysis of the adaptive role of cash transfers in influencing policies on universal child benefits in Turkey, this part strives to grasp the constituents of the multistakeholder development cooperation of the Kızılaycard. The question here is on the ways the adaptive capacity outcomes of the programs inform the policies on child benefits.

Being enlightened with UNICEF's 'Strengthening Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems' guideline<sup>47</sup> developed for structuring child-sensitive shock-responsive social protection, the social protection system consists of 4 layers: evidence base, policies, programs, and administration. Evidence base forms the basis of policy development. Relying on the 4 layers, programs' assessment of their adaptive role can lead to the manner of developing policies informed by the program-related evidence generation, and administrative design incorporating poverty and vulnerability assessment of the targeted population.

To perform a comprehensive analysis of adaptive capacity outcomes of universal child benefits with reference to the ESSN and CCTE, it is essential to understand the nuanced and multifaceted ways in which these programs impact the adaptive capacity of beneficiary households and communities. To do so, the actor-oriented analysis portrays actors in the program operation and administration layer, evidence base and program level coordination, strategy, and policy level.

The multistakeholder nature of the Kızılaycard assigns a role to each actor ranging from policymaking and evidence production to administration. The Steering Committee under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) Office of the Presidency

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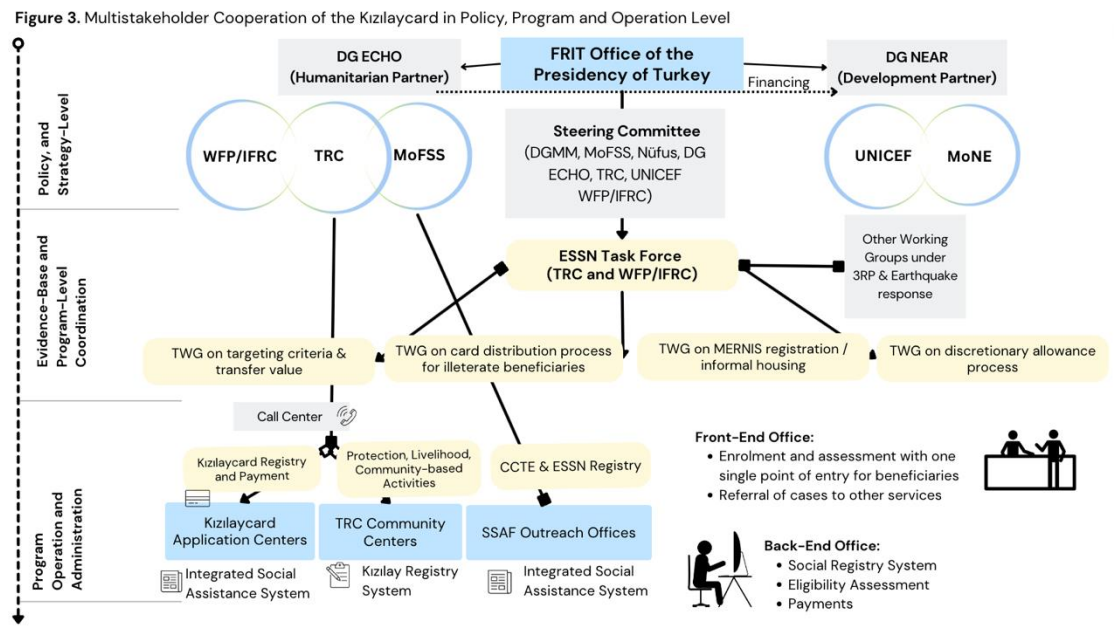
<sup>47</sup> Barca, V. and Kukrety, N. et al (2019) Programme Guidance: Strengthening Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems, UNICEF.



of Turkey centralizes response coordination, strategy, and policy-level management. Policies are based on coordination output at the ESSN Task Force as much utilize MEAL and vulnerability poverty analysis documents. It mainly comprises ECHO, TRC, WFP, IFRC, UNICEF, Ministry of Family and Social Services, Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs, and Directorate of Migration Management.

The evidence base is mostly generated based on the decision of the Steering Committee. It is mostly outsourced to research institutions mainly by ECHO. In addition, The Kizilaycard platform, created by the TRC, regularly releases technical analyses, assessments, and reports, including at least 42 documents plus monthly MEB reviews. Many of these documents focus on thematic issues. In 2021, phase 2 saw increased vulnerability and poverty due to the pandemic and economic crisis, prompting more frequent assessments of resilience breakdowns. Additionally, an earthquake significantly affected ESSN beneficiaries. These reports primarily serve monitoring, learning, and accountability purposes.

Regarding program execution, the operation and administration are to some extent decentralized, such as payments via Kizilaycard, community-based activities in community centers, and the case management system of child protection of the cash plus component of the CCTE to TRC.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the beneficiaries meet the TRC centers and the Ministry's outreach offices in the front end. However, the institutional choices are made by a group of actors including international agencies.



<sup>48</sup> Key Informant Interview Note

Source: Author's own based on key informant interviews' inputs and ECHO (2022) Evaluation of the Emergency Social Safety Net Program, January 2018-March 2020 (ESSN-2)

Over the years, program evolution resulted from changes in partners and their mandates. Testimonies from key informants highlight the UN's role in promoting accountability to affected populations, while the IFRC contributed to learning materials in the Kızılaycard Platform.<sup>49</sup> Though partners' strategies align on paper, operational challenges persist, such as inadequate communication from top to bottom. For example, a lack of awareness hindered the use of transportation facilities for educating refugee children during the pandemic.<sup>50</sup> The transition of responsibilities to different stakeholders remains unclear, with CCTE now under DG Near, the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) executing via outreach offices, and TRC reporting through the Kızılaycard platform.

The policy influence does not take place in one way from donor to implementing partner. Donors like ECHO influence policies through mutual learning with partners, as seen in their shaping of cash transfer policies based on lessons from Kızılaycard. This is evident in thematic reports like "DG ECHO Thematic Policy Documents No 3 Cash Transfers," emphasizing the importance of linking cash transfers with social protection systems for improved responsiveness and resilience. This underlines ECHO's significant role in policy development stemming from projects like ESSN and CCTE.

International standards, such as the Grand Bargain agreement put forward at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 in Istanbul, stress the integration of humanitarian and social protection efforts, especially crucial in regions like the Middle East grappling with the Syrian refugee crisis. However, some critical international principles, like universal child benefits proposed by UNICEF and ILO, are often overlooked, with a gap in understanding social insurance and basic income security. The primary cause is that the programs are influenced more by humanitarian principles and funding than by social protection principles.

Stakeholders with technical expertise, including TRC, IFRC, WFP, UNICEF, and ECHO, contributing to policy initiatives of the Kızılaycard, prioritize mainstreaming vulnerability and poverty assessments. This collaborative effort involves technical analysis and reporting to enhance aid effectiveness. Donors like ECHO also shape policy based on experiences and learning materials by referring to humanitarian

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<sup>49</sup> Key Informant Note

<sup>50</sup> ECHO (2023). The Facility Results Framework: Monitoring Report. No.11. Results Achievement Progress EU Support to Refugees in Turkey.

criteria. Policy discussions at the top level can reflect a mix of donor-driven and national priorities. Nevertheless, some international actors are less powerful in bringing child-responsive social protection principles and advocating for translation of them into welfare policies in Turkey.

## 5. Discussion

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Despite aiming to to meet children's basic needs, and prevent negative coping mechanisms for consumption through design, institutional preferences regarding transfer value, eligibility, and coverage influence the efficacy of programs aimed at reducing vulnerability among refugee children. Understanding the vulnerabilities caused by the refugee crisis is crucial for assessing how these institutional choices are made. Since the children are still exposed to different types of shocks, it is significant to look at the current vulnerabilities of the population triggered by the effect of the newly emerging shocks due to the deficits in the institutional design of the programs at the evidence and policy level along with the administration.

Regarding the current situation, the transfer amount of the CCTE is insufficient to cover all education expenses, thereby highlighting hidden costs. A UNICEF evaluation also finds that while cash transfers in Turkey assist with educational costs, they fall short of covering other essential expenses like stationery, school fees, food, and transportation, thereby making education a financial burden for some despite free schooling.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, although there has been a reduction in the incidence of child labor among Kızılaycard recipients, the COVID-19 pandemic reversed this trend, leading to an increase in the number of child labor and child marriage cases.<sup>52</sup>

Despite improvements in living conditions over time, the earthquake raised issues such as access to water, sanitation, and shelter for all affected populations. Almost a year after the earthquake, the need for shelter and water, sanitation, and hygiene are still prevalent.<sup>53</sup> Issues like contaminated water, poor hygiene, and sanitation in temporary settlements pose environmental health risks and disease outbreaks.

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51 American Institutes for Research (September 2020) Programme Evaluation of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Syrians and Other Refugees in Turkey. Final Evaluation Report

52 SPACE (2021) COVID-19 and the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE) programmes

53 ACF (2024) Press Release: One Year After the Earthquake, more than 800,000 People are Facing Winter in Temporary Shelters in Turkey. Retrieved from: <https://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/en/press/one-year-after-the-earthquake-more-than-800000-people-are-facing-winter-in-temporary-shelters-in-turkey/>

Therefore, implementing short-term public health measures while investing in long-term preparedness and recovery strategies in Turkey is crucial.<sup>54</sup> Similar to the earthquake crisis, improved living conditions can easily deteriorate in a multi-crisis context. Therefore, the long-term resilience-building strategy should integrate humanitarian aid, disaster risk management, and climate adaptation into social protection through recommended institutional arrangements of adaptive social protection.

The analysis demonstrates that humanitarian-focused cash transfers like ESSN and CCTE are not resilient to multi-crisis contexts, since evidenced by a decline or stagnation in adaptive capacity outcomes in education, food security, living conditions, and employability are noted. The narrative of poverty-targeting cash transfers for adaptive social protection needs to be examined against the adaptive capacity outcome development through universal child benefits. To achieve this, child-sensitive social protection should be presented with its features, as the study scrutinizes child-sensitive adaptive systems.

Key principles of child-sensitive social protection, agreed upon by Save the Children, UNICEF, and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, emphasize acting in the child's best interest, progressively realizing coverage, including marginalized children, building adaptive systems, and incorporating children's perspectives.<sup>55</sup> These principles are interlinked and taken through ILO's coverage, adequacy, and comprehensiveness principles.

Coverage and adequacy are vital for the efficacy of adaptive social protection programs, addressing life cycle risks identified by the ILO, which considers childhood a dependent stage requiring socioeconomic support. Regardless of their families' income, children should receive adequate financial support from the government to enhance their adaptive capacity of children and reduce child poverty while investing in human capital. Families receiving the cash transfer are expected to cover expenditures for children to improve child welfare based on the indicators set in the program design, including but not limited to access to education, reducing income poverty, food security, living conditions, and health. The universality of social

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<sup>54</sup> Ahmed SK, Chandran D, Hussein S, Sv P, Chakraborty S, Islam MR, Dhama K. Environmental Health Risks After the 2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquake and Salient Mitigating Strategies: A Critical Appraisal. *Environ Health Insights*. 2023 Sep 26;17:11786302231200865. doi: 10.1177/11786302231200865. PMID: 37771788; PMCID: PMC10524068.

<sup>55</sup> Roelen, Keetie (2021). Child-sensitive social protection. In: Schuering, Esther and Loewe, Markus eds. *Handbook on Social Protection Systems*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 368–377.

protection programs is explained by ILO based on the human rights approach as reaching all members of a categorical population. Universal coverage of children, thus, is significant to develop the resilience of children against shock.

Referring to the progressive coverage principle of child-sensitive social protection, universal coverage of children is essential for resilience against shocks, supported by the ILO's human rights approach. Universal child benefits (UCBs) are characterized by tax transfers, unconditional and predictable payments, and wide acceptance, making them more resilient to budget cuts. Universal child benefits (UCBs) have mutual features: tax transfers, universal to all children, unconditional, predictable, and regular. Further, unlike narrowly targeted, means-tested, and conditional cash transfers, they are not isolated and positioned in wider tax and transfer policies. They can vary concerning policy and programs depending on the recipient's age group, transfer value, means of financing, and coverage of all children in the country. Universal benefits can serve as an efficient stabilizer during economic downturns and can more easily scale up during times of crisis. The programs that everyone benefits from accomplish more widespread approval than those with specific targets. Thenceforth, they can receive sufficient funding and are less prone to budget cuts during times of reduction since the children can be perceived as a “deserving” population.<sup>56</sup>

	Shock Responsive Elements				Child-sensitive Elements
	Evidence-base	Policy	Program	Administration	
<b>Universal Child Benefit</b>	Rigorous impact evaluation recommended	Governmental ownership and funding strategies  Design consideration with guidance of the ILO Social	Categorical targeting considering all children as dependent population  Unconditional, predictable, adequate, regular	Financial inclusion through alternative payment  Implementation by government outreach offices	Progressive Coverage  Inclusion of marginalized and the most vulnerable by nature of universality

<sup>56</sup> Bastagli, Francesca et al. (2020). Universal child benefits: Policy issues and options, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and UNICEF, London and New York, NY

		Protection Floor			Adaptation with integration of poverty-reduction schemes
		Long-term impact with life-cycle time payment			
<b>Poverty-targeting cash transfers</b>	Vulnerability and Poverty Assessments	<p>Insufficient government ownership because of foreign funding, fragmented implementation</p> <p>Lacking policy coherence with social security system due to insufficient referral to formal employment</p> <p>Short-term relief and failure to develop long-term impact</p>	<p>Possible inclusion and exclusion errors due to targeting mechanism</p> <p>No dedication to progressive coverage due to means-tested nature</p> <p>Design with humanitarian features, transfer amount calculated with Minimum Expenditure Basket</p>	<p>Program-specific administration</p> <p>If conditional, higher administration cost</p> <p>Adaptive changes in eligibility, transfer value, and payment methods</p> <p>Fragmentation caused by separated implementation in foreign funded cash transfers</p>	<p>Child Protection and best interest of children thanks to possible humanitarian linkages</p> <p>Adaptation through changing payment amount</p>

Source: Author's own

As in Table 4, comparing social cash transfers with universal child benefits indicates that social cash transfers are poverty-targeting by use of vulnerability and poverty assessment as evidence. However, they create relief with short-term and non-linear impacts. The design considerations are important and decisive in their role to develop adaptive capacity. Regardless, they do not necessarily target long-term life cycle periods as universal child benefits aim to cover all children during their childhood. Both of them have similar features but are not solely enough to eliminate the poverty trap and contribute to human development as social investment should be received with a comprehensive lens. Nevertheless, universal child benefits are a better modality for adaptive capacity development with its long-term and universal payments. Adhering to the ILO's principle, they need to be adequate and in line with basic income.

The current impact of the cash transfers in Turkey on poverty reduction is controversial, with recent shocks pushing 1.5 million people into poverty and leaving

refugees vulnerable.<sup>57</sup> Investing in human capital for all children, especially marginalized groups, is essential. Policies should address multiple vulnerabilities. Alternatively, evidence<sup>58</sup> from well-structured welfare states, such as Germany, Belgium, and England social insurance a preferred scheme and impacts poverty elimination. A comparison between social conditional cash transfers and social insurance examines how conditional transfers mitigate poverty vertically, while child and family allowances reduce horizontal poverty. Although the policy choice is a trade-off, universal basic income is another trend in Europe to accelerate poverty vertically and horizontally.

A strong policy analysis should address the deficits and strengths of the existing system for child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection. The resilience of children to shocks is hindered by the lack of child-sensitive adaptive social protection. Universal child benefits can help address coverage gaps. Cash transfers have shown potential to improve children's well-being, such as increased spending on their needs, better school attendance, and improved healthcare access. Effective programs depend on factors like design, implementation, coverage, transfer amounts, payment frequency, and integration with complementary services and broader social policies. These programs can significantly impact children's cognitive development and overall health.<sup>59</sup>

The Ministry of Family and Social Services 2022<sup>60</sup> report outlines various schemes for children, but they are fragmented, with limited coverage and no universal approach. Their main feature is the aim to cover different childhood stages till adulthood. However, support for adolescents is missing. Refugees are not covered at all stages of childhood. The disability element is also missing. Military support as it is seen from Table 2 creates segmentation, and it indicates that the policy choices are shaped based on public approval in the political realm in the face of targeting people in extreme poverty. They function as poverty reduction schemes instead of policy preferences on social insurance. In the analysis of coverage, it seems that only CCTE for Turkish children has a horizontally larger coverage. However, the number of children covered by a scheme is still very limited considering the total child

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<sup>57</sup> 3RP. Regional Refugee Resilience Plan. Türkiye Country Chapter 2023- 2025

<sup>58</sup> Baylan, M. (2019). "Impact of Social Security Expenditures on Income Distribution: Case of Turkey", *Manas Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 8(3): 2579-2593

<sup>59</sup> Bastagli, Francesca et al. (2020). Universal child benefits: Policy issues and options, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and UNICEF, London and New York, NY

<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Family and Social Services (2022) 2022 Activity Report  
[https://www.aile.gov.tr/media/129482/ashb\\_2022-idare-faaliyet-raporu.pdf](https://www.aile.gov.tr/media/129482/ashb_2022-idare-faaliyet-raporu.pdf)

population of approximately 22 million.

The CCTE and ESSN schemes, developed with EU support, lack integration with key principles of child responsiveness. The EU financially supported the development of the CCTE and ESSN programs following the EU-Turkey agreement, using international migration standards from the Global Refugee Compact. Despite these standards, political dynamics affect the integration of child rights principles. Consequently, the budget allocation should be analyzed through a political economy lens. Since 2011, the EU has pledged approximately 10 billion euros<sup>61</sup> (around 300 billion Turkish TL) for Kızılaycard benefits. It is around 1.5 billion Euros per year totaling 457 billion TL. Turkey allocates around 1.30 percent of its GDP to poverty-reduction schemes annually on average. It equals 59.92 billion TL in 2019. The estimations calculate the annual spending for refugees allocated by the EU, and Turkey's spending for citizens. EU funds are seven times higher than Turkey's allocation.

## 6. Conclusion

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As the baseline of the Kızılaycard is already a comprehensive vulnerability monitoring exercise, multi-dimensional intervention is always at the heart of the policies. Consequently, the ESSN is a multipurpose cash transfer designed to target people with vulnerabilities to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. It indicates that it aimed to address multidimensional poverty and vulnerability from the beginning. The reference point was humanitarian vulnerability aspects in consideration of humanitarian emergency sectors, WASH, shelter, health, and so on, but then adjusted to vulnerability dimensions in social protection in the application of rigorous impact evaluations.

The adaptive capacity outcome of the Kızılaycard reveals insufficient outcomes targeting children, with child labor diminishing but no significant impact on child marriage. The movement of children as a food consumption strategy remains unclear. In this respect, child-sensitive Social Protection<sup>62</sup> recommends systematic child risk and impact analysis evaluating all layers of social protection ranging from policies, and administration to programs with monitoring and implementation. Research should

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<sup>61</sup> European Commission EU Support to Refugees in Türkiye [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/turkiye/eu-support-refugees-turkiye\\_enn](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/turkiye/eu-support-refugees-turkiye_enn)

<sup>62</sup> Roelen, Keetie (2021). Child-sensitive social protection. In: Schuering, Esther and Loewe, Markus eds. Handbook on Social Protection Systems. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 368–377.



explore the sustainability of impacts and alternative policy options beyond social assistance.

Covariate shocks severely impact vulnerable populations, necessitating a rapid response and interventions to build adaptive capacity. In Turkey, social protection programs, particularly for children with disabilities, are inadequately structured and lack comprehensive and child-sensitive approaches. The only referencing documents are the Global Refugee Compact and the EU-Turkey Agreement. Therefore, for Kızılaycard, policy discussions are realized in the Steering Committee and ESSN Task Force at lower-level coordination to provide feedback. However, the major evidence is produced with quasi-experimental methodologies by the external research intuitions in the collaboration of ECHO and WFP.

The Kızılaycard program struggles to provide long-term adaptive capacity, often leaving refugees just above the poverty line and vulnerable to falling back into poverty during shocks. Evidence suggests that long-term universal child benefits (UCBs) are more effective in reducing poverty than limited income-tested programs. Despite recommendations from UNICEF and the World Bank, Turkey has not moved towards universalizing child benefits or expanding coverage to all children in poverty or extreme poverty. Current policy discussions do not reflect progress in this area, indicating a need for more evidence and advocacy to support the adaptive role of UCBs and address institutional vulnerabilities. Therefore, the long-term institutional vulnerability of all children in Turkey emerges as a result of a lack of child and shock-sensitive elements in this multistakeholder governance of social welfare and refugee response.

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## 7. Appendix

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### (Key Informant Interview Questionnaire)

Interview Questions:

Current Situation and Institutional Capacity towards Universal Child Benefit:

In what ways does Kızılaycard play an adaptive role in building adaptive capacity for children to inform policies on universal child benefits?

1. How (much) do you think social vulnerabilities of refugee children (disability, discrimination, access to services) are addressed with the ESSN and CCTE?
2. How do you evaluate the economic empowerment of refugees including youth in the current context through receipt of the ESSN and CCTE? What were the strengths points and things to improve for empowerment?
3. What is the achievement for physical improvement of children thanks to the CCTE and ESSN, (the water, food, shelter, and transportation consumption smoothing)?
4. In relation to the governance of the ESSN and CCTE (many actors involved), what are the gaps and strengths in accordance with child participation, quality of service delivery, actors' coordination, and policy coherence? What would be your recommendation to improve or to keep the status quo.