

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

FCL | ASAM

Donors: EC - Humanitarian Aid ECHO | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg,

## Project Summary:

Within the scope of the PALS Project, Fondation Caritas Luxembourg (FCL) and Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) aim to address protection needs and facilitate access to available services for vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants, including unregistered and undocumented migrants, who live in the provinces of Istanbul, İzmir, Balıkesir and Van. Protection and assistance will also be provided through ASAM offices and mobile teams in order to reach vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants in need of assistance.



**Map 1:** Provinces, where the project is implemented (Balıkesir, İstanbul, İzmir, Van) are indicated in **dark blue** color. Project coordination is conducted from Ankara, which is indicated in **light blue**.

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

**The first month was dedicated to recruitment, training and procurement yet have already started to contribute to the project activities**

On 15 September, the project was officially launched. During the first 47 days in September and October, the project's recruitment processes and logistic preparations were nearly completed. ASAM's existing database and data collection tools were updated according to the specific indicators of the project.

On October 5 - 6, an orientation program was organized for the 25 staff recruited for the PALS project with a special focus on protection topics such as Irregular Migration, Basic Concepts of Protection, Mechanisms for Combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Case Management, and Refugee Law.

From mid-October, in İzmir, the mobile team started to respond to border incidents and do outreach activities in the city district of Torbali and a rural district of Basmane.



**Image 1:** Orientation program was held in Ankara with the participation of all project staff

Ayvalık, located north of İzmir, is an important border crossing for migrants due to the proximity of the Greek islands. It is a new office for ASAM with a newly recruited team. In October, the team was on training and joined the ASAM-UNHCR Western Border Team and will be fully operational in November.

Local authorities such as PDMM and law enforcement were informed on PALS project by official letters and project team visits. In addition to that, information on PALS project was presented to the Local NGOs and UNHCR field offices in regional coordination meetings and working groups in October.

## Summary in Numbers

Number of targeted vulnerable migrants having their critical needs identified and met through basic assistance, legal information and referral: **242**

Number of persons with increased/appropriate information on relevant rights and/or entitlements: **137**

Number of individual case management conducted: **62**

Number of individual cases supported and referred for regularization: **6**

Number of individual cases at risk (SGBV/ UAM. etc) referred to specialized institutions and organisations including internal ASAM programs: **23**



Map 2: Location of Van and its districts

## ZOOM IN

Our Van office have been focused on ZOOM IN section of this month's newsletter.

The province of Van is surrounded by the province of Ağrı in the north and northwest, Lake Van and the province of Bitlis in the west, the provinces of Siirt, Şırnak and Hakkari in the south, and Iran in the east. There is a long borderline between Van and its neighbor, Iran. The border with a length of 454 km in the north-south direction is significantly important for the migrants. Van has become a frequently used hub for migration routes coming from the east due to the mountainous structure of the border, which makes it convenient for irregular crossing. Despite these challenging geographical conditions, most asylum seekers and migrants use the Turkish-Iranian border to enter the country.

Entering through Van is very challenging for asylum seekers and migrants. They have to struggle with mountainous terrain, taking the risk of crossing mined fields on border areas or being arrested by border guards.

ASAM has been carrying out various projects in Van since 2015 and reaching beneficiaries in need through these projects. PALS and "Creating a Protective Environment for Vulnerable Refugee Children and Families (Al Farah Program) in cooperation with UNICEF are the two ongoing projects implemented in the city, where a total of 13 staff work.

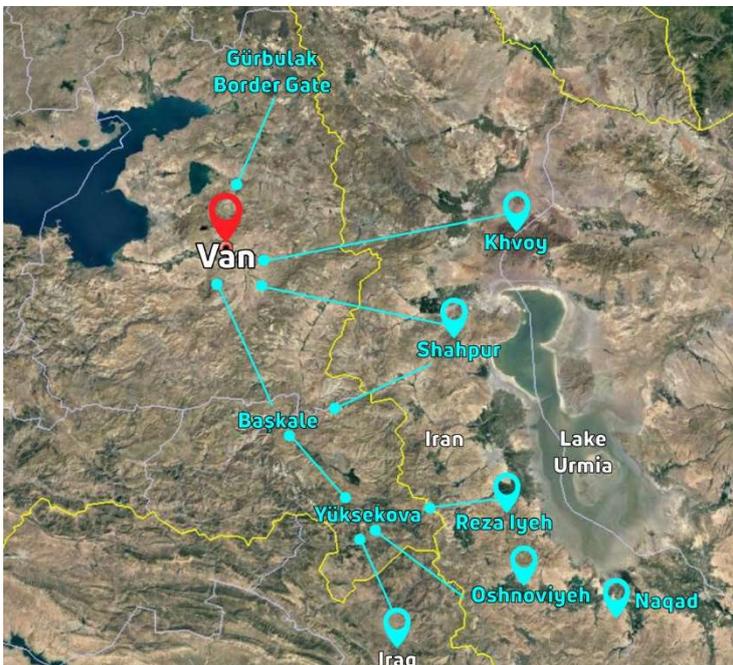
A team of 5 staff works in the PALS project, consisting of a Lawyer, a Field Worker, a Mobile Team Assistant, Driver, and a Persian Translator. The recruitment of 2 more Persian Translators is still ongoing.

The majority of the beneficiaries reached by PALS project in Van are Afghan nationals without any document of identification who have recently entered Turkey. The primary request of the beneficiaries is legal support for International Protection application. They state that they refrain from applying to the PDMM due to their fear of deportation. On the other hand, Van PDMM informed ASAM that they are unable to provide identification cards to the beneficiaries at the moment. Still, they are listing highly vulnerable beneficiaries to ensure their referral after authorizing their registration.



Image 2: PALS staff in ASAM's Van office.

It has been observed that there are many well-educated applicants, such as high-ranking soldiers, civil servants, and doctors from Afghanistan, who were unable to bring along any documents while escaping from the Taliban. Lacking proper identification documents, they face registration problems and do not have access to basic services, including education for their children.



Map 3: Irregular migration routes around Van province.

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

*Habibeh is a 27-year-old single woman from Afghanistan, who has two children aged 4 and 8. The Habibeh's husband passed away 2 years ago. Right after the death of her husband, she received threats from her husband's brother, who is a member of the Taliban, forcing her to marry him. Habibeh was attacked, subjected to sexual assault and fatally injured at the time. To force the Habibeh to marry him, her brother-in-law, kidnapped her children. While she was pretending to agree on marriage, her brother-in-law released her children and Habibeh had fled first to Iran and then to Turkey. Habibeh was also subjected to sexual assault by the smugglers and captivated by them. Since she and her children are not registered to Turkish authorities, they do not have access to health, education and social services. Currently she and her children are residing with another single woman from Afghanistan and the apartment's physical conditions are not. She is now currently working in a textile company. She had left her previous job, since she was sexually harassed by the owner of the restaurant.*

*Habibeh was afraid that she would be deported if she approaches to the authorities. She was counselled upon the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. She agreed to be referred to Provincial Directorate of Migration Management for registration. Project staff also identified need for PSS for her and her children and they were referred to ASAM's project with UNICEF in the same city to follow-up these needs.*