

# Cross-Cultural Sensitivity and Living Together

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# CROSS-CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND LIVING TOGETHER

“Strengthening Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Sexual and Gender Based Violence Response Services for Syrian and Other Refugees through Women and Girl Safe Spaces (WGSS)/Women’s Health Counseling Units Project”

## EVALUATION REPORT ON FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

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# PREFACE

Since 2015, we have been running the project with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) titled *"Strengthening Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Sexual and Gender Based Violence Response Services for Syrian and Other Refugees through Women and Girl Safe Spaces (WGSS)/Women's Health Counseling Units"* as the Hacettepe University Women's Research and Implementation Center (HUWRIC/HÜKSAM). We set up "Women's Health Counseling Units" (WHCUs) inside the Immigrant Health Centers at Alemdağ, Gülveren an Yenimahalle under a protocol signed with the Ankara Public Health Directorate as part of this project, made possible by technical support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and financial support of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). We aimed to create spaces where refugee women and girls who have fled war, leaving their lives and roots behind, can visit comfortably. Our centers have stood testimony to our commitment to stand by them along their rough journey. Within this context, we would not have been able to make way without effective cooperation with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and Ankara Health Directorate. Therefore we are thankful to our Project partners.

The displaced women and girls fleeing wars, over time started experiencing problems with the same locals who initially showed them support. In our attempt to protect and expand safe spaces in this experience - which is also a novelty for us - we chose to let those who live together lead the way to protect the different many colors of different cultures instead of blindly trying out solutions that feel right. For, we knew that letting trust and peace thrive together would also make peace permanent. As believers in wisdom, science and common sense, we of course couldn't ignore the needed strong grounds on which we placed our steps relying on scientific data. This research paper is the solid product of the ideas stated above. We couldn't express our gratitude enough to Professor Kezban Çelik for the intense level of effort she has put into this project as well as for her never-ending energy that has fueled the entire team and for her scientific contributions; which are an amalgamation of knowledge acquired in different fields.

Lastly, a salute to those who migrate free as birds and in solidarity in a world without borders...

Professor Ü. Şevkat BAHAR ÖZVARIŞ  
HUWRIC/HÜKSAM Director



# INTRODUCTION

The fundamental theories of the literature on migration tend to focus on the reasons of migration and its impact on the host country. Starting from the 1950s, the prevailing approach in the literature has explained the reasons behind migration citing structural and individual factors. Macro approaches emphasize economic development models, regional unequal distribution of capital and labor, the asymmetrical relationships of dependency between the center and the periphery, driving factors such as high unemployment rates or low wages in source countries and a combination between the chronic need for low-wage labor in host countries (Lewis, 1954; Lee, 1966; Piore, 1986). Neo-classical economic approaches, which emphasize individual explanations, tend to describe the concept of migration by relying on the "rational" decision mechanisms of the individual and its considerations and calculations of pre-migration and post-migration circumstances, instead of focusing on the historical causes of migration and the migration policies of source and host countries. (Todaro, Borjas, Barnum and Sabot, 1976). Chiswick's (1980) institutional approach, whereby the decision to migrate and migration processes are explained by the characteristics of the individual such as educational background or skills, also focuses on explanations based on the individual.

Approaches that highlight the role of social networks in migration processes (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1974; Portes, 1981, Grieco, 1987; Burt, 1992; Fernandez-Kelly, 1995) maintain that family, kinship and community relationships add momentum to migration and shape associated processes. As stated by Wallerstein and others (1979), while the labor force in the capitalist world economy develops based on individuals, workers experience migration process as a household member instead of their individual choices and estimations. The impact of members of the household, relatives and other members of the community on migration decisions, timing and strategy is beyond discussion. Bach and Schraml's criticism (1982) on this matter points out to an important aspect: Family, kinship or communities are not only economic units but also complex structures with social and cultural characteristics. Relationships that an individual has with these networks are too complex to be reduced to the notion of increasing returns to the material pool of the family. Also, an exclusive focus on material contributions by wage workers may lead to overlooking other contributions made by family members. In particular, the feminist literature points out that the emphasis on the household budget contribution of paid migrants tends to ignore the economic and social contributions of the remaining family members. Another approach views the individual's migration experience within the frame of the family and other community ties, embeds these to political and economic background (Wallerstein, 1979; Wood, 1981). In this theoretical approach the impact of the dynamics of the workforce market, state policies and other agencies are not left out of the picture. From such an angle, migration occurs as part of different dynamics of community networks and institutional structures which the individual is a part of.



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Past contributions to migration literature on male worker migration and family reunifications that follow such migration have, in the 1990s increasingly been replaced by studies on female migrants who have left their families behind (Kofman and others, 2000; Ehrenreich and Hoschild, 2002; Spitzer and others; 2003). The fundamental factor behind this is that women in 1990s account for more than 50% of the migrants and refugees in the world. Looking through this point of view, starting in the 1990s, migration of women in the service sector has occupied a significant space in academic research. Studies in this regard have demonstrated that women who have migrated from South Asia to North America have continued to perform at jobs that are in parallel with traditional gender roles (such as caring for children or the elderly or housekeeping).

Migration of workers is often regarded as one of the most important ways of providing cheap labor in host countries. Foreign workers have often acted as buffers for the economy especially in times of financial crises by contributing to the creation of a spare workforce. (Tanyılmaz and Kurtulmuş Kiroğlu, 2007, p. 135). Migrant workers are often employed in what have been described as 4D jobs (*dirty, difficult, dangerous, demeaning*), where locals often don't want to work. Migrant workers are often employed in lower-paying menial jobs in less favorable conditions and work for longer hours (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2009).

The reasons and dynamics behind **forced migration** -- a relatively less studied field in the literature of migration -- tend to show significant difference in terms of the experiences of the migrants. For any individual who has been displaced or who has been forced to leave their country of origin, the new life that will be started is an "obligation." This is different from other forms of migration in terms of the level of unpreparedness; the trauma it creates and most often, the migrant not leaving anyone behind in the home country. Throughout history, human communities have been brought to the verge of making such decisions by major historical and geographical transformations. However, if "obligation" indicates a failure to continue one's life as before due to political reasons rather than the obligation to set up a new life, it should be noted that this also stems from the incompetence of the particular society (Maḥçupyan, 2008, p. 6).

Women and children are affected worst by war and migration; which are events that lead to psycho-social trauma. According to most recent estimates, 70% of all the 25 million displaced people around the world are women and children (UN, 2007; UN, 2017). There are a number of physical, emotional and social problems that arise for women and children in environments of war, civil war and conflict. Especially in the absence of the males, the entire responsibility of the family is left on the shoulders of women. In terms of vulnerability, women face a large number of challenges in times of war and conflict.

An overview of the existing literature on war, pre-migration and post-migration processes demonstrates that migrant life is fraught with hardships at many levels. These challenges can be described as limited access to fundamental supplies such as water and food, contagious diseases, having to live with fear at all times, forced displacement from home settlement during war, loss of housing and other property, disruptions to one's daily routine combined with efforts to adapt to the new life and ambiguity about the future (Sen et al, 2013, p. 198); witnessing the death or injury of a family member, destruction, looting, child abduction, torture, massacres (Craig et al., 2009, p. 351); forced marriages; gender-based violence including

sexual harassment and assault, child abuse in the form of child marriage, informal marriages, high rates of unwanted pregnancies, inadequate access to health care in pregnancy and birth, poverty, contagious diseases, difficulty in finding shelter, women living in isolated conditions, psychiatric problems (Kılıç et al., 2015, p. 237); being subject to discrimination on the basis of gender, age, race, skin color, sexual orientation, or ethnic or national background; inability to acquire sufficient information on rights, services and access to services and language and culture-related problems (CTDC, 2015).

There are significant challenges in accessing data and information on the number and situation of displaced people around the world. Especially in cases of displacement that has occurred due to civil war and conflict, it is even more difficult to find reliable statistical information. In many cases, as in the case of Turkey, there might emerge conflicting figures coming from various stakeholders making varying estimates about the number of displaced people. Forced migrations also point to 'weaknesses of states on social, cultural, political communication, recognition and bonding with people of different ethnic, religious and sexual identities living in their countries' (Özgür, 2012, p. 214).

Being displaced or being forced to migrate might lead to i) getting cut off from traditional income sources and inability to access these resources ii) being deprived of civil rights iii) facing problems with housing iv) inability to compete in the workforce market and poverty v) exploitation of child labor vi) being denied the right to education and opportunities vii) being subjected to discrimination in urban settings and therefore to social exclusion (Yükseker, 2012, p. 234).

### Migration to Turkey

That Turkey's industrialization occurred later vis-a-vis Western countries, which completed their industrialization processes earlier on, has played an important role in Turkey sending migrant workers to these countries. In this context, Turkey's place in the migration of labor has been a source country of labor rather than a country which receives migrants. (Kirişçi, 2004, p. 2). We often see that migrants to Turkey who are known to have come from Asia or Europe are categorized into such groups as transit migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, "illegals" or legal aliens and analyzed this way. However, it should be noted that the differences between these categories remain ambiguous. Furthermore, the first four groups most often overlap (İçduygu, 2003, p. 17). For that reason, the main character of the system of temporary migration to Turkey, for the most part, takes the form of irregular migration.

It has been established that most migrants in Turkey find job in sectors such as housekeeping, care of children or elderly as well as in the prostitution, construction, textile and food industries (İçduygu, 2003, pp. 27-28, 68). In a study published in 2003, İçduygu divides the work field of irregular migrants to Turkey into two main categories. The first group comprises those who are employed by middle-income and high-income families to take care of children or elderly and housekeeping while the second group includes those employed as cheap labor in particularly the Western regions of Turkey in farming and construction (İçduygu, 2003, pp. 27-28).



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It should be noted that only a minority of those people who have come to Turkey receive or are able to receive work permits (Akpınar 2009 and 2010). The number of those who have received work permits (52.304 in 2014) is extremely low compared to the overall number of migrant workers in the country. However, it should also be noted that the concept of irregular migration is based on Turkey's dynamic informal economy. Despite two major economic crises, Turkey's growth rate has remained high and this, coupled with the country's geographic location, has led to a constant increase in the number of irregular migrants employed in such industries as textiles, construction, food, entertainment and prostitution (though illegally) (Pehlivanoğlu, 2009).

The effects of globalization have created significant changes in Turkey, leading to major changes in the demographics of both those coming to the country and those who emigrate from it. Starting in late 1980s and in earlier 1990s, especially after upheaval in the socialist countries surrounding it, migrants have started coming from countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. As such, Turkey has become migrant receiving and transit country in addition to being a migrant producing country. At the same time, political and economic developments in neighboring countries have also shifted the migration routes towards Turkey. Thereby, Turkey now hosts an increasing number of refugees from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and most recently Syria. Turkey's geographical position between Asia and Europe and its location near regions where instability and conflict prevail and its character as a country which offers a large number of points of entry through land routes and the sea, the country is increasingly becoming a transit country for migrants from the Middle East, Asia and North Africa.

## **What Do We Call Those Who Came From Syria?**

The legal status of Syrian migrants who took refuge in Turkey is one of the most intensively discussed issues in the migration debate. The 1951 Geneva Convention is the basis for the legislation on the legal status of refugees in Turkey. Turkey, which became a signatory to this convention with a "geographical restriction", grants refugee status only to people who come from Europe. People who are from outside Europe can only be given temporary asylum and they are granted a "asylum seeker" status. Turkey, which has granted asylum seeker status to Syrian refugees on the basis of the Asylum and Refugee Directorate from 1994, provides them with "temporary protection". Syrian refugees under temporary protection have a right to "remain in Turkey for a reasonable amount of time" and "they have the right to temporary protection until they are granted asylum in a third country."<sup>1</sup>

In April 2014, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection went into force in Turkey. The law includes a number of provisions that seek to clarify the legal status of refugees in Turkey. After the adoption of this law, the Temporary Protection Regulation was adopted in October 2014. The Regulation regulated the temporary protection regime for Syrians who were given "temporary protection status" in Turkey. This clarified the legal status and rights of Syrians and also defined the set of social aids they could receive. The regulation uses the phrase "those

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1 "Frequently Asked Questions about Syrian Refugees in Turkey - UNHCR." <http://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/12533-frequently-asked-questions-about-syrian-refugees-in-turkey.html>. Accessed 2 Apr, 2018.

protected temporarily” to refer to its subjects. As per the regulation, Syrians who are “protected temporarily” are given a “temporary protection identification document” and they are provided with access to health services, education, the workforce, social aids and social services, translation and similar services. One of the most comprehensive regulations in this area is that those Syrians who have this ID cards can be granted work permits in certain industries.

There are three fundamental elements of temporary protection. These are “accepting refugees into the country with an open borders policy,” “the principle of not returning the refugees” and “urgently meeting the needs of the temporarily protected.” ([www.goc.gov.tr](http://www.goc.gov.tr))

### What Has Been Done in This Area?

Law No: 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) which regulates the admission of foreigners into Turkey, their stay, their departure; the procedures and fundamentals of the protection that will be afforded to foreigners who seek protection in Turkey as well as the scope establishment, duties, authorities and responsibilities of the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management was passed in the Turkish Parliament on 4 April 2013. For Syrian refugees, the “Temporary Protection Directorate” went into force on 13 October 2014 under the relevant provision of the law. This Regulation regulates access to health services, education, employment, social aid and services, translation and customs services. As part of this, several research and implementation centers were set up concentrating on the subject of migration in various universities. Efforts to solve the challenge met by the Syrians in Turkey or meet their demands are fundamentally undertaken by the Prime Ministry’s Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD).

- **The Right to Health:** The legal basis for access to health services for Syrians is provided by the Regulation of Disaster and Emergency Management Centers which came into force on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. All health-related expenditures of Syrian refugees are covered by AFAD. The Circular no: 2013/08 has expanded the scope of access to health and other services, offering these services in all 81 provinces of the country from the initially 11. Article 27 of the Temporary Protection Regulation places services inside temporary shelter centers under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Health. The regulation also calls for conducting necessary efforts about contagious diseases, vaccination of children and reproductive health. In addition necessary measures are taken to transfer individuals suffering from substance abuse or other psychological issues to the relevant health facilities.
- **Status of Syrians:** With the Law on Foreigners and International Protection Law no 6458 in 2013, a new regulation was adopted for those from outside Europe, within the same conditions, introducing the new status of “conditional refugees”. Due to the fact that each of the Syrians is applying individually and the difficulty of accepting conditional refugees as a result of lengthy researches, the collective “temporary protection status” was introduced through the Temporary Protection Regulation entered into force in 2014 and “temporary protection status” was granted.
- **Right to Education:** By means of Temporary Protection Regulation which went into force in October 2014, Syrians have obtained access to services of health, education and social

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aids. Later, on 23 September 2014, with the adoption of the circular titled Education-Training Services for Foreigners numbered 2014/21, the educational services to be provided to Syrian children were brought to a certain standard and placed under the guarantee of the state. Additionally, plans about the education of Syrian refugees were included for the first time in the Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan for 2015 – 2019.

- **Work Permits:** A new regulation prepared under the International Protection Law and the Temporary Protection Regulation was adopted on 11 January 2016 regulating the employment conditions of foreigners who have temporary protection status in Turkey.

According to data from the Directorate General of Migration Management, as of 8 February 2018, the number of registered Syrians residing Turkey **under temporary protection was 3,506,532** which does not include data of people coming from other countries than Syria and who have not registered yet. However, it should be noted that this is an ever-changing number, and it might exclude people who haven't registered despite being in Turkey, or include people who have left Turkey after registering with the authorities. Initially, only biometric records were taken into account but over time other properties of the group (average age, gender, education and skill level, place of residence, employment status) have come to be known through studies conducted among the migrant population later. Some of the information regarding the Syrians according to data gathered from conducted studies is as follows:

- The number of Syrians in Turkey in the age group 0-4 is 400,000 amounting to 12.3% of all the Syrian population in the country.
- More than half (over 1 million 600 thousand people) of the Syrians are minors and children under the age of 18.
- The number of babies born in Turkey is 224,750 according to data from AFAD. According to the same figures, 82,850 Syrian babies were born in Turkey in 2016 alone. This amounts to 227 Syrian babies being born in Turkey in a day on average.
- According to available data not more than 33% of the Syrians in Turkey are literate. 13% have declared that they learned how to read and write without going to school, 26% haven't responded.
- The real ratio of those who have attended a university at some point in their lives or who have graduated from university among the Syrians in Turkey is less than 2%.
- Although the number of enrolment in elementary school seems to be relatively high among Syrians, enrolment in secondary and high school seems to fall drastically in the later levels of the education system.
- Despite exceptions, refugees mostly have chosen to reside in districts that are impoverished, where conservative-piety is strong, where people develop a social solidarity and where the cost of living is relatively low (Erdoğan, 2017, p. 31). In other words, refugees prefer residing in regions that are relatively poorer and devoid of natural resources, and the residents in such areas tend to be more positive towards the newcomers. This serves to form an emotional type of solidarity and it makes it easier for the refugees to adapt to their new surroundings given the conservative structures in these areas and the lower cost of living.

According to data from the report titled *“Urban Refugees From a ‘Rift’ to ‘Harmony’: Syrian Refugees and the Municipalities’ Management of the Process: The Istanbul Example* (Turkish title: *“Kopuş”tan “Uyum”a Kent Mültecileri Suriyeli Mülteciler ve Belediyelerin Süreç Yönetimi: İstanbul Örneği*), the most prominent three problems faced by the refugees stem from:

- Language
- Unemployment
- Housing

The same report shows that for the local residents in areas where Syrians have settled the following are the primary issues:

- Concerns over safety
- Rent increases
- General disharmony

Municipal officials say that the refugees are most affected by the following problems:

- Education
- Language
- Ghettoization
- Increasing rent prices
- Begging
- Informal employment
- Challenges in access to health services
- Financial problems
- Security issues

The migration policy which was initially based on “temporariness/guest status” has been evolving towards a level of permanence and efforts to manage that transformation are increasing on the part of the state. The extent of the issue, the immensity of the demands for services and a degree of unpreparedness have made it necessary for multiple stakeholders being involved. As such, because services provided by state agencies are not nearly enough and because the staff at public offices is unable to meet the migrants’ requirements sufficiently; universities, international organizations and civil society organizations are now supporting the state’s services that are offered to Syrian refugees.

As part of this context, since 2015, the **“Strengthening Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Sexual and Gender Based Violence Response Services for Syrian and Other Refugees through Women and Girl Safe Spaces (WGSS)/Women’s Health Counselling Units Project”** has been conducted by the Hacettepe University Research and Implementation Center on Women’s Issues (HUWRIC) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and with the financial support of the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) under a protocol signed earlier with the Ankara Public Health Directorate.

As part of this project, which seeks to provide migrant women and girls from Syria and other countries who have settled in Ankara with safe spaces and health consulting services, a single center (Ulubey Women’s Health Counselling Unit) was established in March 2015. Later, since September 2017, these efforts have been expanded to include a center in the Alemdağ

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neighborhood of Ankara's Altındağ district (the center at Ulubey moved on 30 May 2017 to Alemdağ along with the Migrant Health Center); another one in the Gülveren neighborhood of the Mamak district and a third one in the Yenimahalle neighborhood of the district of the same name. The so called three WHCUs are located inside the Migrant Health Centers' buildings operated by the Ankara Public Health Directorate.

During this study was being carried out in 2017, a female social worker who speaks fluent Arabic and an Iraqi female doctor working as a doctor's assistant was employed in each of the WHCUs. In addition to these services, a female psychologist who is fluent in Arabic provided services in all three centers on certain days of the week in a rotating manner. Additionally, 34 Syrian health mediators were employed in the project to help bridge the gap between their community and the centers. Others employed as part of the project include one nurse, three translators, three janitors, one part-time Syrian psychologist and three security guards. A female project coordinator has contributed to the coordination of project activities. (In 2017, a total of 53 people – out of 45 were refugees – were employed as part of the project).

The project mainly provides consultation services for women and girls who apply to the Centers in the area of sexual and reproductive health, conducts studies regarding prevention of gender based violence, supporting women and girls who are exposed to such violence and empowering women and young girls. The women who come to the centers are also given information on the possible services they can receive according to their needs. Two legal experts also hold office hours on certain days of the week when they provide legal consultation to the center's applicants. The applicants have also referred to relevant agencies and facilities in cases where more comprehensive services were needed. Staff employed at the centers is continuously trained on their work field and they are continuously supported in terms of capacity building. Additionally, the centers offer various social and cultural activities; events targeting children; Turkish language courses; distribution of hygiene kits, and they provide information on the city of residence. The number of new applicants who come to the centers continues to rise every day.

## **The Purpose and Methods of This Study**

Although the people who fled the war initially weren't met with negative reactions from the locals in Turkey, conflict between the residents and the newcomers arose over time. As Syrian males can find employment illegally at very low wages and without social insurance, many employers have hired them, treating them as cheap labor. Social aids granted to Syrians by the Turkish government has angered the locals given their lower socioeconomic status and lead to detachment between two communities, a situation exacerbated by the circulation of untrue information about the help which Syrians are receiving from the state. Differences in lifestyles, cultural differences and Syrians' lack of language skills have contributed to the rift between the two groups. Incidents between the migrants and Turks have also occurred, some of which have led to injury or damage to property. As a result, feeling unsafe in their new country, many Syrians -- particularly women and children -- have resolved to stay at home. The lack of a social safety network, the inadequacy of the existing mechanisms of support to meet the migrants' needs, not knowing their legal rights and to which institution they could apply have also made it difficult to resolve the conflict, making it necessary to make an effort for the refugees to



peacefully live together with the locals. Especially young women, who have discontinued their education in Turkey and who have not found a paid-job, have been completely left out from the system, as a result of which there is insufficient data about their problems and the kinds of services they need, there is a need for evidence-based information on social policies and services to be developed for this group.

The picture painted above can also be seen at the WHCUs. As the need for finding a solution to this problem was identified, a decision was made to conduct a study seeking to identify the challenging areas for the Syrians and possible solutions, together with the very individuals who are directly experiencing the difficulties. The idea also included the consideration that evidence-based data from both sides could be used in developing a solution for the problems at hand.

In this field, which is also rather new for all the agencies and organizations involved, sometimes the social policies in place, the services provided, personnel resources and the general outlook might be inadequate, although policies towards refugees and the services provided have improved over time. In this context, sharing the data collected through this study with other stakeholders will allow developing joint and systematic solutions and contribute to effective cooperation between different organizations.

In order to achieve these results, "focus group meetings" -- a qualitative research method technique -- were planned to facilitate data collection. **Five focus group meetings** were held during the study. One of them was between the "health mediators" employed in the project, who live in different neighborhoods, two were held with the participation of married women over 20 years of age who also reside in the three neighborhoods and one meeting with girls aged 12 - 19 to be able to learn about their experiences and another meeting with the local resident women from each of the three neighborhoods.

The participants, the venue and the agenda of the focus group meetings were planned as the result of collaborative efforts by the health mediators and professionals at the three centers. The meetings lasted two full days in October, 2017 at a meeting hall located in the center of Ankara and a minimum of eight and a maximum of 15 participants joined each meeting. In all of the meetings with the exception of the one held with the Turkish women from the three neighborhoods, simultaneous Turkish - Arabic translation services were used. The meetings were chaired by a female academician from the Sociology Department of TED University. An experienced expert recorded the meetings in detail. Although each focus group meeting started with questions specific to each group, the meetings were conducted in a fashion loyal to the general purpose common to all of the focus group meetings. The main purpose of the focus group meetings is to understand the dynamics of the relationship between the migrants and the residents, identify areas that cause difficulties between the two groups and develop suggestions and solutions to increase "social integration". In order to ensure that the participants could speak about their experiences comfortably, to create an informal and non-hierarchical environment was attempted. In general, the participants seemed comfortable and willing to speak at the meetings. After the meetings, all notes made during the meetings were read over many times in details and the experience of each group was evaluated first within the group that had the meeting, the common points of these evaluations are presented under the heading General Evaluation.



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## 1. Focus Group Meeting With Health Mediators

This focus group meeting was held with the participation of 14 of the 34 health mediators who work at the three centers and lasted two hours. This meeting began with each participant introducing herself and later continued with a discussion on the nature of “health mediation” as a job, in what ways being a health mediator contributes to their personal development as well as how it helps others, challenges on the job and suggestions on improvements to make their job better. This was followed by hearing suggestions from the participants on how to increase the level of social integration between the migrants and the locals as well as discussion’s on the obstacles in the way of integration. The profile of the participants can be seen in the chart below:

**Participant Profile**

Age	Educational Background	Number of Children
49	University dropout	7
39	Vocational high school	3
26	Elementary	3
42	Elementary	4
51	Elementary	6
33	High school	3
41	High school	3
42	Elementary	5
37	Vocational high school of commerce	3
36	Elementary	3
31	University dropout	3
33	Elementary	1
29	High school	4
52	Secondary school	4
<b>14 participants total</b>		

### Health Mediation Changes and Transforms

Two of the participants who were health mediators came from Iraq and the remaining 12 were migrants from Syria. Their average span of residing in Turkey was 2-3 years. They are all married and with the exception of one participant, they all have a minimum of three children. In terms of their educational backgrounds, two are university dropouts, five high school graduates, five elementary school graduates and two who have completed secondary school. It can be argued that the education level of health mediators is above the average in their community, and even above the average education level of Turkey’s female population. However, the participants have agreed that formal education is not that important in order to be a good health mediator and what really matters is to really want to do this job. In this sense, rather than the age or

educational background of the individual, her preparedness, desire to work and being ready and open for change plays an important role in being a good health mediator. A 42-year-old, secondary school graduate health mediator emphasized this point saying: *"It is not important what your education level is, rather, what matters is the ability to communicate with the different segments of society. First, you should be able to reach the heart of people. The way you talk, what time of day it is and what place you are at are very important."*

According to the general opinion of the participants, health mediation is a "very good" job. A 42-year-old participant who had to drop out of high school due to child marriage -- who is also a mother of four children -- explained this saying: "It changed my life." According to this participant, this change was directly related to the transformation of her views on gender roles in society. She declared that traditional gender roles are dominant in the social and family structures in Syria, where the men go to work and women stay at home, a line of thought which she used to agree with. However, she stated that her life changed after she came to Turkey and was trained as a health mediator. *"I used to think that women should stay at home to raise good children and build up a respectable family. Here, we went through a series of different stages and we have changed. All of this has brought me to a very good point. I have changed 100%, I have been successful 100%."* She also stated that this change is not only about receiving training in a certain field, finding a paid-job and thus boosting once self-confidence but it has had a deeper impact, changing her outlook on life entirely as well as her views on gender roles. A 52-year-old mother of four children coming from Iraq agreed: *"We have changed 90 degrees"* by pointing to the rapidity and comprehensiveness of change. Yet another participant commented (26 years old with three children, graduate of primary school) *"We had eyes before, but they weren't open. Now they are open."*

All of the participants have expressed satisfaction with their training which has enabled them to become health mediators. They said earlier experiences and education had taught them certain things, but noted that the most important parts of their training that they received within the project were learned recently. A participant, who is 39, a mother of three and a graduate of a technical high school said: *"We knew some of the knowledge we were thought, but not all of it. We knew that child marriages and violence against women were wrong but thanks to the doctors, we now know that there are centers that support women and now we have things to say on this matter,"* adding that particularly trainings which offer practical suggestions and solutions have made a very important contribution. A 49-year-old participant, who has seven children, who dropped out of university said: *"Scientific seminars were helpful in terms of women's and mother's health. I didn't know about many of these issues even though I am a teacher myself. We learned a lot about the importance of following up pregnant women, about health and about psychological illness."* All women have said being a health mediator has boosted their self-confidence and that their knowledge has transformed into power.

*"For example, we didn't know about the importance of vaccinations, and pregnancies and family order. Now we have lawyers and psychologists. We are learning still and telling others who don't know."* (36 years old, elementary school education, three children)

The empowerment and change of health mediators and their transformation seem to have created an incredibly powerful impact on their own lives. A 51-year-old mother of six children, who also has grandchildren and who is an elementary school graduate illustrates this point:

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*"In Syria, given my educational background and age, I used to think that there is no future for me, that I will accept whatever comes and I accepted. But when I came to Turkey, I saw that there is really no age for learning. I felt as if I was 25. I had many issues with my husband. I married at a very early age. I was able to share these after coming here, which has helped me relax."*

Certainly, as a 42-year old participant who has four children has said, it wasn't easy to change the *"ideas those have ossified"*. Health mediators have had to face some resistance and obstacles when they wanted to leave their lives behind the four-walls of their homes. However, not only themselves but also the women of the cultural group where they want to facilitate access to health services have the same ossified thoughts and changing those will take time. The same participant commented: *"Change is not very easy, that's why it is not very fast. Even though we might run into resistance initially we can change that in time."* And with this she specifies that there won't be a rapid change and transformation without any objection.

*"Initially they didn't want to accept the things we said. They didn't know how to empower themselves. Now they have become strong. They even started visiting us in our homes. They are experiencing psychological problems because of the war. In Syria, it was very difficult to go to a psychologist. It was unacceptable. Here, it has become easier." (41 years old, high school education, three children)*

### **Entry Into Public Life, Impact Supporting Emancipation**

Almost all of the health mediators have stated that their leaving the house due to this job and becoming part of the public life have greatly increased their opportunity to meet with others. Without understanding the values of a conservative society where being able to leave the house on your own is seen as a form of freedom, it is not easy to appreciate the value of this experience. A better explanation comes from a participant who is 52, who has four children and who has finished secondary school:

*"I have started feeling freer. In Syria, it was like we were in prison. There, we couldn't act on our own. Here we act very comfortably. We have benefited greatly from this experience and also helped others benefit from it. "*

*"In Iraq, I couldn't possibly leave the house without my husband. But here, I can take a one-hour long walk to the health center. After getting this job, I have also been able to **talk with my family more comfortably**. The only problem I am having is convincing other women." (37 years old, 3 children, high-school diploma)*

The women, who have lived through very difficult stages and started living in Ankara, were first introduced to the centers and later gone through a process where they could increase their education and skills and after that started to reach out to other women in their cultural groups and creating an impact and difference in their lives. The most important tool for this change was being health mediators. First, they were able to leave "the home" to attend the trainings necessary for the job. After receiving a training and starting to work, they have attained a certain status and a job where they can earn a regular wage in a country where they are "foreigners", and where they face exclusion and even discrimination at different levels. This is a very valuable

experience and they are eager to share the value this has for their lives and for the lives of others. As a 33-year old mother who has one child explains:

*"We came here as foreigners. I virtually never left the house. But after becoming a health mediator I started establishing a relationship with other people. Now I am helping people. I have gained so much power."*

### **Being a Woman in Syria and Views on Being a Woman in Turkey as a Foreigner:**

A 31-year old participant, who had to drop out of university in the past and who has worked as a teacher in Syria, said women's lives are not at all easy in Syria and that women are seen primarily and foremost as being responsible for raising children and for housekeeping; that traditions are very decisive and owing to that, women don't have any legal rights. According to her, the most important difference in Turkey is that women in Turkey have legal rights, which makes them strong.

*"When you gave someone advice in Syria, they would answer 'but this is our culture'. Here even the law supports women. There was no system in Syria against child marriages. They would advise against it but others would usually say 'yes my grandmother also married at an early age.' Everything is different in Turkey. **Women are powerful here.**"*

They see the women in Turkey as being freer and as women who have rights. But it has also been observed that there are many similarities rather than differences and that many women also emphasize the common attributes of the female experience. They have also stated that there are differences between the women who are their neighbors and the women that they see in the public space in general. Women who live in the poor neighborhoods of the city, and women who mostly deal with housework create the perception that "women are women everywhere" or women experiences resemble each other a lot. As a 42-year-old participant, who has finished elementary school and who has five children states:

*"**A woman is a woman..** From Turkey or Iraq.. The problems we face are the same. We can say that there are not many differences between us. It might be that you might not leave the house alone in Syria. For example, [there was] a Turkish woman who was beaten by her husband every day. We are also experiencing similar things."*

The participants have mentioned that similarities of experiences of being a woman and experiencing womanhood are more than their differences with Turkish women but they have also said that the two groups' "family lives" is different, which can sometimes lead to conflict. Syrian women note that due to the longer life span in Turkey, family lives have also undergone a transformation process but there still exist some differences. According to the participants, the Syrians' "habit of staying up until late hours" can be seen as a fundamental difference between the locals and the newcomers and a potential area of conflict. Staying up until late hours, family members and close relatives' gatherings, crowded and noisy family socialization seem different. However, given the lengthy working hours of migrant men who are now part of the work force, this difference is also changing and the participants feel that migrant families will also be more like their local neighbors in the near future.

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## Experiences of Working as a Health Mediator and Some Suggestions

In general, all of the health mediators love their jobs and feel very glad that they can find such employment as a woman from a foreign country. However, they have said that issues such as the “sustainability” of the job, “improving the wages,” and a desire to have a “more reassuring and descriptive ID card” are some of the areas where improvements are needed. The most important aspect remains the job’s sustainability -- as their employment is project-based -- and their most important demands have concerned this point and turning their job into a permanent profession. The participants have also emphasized the need for more intensive Turkish courses, free of charge, for improving the health mediator women’s language skills; crucial for reaching out to women outside their own cultural group. The participants also emphasized the importance of the “bridging” role health mediators play between individuals and agencies/services and the importance of developing services that might further strengthen this connection.

## Relations With Local (Turkish) Neighborhood Women

It cannot possibly be an easy feat speaking about locals as the member of an ethnic minority group living under a temporary protection status. Perhaps it is owing to this that most of the participants start speaking about their experiences using such phrases “There are good people and bad people,” “Initially they were mean, but they started getting used to us as they got to know us,” seeking a moderately safe position when commenting on their neighbors. But this delicate search for a balance is lost on two issues. The first issue is about children: Keeping children inside the house is difficult and children who don’t go to school, who play outside get into problems in their interactions with the local children. Most such fights end up with the Syrian kids being physically attacked by the local children. The experiences of children going to school do not differ as well; sometimes teachers, parents and other students in a school can display discriminatory behavior toward migrants.

*“My child is 10. He is always being pressured by his teachers. They tell him ‘you don’t understand anything.’ They failed him even in Arabic. I really hope that they will be more understanding towards Syrian children” (42 years old, 5 children, elementary school).*

It’s been observed that the participants can tolerate discrimination towards themselves to an extent, but find it extremely hurtful when it’s their children who are being discriminated against. Perhaps, this gives them the idea that all their efforts are meaningless, and the difficult and lengthy ordeal they had to endure to ensure that their children stay alive and live a good life was for nothing, given that the very children they sought to are being traumatized once again in the same process.

*“Ten days ago, Turks beat up our child. We went to the police, **but the police blamed us for what had happened.** On the second day, about 50 people came with knives and beat up my husband (she started crying at this point and had to interrupt her account). We asked them why they were doing this, what we had done. They threatened us, they said we shouldn’t go to the police. One of my children works, he leaves early in the morning and comes in the evening. He has no trouble with anyone. I am looking to move to a house closer to the center but it is very hard to find a house without someone vouching for you.” (52 years old, 4 children, secondary school education)*



Another issue which has directly affected the outlook of the locals on the Syrians regards the social aid extended to Syrian refugees from the state. Some of the participants have said their financial conditions aren't much different from those of their neighbors and that aid granted to Syrians has led to negative and sometimes hostile attitudes. Many have said their neighbors should also benefit from such assistance, as the assistance granted to them has created a "**competition among the poor**" for resources. A 51-year old woman with six children, who lost her husband and two children during the war in Aleppo, has very delicately and rather gracefully expressed this: "*You know we are being given assistance, and sometimes the neighbors resent this, wondering why they aren't being given any assistance, they should also be given such assistance.*" Another participant has said, "*My neighbor is also in need, they should also be given social aid.*" They want to clear themselves of the accusation that "*you are grabbing Turkey's goods.*"

Another point which has made living together more difficult is about the challenges of "rent prices/renting a home." Although the participants had been in Ankara between 2-3 years on average, most of them have had to move house before they could manage to live in one for the duration of a year. Finding a house, and renting a home at a good price were highlighted as issues making living together more difficult or as issues with a high potential for creating conflict. This is an important issue, because the general tendency of homeowners not to let out their homes to Syrians is causing the Syrians to concentrate "in certain neighborhoods." When this happens, the rents automatically go up bringing down the negotiation power of the newcomers. This also makes the lives of the old residents of the neighborhoods, which in turn easily leads to the "Syrians" being blamed for higher rent prices. The issue of rent also turns into a topic that creates "competition among the poor."

### What Should be Done to Achieve Social Integration?

Most of the suggestions that have come in this regard have been about increasing the frequency of "*getting together and interacting with the others.*"

*"Why have the Syrians chosen this place? ... **Short films** have positively affected the perceptions. They have made it possible for people to help each other. (39 years of age, three children, high-school diploma)*

*"Having **dinners together** would bring out our common traditions and history. Happiness would be the main goal. The dinner would be like the **salt and bread** between us. It would mobilize internal emotions. And the neighbors will tell the other neighbors. It will change gradually. There must be a psychological comfort among us (33 years of age, three children, university diploma)*

*"Going to hospitals as caretakers for the sick. Going to **farmers' markets and stores for charity**. Buying fabrics and **sewing something** ..there are many things that can be done here (42 years of age, 4 children, dropped out from high-school).*

## 2. Focus Group Meetings Held With Married Migrant Women Over the Age of 20

There are some findings from important studies about social life and challenges in the cities where Syrians reside predominantly. It bears a degree of importance to share the results of these studies before sharing the experiences of the women residing in Ankara.



As discussed in the above section on the experiences of health mediators, finding housing and participation in the workforce are of crucial importance in maintaining daily life in Turkey. In 2010, the average rent in the Gaziantep's middle-income neighborhood of Karataş for a four-room apartment was TL 350-600. This figure has gone up to TL 950-1200 as of recent. In Kilis, rent prices which were between TL 150-400 around the university area had risen to TL 600-1000 as of 2010. As such, the migrants have contributed some individuals' (namely, homeowners) income to increase in Kilis and Gaziantep, but they have at the same undermined the purchasing power of a low-income and substantially large group of locals. This is why in those provinces where Syrian migrants are higher in number; narrow-income group families are facing serious economic problems (Sönmez and Mete 2015). A very large segment of (more than 90%) the migrants under temporary status are employed informally, working at jobs that have deplorable conditions in terms of job safety and health and they are paid by about 60% less than a local worker doing the same job (ILO, 2013).

That there is a large informal economy in Turkey -- primarily in the services sector -- has given various opportunities to irregular migrants, transit migrants and Syrian and Iraqi citizens who have come to Turkey under temporary protection status. The fact that incoming migrants can still find jobs in the workforce instead of the general unemployment rate; high youth unemployment rate, and the low rates of labor force participation has occurred due to the wideness of informal employment in the country. Although informal employment has been decreasing since 2000, it still accounts for 36.7 of the employment sector. For the non-agricultural sector informal employment is around 22.7% (according to 2014 data from TURKSTAT). The highness of that figure places irregular migrants in the bottom wage layer of the workforce market.

### 'People of Ankara are Nice, Rent Here is Low'

Twenty-nine women in total attended the two focus group meetings held with migrant women from all three neighborhoods. The profile of the participants is as follows:

#### Participant profile

First focus group (Migrant women over 20)			Second focus group (Migrant women over 20)		
Age	Education	Number of children	Age	Education	Number of children
29	Elementary	3	52	Secondary	2
28	Secondary school	4	31	Two-year institute	2
46	Elementary	6	27	No schooling	2
50	Elementary	7	34	Teacher training school	2
48	Elementary	8	41	Secondary school	5
33	Elementary	3	23	Art institute	2
29	High-school	3	35	Attended until 7th grade	3
18	High-school	1 *	37	Attended until 5th grade	5
35	High-school	4	43	Attended until 10th grade	3
43	Elementary	3	31	Attended until 9th grade	6
32	Secondary school	2	36	Attended until 8th grade	6
27	High-school	3	26	Until 5th grade	2
33	High-school	3	41	Attended until 6th grade	1 *
46	Secondary school	7	25	No schooling	1 *
46	Elementary	6			
<b>Total 29 participants</b>					

\* Divorced or widowed

Because of Syria's civil war which started in 2011 and Turkey's "open door policy", more than three million Syrians have come to Turkey and about 90% of these newcomers have been dispersed to almost every corner of the country. About nine percent of those who came still reside in refugee camps but a great majority live outside the camps in locations across Turkey's 81 provinces although border towns and large cities host larger numbers of Syrians. Ankara hosts some 80,000 Syrians, which is not a very dense population. The first question asked to the participants in these meetings was their reasons for choosing Ankara. Most participants said they moved to the capital because their "brothers, sons, husbands or other relatives" were in Ankara. This is a common finding in the literature of migration, with most migrants deciding where to live on the basis of their close acquaintances or relatives. Informal networks play a decisive role in the making of these choices.

Again, it has been observed that in Ankara a "**migrant economy**" has not formed as strongly as the provinces at the south of Turkey. Most migrants compare Ankara and Gaziantep and Ankara emerges as a city where it is easier to live especially in terms of rent prices. A 52-year old participant who lived in Gaziantep prior to Ankara draws the following comparison: *"Houses and rents are cheaper in Ankara. The rent was high in Antep. Ankara is cheaper. In Antep, I paid 650 lira for a single-room apartment. Here I pay 600 lira for a four-room apartment."*

Perhaps owing to reasons such as the non-existence of a migrant economy/ or the existence of a rather restricted migrant economy, and the number of Syrians being relatively little in a city of 6 million, discriminatory and exclusionist attitudes as well as the low levels of hate crime that sometimes involve physical violence -- or in the participants' words, *"because the people of Ankara are very good"* -- have been reasons why participants have chosen to come here.

*"Rent prices are low, and **treatment towards Syrians is better** than in other places." (32 year old, two children, secondary school).*

*"The weather is better than in Mersin. I couldn't believe I was returning to Ankara. **I felt like I had come to my hometown when I returned to Ankara.** I am really used to the people here, that's why I like it" (33 age, 3 children, high-school).*

*"The treatment of people and the rent prices are better in Ankara. **We heard that rent prices have increased in Antep.** This is why Ankara is better. Also there are work opportunities in Ankara" (29 years-old, three children, elementary school).*

It was also observed that Syrian migrants use social media well, with experiences from different cities swiftly shared online which makes it sharing of information and experiences effective. For Syrians residing in the Altındağ district of Ankara, there are many opportunities to find jobs in the Siteler neighborhood, this is also the reason why this district was chosen as a permanent location to live. Siteler provides job opportunities where both male adult and male child labors can be used; an important element in making the choice to move there. Having job opportunities for male children and male adults come out to be an essential factor.

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## Changing Experiences of Womanhood From Syria to Ankara

The social roles, daily life experiences, their use of public space and duties have changed during migration. The women, who were mostly in charge of the sphere inside the house when in Syria, have said that the expectations regarding social roles was integrated with traditional roles in Syria.

*"The most difficult situation is having to live under the pressure of a husband. If a woman works outside the home, she will have a place in the social structure and her personality will improve. But a housewife always experiences **pressure from her husband**" (43 year old, three children, attended school until 10<sup>th</sup> grade).*

However, their lives have changed dramatically in Ankara. Some participants have found this transformation "positive/liberating and empowering" while some others find it negative, thinking it has increased their responsibilities and burden. The fundamental thought held by the women who find the new experiences emancipating and empowering is that they felt that living in Syria inside the house and only being in charge of indoor responsibilities was restrictive. These women have used the expressions: "I was valueless as an individual," "it was a limited life," "I wasn't free," "I couldn't leave the house" and have said they feel more comfortable and free here and that they are in the public sphere more often -- even if that's because of obligations -- and that this experience has empowered them. The husbands, male children and other male members in the households of these women also work. In general they work within informal sector and work for long hours. The male members of the household who work for 14 hours on average have had to transfer responsibility for responsibilities regarding the household and the public sphere to women. Errands like paying the bills, doing the shopping, children's schools, language courses, following up on state aid and applying to such assistances is now mostly a responsibility for women.

*"Here working hours are very long. The husbands work very long and they are treated differently and paid different wages when compared with Turkish citizens. Their rights are violated. Here, women too, have to work more. She has to ensure that their children could live a life both outside and inside the home by contenting with what they have. They are finding it hard to deal with all the bills and school spending for the children. **Men work for 14 hours.. All other things are placed on the women's shoulders.** In Syria, the men was handling things; here it is difficult for both of them." (36 years old, 6 children, attended school until 8<sup>th</sup> grade).*

*"Here **women have had to become women and men at the same time.** Because men work long hours, women have become more like men. The bodies of women have also masculinized. If the father is working all day, the woman should fill in that gap. The father is losing his role in the family.. So the woman is also assuming that role." (34 years old, two children).*

These women are women who bring income to their families, whether that happens through informal economy, with lower income or through child labor. In this situation, a new arrangement of roles is necessary and women assume these new roles. Taking these roles empowers women, increases their participation in the public sphere, increases their contact with others and emancipates them. This has also strengthened their belief in their capabilities and taken their demands to higher levels.

However, they have also expressed this new situation using expressions such as “*more of a burden has been placed on the shoulders of women*” and that they have had to deal only with household affairs and child raising in Syria whereas they now have the burden of sustenance and conducting business outside the home; much like discussions on a “second shift.” Since the sphere outside the home is a new burden -- experienced in this sense as an obligation -- some participants see this as an “*new load and responsibility*.”

*“In Aleppo, I worked at a grand hair salon. However, I don’t have that opportunity here. I would have liked to work at a bigger salon. But Turks here tell us that I can make more money at a Turkish salon, because I have a 10-year experience. But I am not allowed to work here. Even our husbands cannot completely enjoy their rights. I have only daughters, no sons who can work. I am paying the rent of 900 lira with difficulty and I am trying to make ends meet. I have moved three houses because they were all in ruins. I am now working as a woman so that we can make ends meet. My husband comes late, and he can only stay up to one hour. **We work more than men do. We take care of the children, we do work and we also try to receive aid for our homes.**” (36 years old, 6 children, attended school until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade).*

In general, all of the women in these groups married before they turned 20 and seven out of 29 women were child brides who married while they were under 15. It should be mentioned that, the women now say that they see 20 as the ideal age for marriage and similarly they see 3-4 children as the ideal number of children to have. The age they consider ideal for marriage and the number of children they consider ideal for a woman to have differ from the reality when their own marriage age and the number of children they have is considered. It can be said that in what these women describe as ideal, the age for marriage goes higher while the number of children goes down.

### **How do Migrants Sustain Their Livelihood?**

In terms of how participants maintain their livelihood, two sources of income have stood out as the main sources: i) child labor ii) social aids

All of the participants have mentioned the difficulty of making a living. They have all expressed that they live in poverty and that the cost of living is very high. There are several reasons that are in close relationship with each other which define poverty. The first reason is the high cost of rent. The second reason is that there are almost no adult males who work at a job which pays a decent wage. For the Syrians under temporary protection, the possibility of getting work permits emerged in 2016 March. However, for obtaining a work permit, an application should be filed by the employer. As per the experiences of the Syrians for an employer to make an application, the kind of labor the Syrian citizen is offering should be either very rare in the labor force or the employer should be operating at least a medium-scale establishment. Where either of these two elements is lacking, the first reason to hire migrant labor is its low price. For this reason, the male members of the participating families are employed informally at jobs characterized by long work hours and low wages. The insufficiency of income acquired through these jobs leads to the need for using the labor of the male children in the family. As it is, adult male labor is often restricted; leading the families to rely on male children’s work and social aids. However, as social

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aids are not enough for sustenance by itself, where there are male children in the household, it's been observed that it is usually an obligation for them to work.

It is heartbreaking for the women to include male children in the responsibility of maintaining the family's livelihood - especially in case of children who were still receiving an education in Syria and who were academically good -- but there doesn't seem to be any other choice. There are no other options particularly in the case of crowded families.

*"All three of my kids have had to work here," "I have two children, and they both work," "One son is taking care of a six-person household by himself, social assistance is too low and not enough"* are some of the expressions used by the participants to describe the necessity of the situation. Having five or six children make sustaining the family even harder and in parallel to the higher number of children, the women themselves cannot participate in the workforce. For taking care of six children and doing household chores is difficult and time-consuming. Male children cannot continue their education and are forced to work:

*"I wish my children would go to school instead of working. My son was top of his class when we were in Syria... I have two children, one aged 16 and one 18... They can't go to school because they work here." (36 years old mother of six, attended school until 8<sup>th</sup> grade.)*

*"I have the same problem. **My son wants to go to school.** We pressured him into helping his father. According to our circumstances, he might or might not finish school. We are struggling, although we don't want this." (31 years of age, mother of six children, attended school until 9<sup>th</sup> grade).*

*"My children were students in Syria. They didn't work there. However here my 14-year old son has had to work. This is the most difficult situation." (46 years old, 7 children, secondary school).*

The participants' paid work experience in Syria is very limited. It's been observed that in general educated women are the ones who work, but a majority have no experience of paid work. Additionally, having fled civil war, lack of school diplomas or other certification which is necessary especially for professions that require special skills sets such as beauty salon employment makes it difficult for them to find work. The real problem is that it is almost impossible for them to work for the sheer fact that they are women. Responsibilities regarding the house and care, lengthy work hours make it almost impossible for women to earn wages from employment.

*"We didn't work in Aleppo. Our school-aged children are working. **Our husbands don't allow us to work outside the house.** We can't get the same full-day wage as Turks. Is seen as cheap labor and expandable at work.. is forced into doing this." (29 years old, three children, high-school).*

Additionally, lacking Turkish language skills, due to the working of male members and male children, as they cannot transfer their responsibilities regarding housework and in the case of presence of children who still attend school, women do not even search for jobs. In addition to that, the already high rate of unemployment in Turkey makes difficult for migrant women labour to be in the labour market.



### Encounters With Others

Relations with neighbors, school-children and work conducted by various civil society organizations are ways that establish links with the outside world for these women. The easiest method of such interaction— although it involves tensions – is through neighbors. Neighbors have often held prejudices in the first encounters but over time these transform into ties where they “*understand each other better.*” However, as the participants frequently state, it is usually the migrants who have to work in order to sway the prejudices towards a more “*positive way.*” The migrant women seem to have internalized this point. *‘They are the ones who have come to the neighborhood, or to the building later and from Syria. They are the ones who should expect that the real owners of the neighborhood will have some prejudices and turn those negative ideas into positive thoughts.’* In general, it is the migrant women who make efforts in this direction, always trying to be good and to ensure that there are no problems. However, issues with children disrupt this situation a little. Altercations and fights between children usually turn into disputes between families and these can take a form where they actually strengthen the prejudices held against the migrants.

The experiences lived at school by the children is a situation which brings women into relationship with the world outside the house. Sometimes the teachers, sometimes altercations and conflict between children make school a place where they face discriminatory/exclusionary practices. Interactions with homeowners and the homeowners being “greedy” also serve as opportunities for encounters. On average, the refugees who participated in this study had lived in Ankara for two or three years, a period during which they also had to move house as twice or three times. This indicates that they have to move very frequently.

When the issue of what can be done to facilitate social integration and living together, the first suggestion that comes up is usually about this point. The high cost of rent and the ease with which migrants can be evacuated show that the migrants are extremely vulnerable in this regard. The second line of suggestions involve the migrants’ demands of measures regarding finding employment, work permits and protecting their right to work. Women mostly name demands such as lower-cost housing for their husbands, their male children and their families, but rarely ask for things for themselves. They have expressed a desire to learn the language, send their children to school and have the appearance of a “good Syrian” in the minds of others, but they haven’t considered or wanted something especially for themselves.

### Main/Common Problems

- High cost of rent, difficulty finding housing, easy evacuation procedures.
- Husbands’ working at low-wage, but more importantly, long-hour jobs.
- A significant problem with low-wage work and the women not working outside is that this situation forces male children to work. As an employer who exploits child labor cannot possibly ask for a work permit -- as it is illegal to employ children -- this in turn contributes to higher rates of informal work. This applies not only to children but also to male adults.
- Failure to have established strong ties with the residents of their neighborhood.
- Lack of training facilities, activities or an environment to overcome the language barrier.



### 3. Focus Group Meeting With Migrant Young Women

The focus group meeting where 14 young women aged 12-20 participated lasted two hours. The average age of the participants was 15 - 17. Five of the 14 participants are currently continuing their education. Others have said although they were enrolled in school in Syria, they still haven't had started school in Ankara. On average, these participants have lived in Ankara for two to three years. The profiles of the participants can be found below:

Participant Profile

Age	Education	Duration of living in Ankara (year)
15	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	2
18	Was supposed to start 10 <sup>th</sup> grade, doesn't go to school	1.5
15	Was supposed to start 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, doesn't go to school	1.5
16	Was supposed to start 9 <sup>th</sup> grade, doesn't go to school	2
16	Was supposed to start 9 <sup>th</sup> grade, doesn't go to school	2
15	in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	2
12	in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	2
18	in 11 <sup>th</sup> grade (Imam Hatip high-school)	2.5
17	Preparing for senior year in high school	4
17	In 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	4
13	In 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	3
14	Completed 9 <sup>th</sup> grade, doesn't	2.5
20	Senior year in Imam Hatip high school	2
19	Preparing for university	2
<b>Total of 14 participants</b>		

#### From a Safe and Protected Life Into Uncertainty

The experiences recounted by the young women are remarkably different from those of their mothers. Their lives in Syria, which were more free owing to a safer, more clear environment due to their age and still being in school, was upended completely. Perhaps it is best to talk to young people to understand what war is, what it changes and what it destroys. For the mothers of these young women, the priority is to hold on to life in a fairly foreign country, keep children in school, maintain a livelihood, set up a new/good life rather than to remember what the war has taken away from them. However, young women are more readily and sincerely outspoken on having lost their dreams, schools, apparent and safer lives.

*"We were happy in Syria. We led a good life. We seized the day. Our dream was to finish our school. Here we couldn't learn Turkish" (18 years old, starting 10<sup>th</sup> grade).*

Bidding farewell to dreams -- or more optimistically, putting them off for a while -- has become a necessity. Because there is a clear link between their dreams and access to education and for

accessing education, staying in school and being successful in the new system, the improvement of Turkish is a must and most of them haven't so far been able to master this aspect. It becomes more difficult to dream that targets a career mediated by education in case you cannot learn Turkish. This new life is already difficult as it is. Their family life, their schools and friendship have also changed. The families struggling to make ends meet are expressed as "*work really hard and everyone in Turkey works so much.*" by young women. Cross-country data openly answer the question of whether everyone works long hours in Turkey. True, people in Turkey work longer hours but that period is even longer for migrants, especially those who are employed in the informal sector.

For young people who have experienced a protected, safe and predictable life, the new life is difficult. It is also tough for boys, because they have now become participants/stakeholders in their families struggle against poverty. For girls, an uncertain, unpredictable life where pressure on is stronger, has been generated. All of these conditions make it even more difficult building a new life. A 16-year old participant who hasn't started school in Ankara although she is now in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade has said:

*"Our life in Syria was nice. **Our future was safe. We thought that we would fulfill our dreams.** We were going to school but our dreams were washed away with the war. We had no other business than school. We had big dreams. We had thoughts about achieving our own future, but our life was much better. Because, that is our homeland."*

*"...there, we had safety. We were going to school. **Life was calm. We weren't afraid.**" (15 years old, finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade).*

*"**We were going to school. We were attending to the festivals.** We were attending projects, ceremonies. We were busy with school and learning" (13 years old, attending 7<sup>th</sup> grade).*

The new country and the necessity of male adults and boys in the family to participate in the work life and the generally long working hours have contributed to the girls being stuck inside the house and as such it has brought a degree of loneliness. The fact that the male members of the house are not at home makes young girls, especially those who have not attended school, dependent on the home and the neighborhood. The poverty their families face also makes it difficult for the girls to pursue their dreams of education. As one of the young participants' states, this restricted life has been summarized as "**there is no life for the young here.**"

*"...before the war, we could meet with our friends. There were certain days on which we would meet. Here people don't have the time to get together. Life here is only work. There is no life for the young here" (19 years old, attending senior year of high school).*

Another factor which contributes to narrowing lives for girls and an increased control over their actions regards the "boys" of the family. Not only the parents but the other male members of the family also exercise control over the girls' lives, a pattern which is not questioned. The girls are aware that this distinction between girls and boys which affords much freedom to boys actually produces "**discrimination**". They have also identified and even deciphered this patriarchal structure which produces inequality for young girls and boys but they feel there is nothing they can do because they feel powerless. Here is how an 18-year old participant elaborates on this point:

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*"A young man gets to have a say in affairs once he is 18.. they take their own decisions and they come and go as they like. **Hearing their views is an obligation.** Once they are grown, it's over. They have a say. When it comes to us, they tell us 'you are girls, this cannot happen,' but for them everything is allowed. He doesn't have to answer for anything."*

*"Many things are forbidden for us. If I stand near the window, my brother who is three years younger than me asks me what I am doing. **They are constantly watching us.**" (15-years old).*

In response to a question on the things they could do in Syria but they can't in Ankara, it becomes evident that young girls who are in school are relatively more comfortable, that they have friends because of school and that they spend more time with their families; they are involved in family chats, go to different places and get together with neighbors and relatives. However being included in the education system in Ankara is difficult. Even for those who are part of the education system, there are still problems with the language -- which they describe saying *"Turkish is very difficult; that is the most difficult thing."* In the words of a 19-year old who should be in the last year of high school: *"The curriculum is easy in Turkey but we have a language problem."* They are able to use a degree of Turkish in daily life but they don't feel that they can be successful in academic life with partial language skills.

Another challenge faced by these young women is the perception and partially threat that the outside is *"dangerous and untrustworthy"*, which contributes to their being stuck inside the home. At the roots of being afraid of going out lies the perception of the *"dangerous public sphere."* Reports of *"people smuggling, young girls being kidnapped"* they have heard of various sources -- regardless of their truth -- produce the discourse of a dangerous outside world.

Another obstacle in the way of young girls' access to education is Turkey's co-ed system. Schools in Syria, especially those who teach sharia based education, are gender-segregated. Since Turkey doesn't have gender-segregated schools, in some cases girls aren't sent to school. A 13-year old participant has said: *"Because of co-ed education, they didn't enroll me in school."* Additionally, the fact that the academic day is lengthy and that they have to be in school for an entire day can at times turning into an obstacle. It has been observed that the young girls who are helpers of their mothers in the domestic sphere find the academic day long which lasts a full day. The 13-15 year age group is at secondary school, which means that they are not overly affected by the co-ed system, but as some girls have stated, co-ed education might lead to their giving up on education in high school. *"I had to be in the same class as boys here so I can realize my dreams. I had no issues. There was no effect on me that I was in a co-ed school. But there could be in high school."* (15 year old, continuing 8<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Education Seems to be the Only Way Out**

In spite of all the challenges ahead, the young women have a strong belief that continuing their education and holding a profession will save them. They are also aware that they will not be able to work if they fail to have a profession through education. The jobs that migrant girls with a lower-level education or with no education at all are jobs that their families will never approve of. An 18-year old participant confirms this saying: **"I want to work, but I always find bad jobs and my family doesn't accept. But nobody would be able to say anything if I had a diploma."**

They believe that they can work only if they have a professional career and for this reason they attach significant value to education.

Staying in education is important in order to get out of the house, to break the pressure applied by the male members of the family and, in the words of a 19-year old participant, **“to be able to trust myself and set up my life and not remain under male dominance.”** They also want education to have a say inside the house and in society and in order to have a stronger position in society.

### **‘Turks are More Relaxed’: Encounters/Comparisons Between Local Young Women and Migrants**

The participants feel that their peers they see in their neighborhoods, schools, around are luckier and more at ease than themselves. Describing the situation as *“They are not prisoners inside the house like us”* local young women are stated as girls who can easily go out to the street, who can use mobile phones and who have internet access. One other difference regards the “hijab.” The participants have said that if young girls want to take off their hijab in Ankara or in Turkey, they can do so and that is why they have more freedom and are luckier. Because Syrians don’t have that opportunity and all of them have had to wear the hijab starting at age 10-11.

The focus group meeting has shown that access to developing, spreading and increasingly cheaper technology is important for the girls and owning a mobile phone and especially one that has internet access is very important; something which symbolizes being young, free and relaxed.

The first aspect that should be mentioned with regards to the life they lived in their neighborhoods, especially in the case of girls who don’t have access to education, is their relationship with other young women. Friendships between boys and girls are unacceptable for both sides-- the migrants and the locals of the neighborhood. That the girls mostly reside in neighborhoods with predominantly Syrian residents helps life in the neighborhood to go more smoothly. *“There are all Syrians where we live. We are happy. This is good,”* or *“We are all Syrians. We can’t really get along with Turks, we live apart, we just greet each other”* were some of the comments by the participants.

However, it is evident that they have been overly affected by the general dissatisfaction felt towards Syrians. An issue of contention/dissatisfaction which all of the young women have mentioned, just like their mothers, was that they cook “spicy/smelly” meals which irritates the neighbors. In general, the young women see the neighborhoods where they live as “impoverished, run-down” and they say that the aroma of meals and being a large family contribute to less disagreement in these neighborhoods. A 12-year old participant has shared an experience which illustrates this point: *“We rented a house in a new building as two Syrian families, but they were angry at us whenever we cooked something. They couldn’t even tolerate the smell of what we cooked. We left and moved to a gecekondu (a shanty or shack). The gecekondu is better... Both our house and neighbors are better here.”* However, in general the young girls want to live in “rich neighborhoods.” *“I don’t like where I live. It is a run-down neighborhood. It is very crowded. We want to move to a better and richer neighborhood.”*

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## 4. Local Residents and Social Integration

Studies conducted on Syrians in Turkey, evaluated together with general observations and news reports, indicate that although there are at times attitudes that border on racism, xenophobia and hate, the level of “social acceptance” of Syrians by locals seems to be extraordinarily high (Erdoğan, 2014, p.5). However, in spite of this higher level of acceptance, society’s attitude and concerns regarding some spheres seems to be very clear in the studies conducted on the issue (Erdoğan (2014, pp. 24-35):

“[Research indicates that] [the Turkish] society has placed a very serious cultural distance between itself and the Syrians (45,3%); that the attitude towards the education of Syrian children is very positive (72,5%); that the burden brought by the Syrians upon the economy is taken seriously with the prevailing opinion being that they have damaged the economy (70,8%); that half of the Turkish people don’t support permanent work permits (47,4%); that they are relatively more positive about temporary work permits (32%); that society in general is not positive about the idea of granting citizenship to the Syrians (84,5%); that Syrians are generally seen as a security risk (62,3%); half of the people expect the Syrians to go back to their country (45,1%) and that they don’t believe that Syrians will adapt to Turkish society (66,9%).”

In the report titled “The Effects of Syrian refugees on Turkey” by Oytun and Gündoğan (2015, p. 16) “it’s been observed that issues stemming from differences in language, culture and lifestyle occupy a significant place between the Syrians and the locals, which forms a weak side of social impact in terms of acceptance and adaptation. The tendency of local to see as a threat and feelings of distrust increase as the demographic profile of the migrants differ from the social fabric of a given province. In some provinces, this situation is fanning ethnic and denominational polarization.” Other field research conducted in the region has shown that 70.8% of Turkish people hold the perception that the country’s economy has suffered because of the Syrians, and that 60% of the people are against giving aid to Syrians while Turkey has its own poor (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 26).

### **Focus Group Meeting Conducted With Local Women From the Neighborhood Who are Married and Over the Age of 20**

The focus group meeting held with nine women residing in three neighborhoods where there are large numbers of Syrians has given important clues as to the difficulties to living together and how the resident sees the other ones. Below is a chart showing the profiles of the participants:

Participant Profiles

Age	Education	Number of children	Length of living in Ankara
44	Primary school	5	20 years (own home)
41	Primary school	3	14 years (home of mother in law)
46	Primary school	2	31 years (home of mother in law)
62	Primary school	3	42 years (renting apartment)
53	Primary school	4	12 years (renting apartment)
37	Primary school	3	30 years (renting apartment)
50	Primary school	3	30 years (renting apartment)
46	Vocational high school	2	13 years (own home)
33	Primary school	4	10 years (renting apartment)
<b>9 participants total</b>			

It should be first noted here that a distinction between “local vs. foreign” would be a bit of an exaggeration. The resident women from the three neighborhoods have lived in the same area for at least 10 years. It can be said that they are a resident group in terms of the duration that they have been living in the neighborhood. The reason why the current neighborhood was chosen has traces of the process of internal migration. The availability of acquaintances and relatives, settling in this neighborhood due to marriage, affordable housing prices and the proximity of the neighborhoods to job opportunities, especially the Siteler area, can be named among the reasons for choosing to live in these three neighborhoods. Although there are many tenants, the frequency of home replacement is low, depending on the length of the living period. In general, they know each other and their close neighborly relations still continue. The women often get together, comfortably leaving children with each other and in general they state they love their neighborhood “except for the Syrians.”

They often say that “when Syrian migrants first came to the neighborhood ‘we really pitied them, we helped them a lot’ but over time they didn’t respond to our goodwill in the same manner.”

*“We pitied them a lot, we gave them stuff and we helped them. But later on it didn’t work out” (62 years old, has resided in the same neighborhood for 42 years).*

*“They were spoiled because they got too much assistance” (46 years old, resident of same neighborhood for 31 years).*

The residents initially believed the newcomers would be “temporary guests”, they approached the issue “humanely” and thought that they came for a short period of time. However, the fact that Syrians having stayed in the neighborhood after three or four years of their initial encounter and the perception that “not only that they still haven’t left, they are settling more and more every day” has turned issues into a problem which they at first ignored, thinking “they are going to leave soon anyway.” Especially those who have lived in the neighborhood for 20 or more years live trouble in accepting the permanence of Syrians and they say that they became the “minority” of the neighborhood and they say that “we are minority but we still exist”.



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Due to the increase in the period of living together, the Syrians becoming more settled, they have begun to get a job to live, to send their children to school or to solve their unemployment problems and increase their income-generating activities, were found as threatening for those living in poor neighborhoods who are already tenants, whose husbands do not have regular income and jobs. Neighborhood residents are particularly angry with Syrians who have established their own businesses, and expect them to shop at existing local stores instead of starting their own businesses. Syrian restaurants, bakeries, hair salons or grocery stores popping up in the neighborhood strengthen the idea that their neighborhood is turning into a "little Syria."

*"They have kebab places.. **They have made this place just like Syria. They swiftly opened up their own businesses..** Their barber shops, restaurants" (62 years old, resident for 42 years).*

### **Different Cultural Encounters: "Syrians Say that they Sleep in the Daytime and Wander at Night"**

Syrians becoming more settled, opening new stores and gaining on more of a visibility in the neighborhood and in the street has been disturbing -- even infuriating -- for the neighborhood women who feel like they are the "real owners" of the neighborhood. This situation which can be described as "**competition amongst the poor**" is common to all migratory experiences and is encountered in all studies on migration. The residents, over time, start seeing the Syrians as the fundamental reason behind their own poverty, feel that the Syrians are being spoiled by assistance, and develop the idea that "in fact as newcomers they do not deserve these opportunities."

*"Three people work in the household. **They make 4-5 thousand lira but they still take assistance, they are given free coal, but I can't.** They sell me coal, they give more to them. So ours say, if I am a citizen of this country, the state should also give me. I mean if you ever get a chance, I suggest you come and visit us... They don't even come into our houses for a tea or coffee.. They don't come to our houses. In the bottom floor they came as tenants, they don't visit us" (37 years old, has lived in Ankara for 30 years).*

What lies behind their anger is the state assistances to Syrians, the thought that the Syrians are wasteful, unappreciative and as such they don't deserve social assistance. The neighbors get angry, saying that the Syrians try to sell some of the food in the aid packages given by the municipality, that they don't eat bread or pasta but still go and take the aid packages and sometimes even throw them into the garbage.

*"They take bread from the municipality and then they sell those. They don't eat them, they make their own bread. **They get bread for free but they throw it away**" (46-years old, has resided in the same place for 31 years.).*

*"I have seen this first-hand. We take food aid packages from the Metropolitan Municipality... **but they throw the pasta in the trash...** They take rice but they don't even take the tea. I have taken these out from the trash can. They go and apply saying they need food assistance. The Metropolitan Municipality gives them, but hey throw it out. I have removed it from the trash and given it those who really need it." (50 years old, resides in the same neighborhood for ten years).*

Certainly, there are participants (two participants) living in the same neighborhood who think that Syrians don't eat some contents of the food packages because of their cultural habits and not because they are wasteful or spoiled.

As the period of living together prolongs, it fosters the idea that the migrants should either assimilate or go back to their countries in the minds of the residents.

*"Ten years later they won't respect us at all. Now, they feel a bit pressured, feeling they are new comers. Then they will be trouble for Turkey like Israel. **They don't want to get used to.** They don't say, 'let's adapt to local traditions'" (62 years old, has lived in the same neighborhood for 42 years).*

The residents often criticize and even are angered with the habits of Syrians such as staying up late, using too many spices in their cooking, not using the garbage cans when taking out the garbage, being too noisy in the apartment -- in other words -- they even get angry with almost all of the daily practices in the lives of Syrian families. It has been seen that, "if they will continue living here, then they should learn our rules and even put these into practice" kind of point of view has been developed.

*"They don't have the habit of throwing out the trash properly. **They just put it outside their door.** I explain, this is not where you can throw out garbage, you should be throwing out over there... No... They don't have knowledge, or they don't care about garbage and cleanliness, they don't do it, they disobey." (62 years old, has lived in the neighborhood for 42 years).*

The anger has come to a point where the residents take the issue out of the neighborhood level and point at the highest political level in the country. One participant commented: "*I am fed up with these Syrians. I will file a complaint to the president.*"

The participants of the focus group also say that the Syrians always live closely together and they easily unite and threaten the locals even in the case of the slightest; saying that it is almost as if they are the minorities.

*"It is as if they are the hosts and we are the migrants... That's the situation we are in. For example they had a fight. They stoned our apartment building. My children aren't safe. I am uneasy" (50 years old, has lived in the same neighborhood for 10 years).*

*"At the slightest incident, they get a knife and attack children. They are always fighting." (44 years old, has lived in the same neighborhood for 14 years).*

### Women Residents' views of Syrian Women

Syrian women have stated that in general they view Turkish women as hard working people who are strong because they have rights based in the country's laws. However the local/resident women of the neighborhood are most often and most easily angered by the "Syrian women." They seem to be placing the entire blame for the changes that have occurred in the neighborhood, increased poverty and perhaps challenges in accessing various forms of social assistance, on the Syrians or consider the nearest responsible from this. And it appears they are directing this anger particularly towards Syrian women as the weakest link, "the other woman", in the search for a "scapegoat" about unfavorable things. This leads to too many judgments

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that Syrian women buy make-up products instead of meeting the fundamental needs of their families, they make their children work, they dress up too much, they don't clean their homes, predominate their husbands so that they become lazy.

*"For example, she is going to buy potatoes, she dresses up for that" (37 years old, has lived in the same neighborhood for 30 years).*

*"We hear that they say the women of Turkey are unkempt... They say that the [Syrians] are always naked inside the house." (44 years old, has been living in Ankara for 20 years).*

*"They live one floor below, they have four children. I set up their heater, we set up the chimney. I saw the woman two days after that and I couldn't recognize her. She was dressed up, all painted. She had put on a ton of make-up. Like an oil painting, I couldn't recognize her. Now that her home is heated... I couldn't believe it, I asked myself was it really this woman who asked for my help? (50 years old, has been living in Ankara for 30 years):*

*"Of course they are worried that their husbands will take a second wife, so that's why they take care of themselves like that" (46 years old, has been living in the same neighborhood for 31 years).*

*"And they use the children too much. They send the children to garbage, to work, everything... They don't tire themselves out." (62 years old, has been living in the same neighborhood for 42 years).*

*"They say that according to their religion, women don't have to clean the house. They say outfits, maintenance of their bodies are more important for women." (33 years old, has been living in the same neighborhood for 10 years).*

One obstacle/challenge in the way of living together or achieving social integration regards the informal employment of Syrians. The participants have also underlined the ineffectiveness of state mechanisms that should check issues regarding informal employment, not paying taxes, their attempts to open businesses. All of the participating women come from "single-income" families where only the males work. They are also poor because they live in the same neighborhood. They believe that, since Syrians do business easily and absence of enforcements for them within this context, the state is imposing a double standard by slightly "closing eyes" to irregularities with Syrian businesses or "favoring Syrians" as difficulties with finding employment for resident men and low-wages also have impact on their lives.

*"They get rich<sup>2</sup>... They even attack the municipal police. They open up a store wherever they find a small space. They don't pay taxes. They open businesses everywhere, whereas my sons can't. Our own people cannot open a store in that particular location. But they can... and they do businesses" (53 years old, has been a resident of the neighborhood for 12 years).*

## What to do?

*"I wish they hadn't dispersed them [Syrians] across the country and just contained them near the borders. There is no situation to live in the neighborhood. No peace. They [Syrians] should be gathered and placed in a certain region." (53 years old, has been a resident of the neighborhood for 12 years).*

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2 The participant uses an idiom in Turkish namely "biti kanlanmak" by which she points that although in the past Syrians were poor and powerless, they become wealthier and powerful in time.

*"For owning a business, the same rules for Turkish people should be applied to them as well" (37 years old, has been a resident of Ankara for 10 years)*

*"They shouldn't be supporting their own but our businesses. They shouldn't open new stores, they should shop at our stores. (50 years old, has been a resident of the neighborhood for 10 years).*

*"If you are telling your own citizens to go find work, you should be saying the same thing to the Syrians. There should be equality. If we are paying taxes, so should they. There should be equality." (37 years old, has been a resident of Ankara for 10 years).*

### **General Evaluation: What do the Results From the Focus Group Meetings Tell?**

An overview of the universal profile for migrants shows that migrants usually have different linguistic, cultural and life styles; have low socioeconomic status and that the number of women and children among the population seeking refugee is high and their educational levels are low. When one examines the profile of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, it is seen that the resulting picture is similar to that of the universal migrant profile (Tunç, 2015, p. 38).

The same findings seem to be notable for Ankara, where the migrants live in crowded households; with lower levels of education where male child labor is used and where girls' access to education is limited due to a number of reasons, where adult males are employed in the informal industry at low wages and for long hours, that where possible, the participation of women in the work market is also informal and low. Another observation is that the migrants live together closely to each other in the same area. The social capital of non-local work forces is established by family members, close acquaintances, religious and ethnic unions. Trust-based social capital provides a tightly knit web of relations for the ethnic group but it also leads the group to remain closed to the outside world. (Sanders, 2002, p. 283). Cheaper rent coupled with the support mechanisms created by living together lead to such a clustering, but also diminishes the chances of integration with the rest of the society.

### **"Health Mediators" as a Successful Practice**

It has been established that the system of health mediation has been very successful, leading to the formation of so much more than just an income-generating activity for the migrant women. It has emerged that primarily the health mediators are conducting impactful efforts for their own ethnic groups, have touched the lives of other women and have become role models for others. One of the most frequently asked question directed to health mediators is: *"How much money do you earn from this job? Can I also do it?"* Along with the efforts of the health mediators at the centers, the demand of the ethnic group's women for health services has risen, as well as their frequency of using the centers and their questions regarding different services has also increased. Health mediators have also transformed and changed; they now have a stronger belief in their capabilities and their projections about the future shifted. Their use of the public sphere has increased as well as their interactions with other state agencies and women. They have turned into women who question the gender-based role segregation within the family and who demand more egalitarian lives, in their words, they have been "emancipated". However, the longer-term sustainability of the position and the granting of some sort of official recognition of

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the profession, -a sort of professionalization demand- have been noted down as an important dimension that should be considered in the near future projects.

### **Young Women**

Classifying young women and girls as a very special group and the removal of all the obstacles in their access to education seem to be issues that should be sorted out immediately. According to UNICEF data, 73% of Syrian children in Turkey cannot go to school. Although all of the children residing in migrant camps go to school, only 10% have that opportunity outside the camps (Karaca & Dinçer, 2013, p. 36). Despite inside the camps the situation is good, the overall rate of school enrolment has remained at about 15 – 20% (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 13).

The lives of girls who don't have a chance to continue their education or who have been excluded from the education system due to a number of reasons including various bureaucratic or economic hardships, have become stifling, with the time they spend inside the house and control over their actions and mobility has increased. Although girls who remain in the education system still have dreams of a better future, for those left outside, it is evident that they have no choice other than marriage. Long-hours of absence of the male members of the family also leads to mothers exerting greater control over the lives of their daughters, which also contributes to marriage being seen as the only viable option as there is no other choice. When options available to girls are not being increased, this would lead to the reproduction of sexist and traditional roles (child marriages, responsibility of the house and children, the ideal number of children to have still being too high) and studies regarding this issue are needed. The families, especially the mothers, are more concerned with the life that needs to be re-established in the place of migration rather than the life that has been lost. However, young girls are trying to live with the memories of the past they have lost and about the future they think they have lost. They are experiencing intense levels of disappointment and they have little to dream. There is no other option than holding on to education. This is why it must be seen as a priority to produce alternative routes and enable them to dream again. A large number of those under temporary protection status are children and young people, with 55% being younger than 18 years of age, with a high fertility rate. These figures strongly suggest that compulsory fundamental education is an immediate necessity for those who are school-aged and that offering vocational training to those who have had to discontinue their education also remains a pressing matter. The situation also indicates that improvements should be made in accreditation and documentation for those who have abandoned a university education.

### **Young Men and Child Labor**

Many studies conducted among the migrants under temporary protection indicate that the number of child workers is rapidly increasing. Given the high rate of children and younger individuals, the fact that exploitation of child labor is on the rise becomes a very important issue; and Turkey is now at risk of losing the significant gains it has made in this area. A very small proportion of those migrants under temporary protection actually reside in refugee camps and a majority have been dispersed across the entire country (with 85% of them living outside camps). This situation has made it difficult to develop services that are specialised for the group at hand and at the same time, create a security risk for the entire country. The Syrians



outside the camps are putting on a life struggle in 72 Turkish provinces by working in temporary positions, begging on the streets or relying on social assistance (Kamp, 2014).

The meetings held in Ankara have also shown that using labor of male children is the most important strategy of generating income for the families. The women do not participate in the work life. Given the large size of families, their educational backgrounds and responsibilities regarding housekeeping and child rearing, the likelihood of such a probability seems low. Women among Syrian refugees who participate in the workforce is too low (2%). This shows that, women, who constitute %49 of Syrian refugees, either chose to stay out of employment due to cultural reasons or that they cannot find jobs that are suitable for them (Sönmez and Mete, 2015). For all these reasons, in order to prevent boys and young men from working long hours in heavy working conditions and dealing with child labor, the reasons behind the situation as well as where interventions are needed should be well understood.

### **Competition Among the Poor**

Possibly the most important problem the Syrians face in their daily dealings regards the “right to shelter.” In general, in areas where Syrians predominantly reside, a “migrant economy” has formed, where it is most manifest in the form of rent prices. In addition to the higher cost of housing, eviction of migrants is also very easy. The right to shelter remains a rarely-talked about topic in discussions about regular/irregular migrants and their rights. It will remain important to conduct studies in this area and perhaps engage in some degree of advocacy for mechanisms in this area to be improved. In the absence of such efforts, the unequal relations in the property market force migrants from one house to another, pay incredibly high amounts of rent and create obstacles in the way of improving relationships with the residents as well as lead some homeowners to make undeserved gains off the migrants. This situation also places the resident and poor tenants in the neighborhoods where Syrians drive the rent costs up, contributing to feelings of anger and blaming towards Syrians. The presence of Syrians who have to work with absolutely no social or economic protection can at times be seen as the reason for higher rent prices, higher unemployment rate so the increase in the crime rate by some segments of society.

### **Careless Social Assistance**

One of the main topics local residents resent is “*social assistance to Syrians.*” Although social assistance is given upon certain conditions in Turkey, as Syrians are receiving social aid due to their status, the residents are prone to developing the idea that “*Syrians who don’t really need it benefit from social aid.*” There seem to be two sources of this opinion: the first one concerns how eligibility for social aid is determined. In spite of the fact that they are poor as well, the residents think that they cannot receive aid, they deal with bureaucratic procedures in case they demand for receiving social assistance and as a result they are often being rejected, which leads to competition among the poor and give harm to social integration.

The second reason is that the food packages prepared for Syrians seem to ignore the traditions and eating habits of the target group and these seem to have been prepared in a way that’s not sensitive to their culture. Distributing pasta to a group whose eating habits don’t include pasta is contributing to the formation of stigma against Syrians. They are often accused of being wasteful and spoiled, or of throwing pasta packages into the garbage, selling the bread given to them.

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## What Can be Done to Ensure Social Integration?

According to Erdoğan (2014, p. 6) :

“Universally, people who manage to make a life for themselves in the countries they live, tend to prefer to stay in the country where they have migrated, especially if their own country is worse off and if there is an environment of conflict prevails in their home country. Although the Syrians who live in Turkey say that they might return to their home land once peace is established there, they also accept that this has become quite impossible over the short and medium term. In other words, the chances that a very large number of the Syrians in Turkey will not return and will decide to stay in Turkey are very high.”

According to the findings of a field study conducted among Syrian refugees residing in Kilis in 2016, 79% of the refugees would like to have dual citizenship. 79% of the refugees have said they would like to go back to Syria if the civil war in the country comes to an end; in other words 21% of them would like to stay in Turkey. Approximately 44% of the refugees have said they would like to marry a Turkish citizen. About 57% have said they would like to continue their education in Kilis. About 68% of those refugees who have jobs don't receive state assistance. 60% of the refugees have said they would like to settle in Turkey if they find a good job (Paksoy and Karadeniz, 2016).

Especially the cost of rent, exploitation of labor, being cheated while shopping, inability to benefit from public services, security concerns and sexual abuse that mostly targets women have been issues that have come up as problems according to the statements of executives of associations. Other aspects that pose problems for the Syrians are marriage conditions, second or third wives, child marriages, polygamy and prostitution (Kaya, 2015, p. 277).

The first and essential thing is to conduct studies regarding issues that lead to competition among the poor (social assistance, the ease of starting a business and audits, arbitrariness of fixing rent prices).

For girls in general, but especially for girls who have been left outside the education system, alternative possibilities should be created and “youth friendly” activities should be planned to increase interaction with local girls. Planning activities in the form of income-generating actions and providing the much-needed freedom for young women are necessary.

Especially in a world where youth has been associated with consumption, understanding that Syrian young women's demands about consuming should be understandable. In this respect, it will be meaningful to find sources of at least small consumption (such as getting make-up materials, mobile phones, a few new clothes and buying them from the shopping mall, trips around) through some income generating activities. That these girls want to have the same things as their peers shouldn't make them seem “guilty” and they should be empowered in a way that they can start having dreams once again. Spending time with other young people will also contribute to their learning Turkish effectively.

Offering awareness raising trainings to local people, especially to women, about living together, from where, what kind of a life and why Syrians came and their efforts about holding on to life will make a significant contribution to social integration. As part of this, activities that will bring together migrant and resident women together such as trainings, courses and activities from which both sides can benefit should be planned. It will be important to plan social assistances, services and some trainings that will bring together both groups of women, by which this will be meaningful and useful not only for Syrian women but also for local women.

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