



Needs Assessment Report of Syrian Urban Refugees Receiving Assistance from Tarlabaşı Community Center in Tarlabaşı/Istanbul

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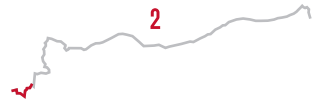
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British Embassy

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Tarlabası: A Home for Migrants

A part of Beyoğlu surrounded by Dolapdere street to the North, Tarlabası Boulevard to the South, Taksim Square and Gezi Park to the East, and the Golden Horn to the West, Tarlabası was first developed in the second half of the 19th century as lower and middle-class housing with a predominantly non-Muslim, ethnically and religiously heterogeneous population. Tarlabası's history over the last century, however, is one of continual economic, cultural, and social change. In the 1950s, the makeup of the neighborhood began to change due to waves of migration of religious minority populations out of the country and the events of September 6-7, 1955. From there, the neighborhood experienced successive waves of migration in the 1970s from Middle and Northern Anatolia, in the 1990s from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, and now most recently since 2011 as a result of the Syrian Civil war. The neighborhood has become a home for marginalized and displaced people in the city and faces stigmatization and neglect by the Turkish government and media. However despite issues of stark socio-economic inequality and illegal activities, there is a strong sense of social solidarity within the neighborhood. In 2005, a decision to start urban renewal efforts in Tarlabası was announced and was met with resistance over concerns of gentrification and marginalized groups being pushed out of the neighborhood. Amid criticism, the urban renewal project was eventually canceled in 2017.

19th century Beyoğlu was a cultural and commercial cosmopolitan center of the city, home to many embassies, banks, and foreign residences. Within Beyoğlu, Tarlabası existed as a residential area for middle and lower-middle class people working in the area, with a significant non-Muslim population mainly comprised of Greek, Armenian, and Jewish communities.¹ This began to change subsequent to the formation of the Republic as embassies were relocated to

Ankara, and fixed property belonging to non-Muslims changed hands in 1942 after the introduction of the infamous Wealth Tax² that forced many to sell their houses at low prices to Muslims.³ The neighborhood faced a major wave of migration out of the area as a result of the pogrom of the 6th and 7th September 1955, which targeted the properties of non-Muslim communities. These events inflicted heavy damage on the cultural, religious and economic presence of non-Muslim minorities and drastically changed the demographics of the neighborhood. This push of minority communities out of the area continued through the expulsion of Greek citizens in the wake of the Cyprus Crisis of 1964, in which many more properties in Tarlabası and other parts of Beyoğlu changed from Greek and other minority ownership to Turkish ownership.

This shift in demographics and property ownership in Tarlabası created a new group of landlords, who in many cases converted the space into low-cost housing for migrant populations in the city.⁴ Due to its proximity to the city center and centers of entertainment and trade, the neighborhood became a preferable place for migrants looking to settle and find work in central Istanbul.⁵ Houses originally meant for families, were divided up to provide rooms for single men migrating to the city.⁶ Starting in the 1950's, the exodus of former residents was met by an influx of economic migrants from central Anatolia drawn to the city in response to Istanbul's increasing industrialization and rapid urbanization.⁷ From here on, however, trends of social and physical dilapidation, neglect, and disinvestment by the state become evident, and as buildings and facilities in the neighborhood slowly fell into disrepair. The neighborhood became home to marginalized and displaced peoples and was increasingly stigmatized by the media and the Turkish government.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Tarlabası faced an influx of forcefully displaced Kurds of South Eastern Anatolia who were fleeing war in southeastern Turkey. In addition to the local Roma population and the internally displaced Kurds, it also gradually became a run-down

home to many irregular migrants and asylum-seekers from West African countries, Iraq and transgender individuals, sex workers, and other socially displaced groups. This, along with its reputation as a hub for illegal activities, added to the neighborhood's stigmatization in the media and by the state. In 1980, through the destruction of over 350 historical structures, Tarlabaşı street was widened into a multi-laned major road--effectively cutting off the neighborhood from the rest of Beyoğlu and further contributing to its isolation.⁸ The neighborhood was allowed to effectively transform into a slum.⁹ Despite Tarlabaşı's proximity to the city center, unemployment, low levels of education, and lack of access to basic municipal or state infrastructure and services has produced intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization for its residents.¹⁰

However, even with these intersecting forms of neglect and social stigmatization, significant social solidarity exists between residents of Tarlabaşı. Despite not being originally from the area, residents have formed a multicultural community, relationships, and businesses.¹¹ Tensions do exist in the area--particularly between Kurdish and Romani residents--and against African migrants, Iraqi migrants, and transgender inhabitants.¹² The various community centers and local initiatives in Tarlabaşı, however, have been instrumental towards bringing the community together. Further, in a recent report for Environment and Ecology Research, Tarlabaşı was identified as one of the most child-friendly neighborhoods, despite its negative reputation. Unlike in many other neighborhoods in Istanbul, children often walk to school on their own here, and benefit from a built environment and community supervision that, while not in a good state in some areas, is more conducive to providing children with places to play than many other busy urban areas in the city.¹³ The report goes on to identify the potential of the neighborhood to become a more child and community friendly space, potential problems, and proposals for future solutions.

In 2005, a decision to begin urban renewal projects in Tarlabaşı was announced, and was met with resistance. Earlier stigmatization of the area continued, but now reframed in a way that legitimized interventions into the urban and socio-cultural dynamics of the area.¹⁴

In light of recent economic expansion in Beyoğlu and its increasing visibility as a cultural and economic center, the urban renewal project envisioned turning Tarlabaşı into a mixed-use development with commercial centers, luxury residences, offices, and hotels.¹⁵ The fact that the area had been so largely ignored, and allowed to transform into a slum now could be used as justification to legalize attempts at gentrification.¹⁶ The redevelopment plan included the relocation and displacement of many residents of the area. The threat of potential displacement led to anxieties for many local residents over the potential loss of livelihoods--businesses, social connections with others in the neighborhoods, homes--and overall has negatively affected the social functioning of the neighborhood.¹⁷ Many families were forced to quit their jobs and move to the suburbs of the city such as Okmeydanı, Küçükçekmece and Pendik.¹⁸ Moreover, it is argued that the unending construction in the area have led to further deterioration of the neighborhood by increasing the crime rate.¹⁹

In 2017, the urban renewal project initially proposed in 2005 was canceled. The Istanbul 3rd Administrative Tribunal decided on 31 October 2017 to unanimously cancel the renewal project in response to the case opened by the Turkish Chamber of Architects. In the decision, it is stated that the renovation project is against the 'town planning principles, public interest and law. However, the return of the previous inhabitants seems to be impossible as most of them struggled to relocate themselves with little or no financial support from the state.

Last Wave of Migration to Tarlabası and Syrian Dom Refugees

In 2011, Tarlabası experienced yet another wave of migration--this time predominantly of Syrians fleeing the Syrian civil war. Among them, was a significant population of the Dom in addition to Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens from Syria. The aim of this section is to provide a brief overview of the history of Syrian Dom population in an effort to understand the special circumstances faced by, arguably, the most fragile and unwanted inhabitants of Tarlabası neighborhood.

The Dom constitutes a distinct ethno-linguistic group that emigrated originally from India towards the Middle East between the 6th and 10th century.²⁰ The Dom, Rom and Lom populations emerged from the same emigration wave from India and they represent the three main divisions of the community known colloquially as the Gypsies.²¹ Dom people —mainly spread out across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Egypt, Palestine and Iran—have a population of nearly 5 million.²² While keeping a strong awareness of their roots, they are known for usually hiding their ethnic identity due to fear of discrimination.²³ Due to the same reason, they tend to avoid taking sides in political issues and refrain from contact with public authorities. On the other hand, they adapt easily to the social and cultural structures of the countries they live in. The Dom typically speak their own language, Domari, as well as the languages of the countries in which they reside. Domari is often used in family and community spaces, while the host country's language is often used in other contexts. Despite being present in the region for centuries, the Dom is still treated as outsiders. They often face social exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization from authorities and majority populations, which is reflected in high rates of unemployment, poverty, poor housing conditions, restricted access to education, stereotyping and negative perceptions regarding their life styles and culture.²⁴

Before the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, it is estimated that around 150,000 Dom people lived in Syria, as part of the wider Dom community throughout the Middle East. The humanitarian crisis in Syria led to the dispersal of the community across the region mainly towards neighboring countries including Turkey (50,000), Jordan (30,000), Lebanon (20,000) Iraq (20,000), Egypt and, to a lesser extent, United Arab Emirates and European countries.²⁵

Dom refugees are part of the approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees seeking a new life in Turkey.²⁶ There is a lack of official data but it is estimated that around 50,000 Dom people migrated from Syria to Turkey since the beginning of the war in 2011.²⁷ In Turkey, many of the Dom people also speak Arabic and Kurdish. In a research report dated 2016, the decision of the Syrian Dom to move to Turkey is explained in relation to three different dynamics.²⁸ First, because of the multilingual structure of Dom communities, who used to live along the borders between Syria and Turkey, there is a common belief that they would not have any language issues in Turkey. Second, they perceive Turkey as a developed country in which they can have better access to social services. Third, Turkey's open-door policy as an immediate response to the conflict which made Turkey the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. However, as it will be underlined, these three dynamics also became the source of many of the problems faced by Dom communities in Turkey.

Discrimination

Available studies indicate that the Dom refugees in Turkey are exposed to exclusion and discrimination by the public authorities, host society and other Syrian refugees. These acts of discrimination are based on (1) their ethnic identity and the deep rooted prejudice against Gypsy communities (2) their way of life and (3) their status

as refugees from Syria. Some accounts indicate that Dom refugees coming from Kobani and Hasakah were subject to ill-treatment by law-enforcement authorities and not allowed to cross the border in some cases.²⁹ Being labeled as “gypsies,” “nomads,” and “beggars” among public and in the media is exacerbating the experiences of Dom refugees by segregating them from society and limiting their access to basic services. In 2014, Syrian Beggar Circular was issued by the government, which created a much more precarious and discriminatory environment for Dom refugees. This measure established that the refugees begging in the streets would be deported or forcibly sent to the state-established refugee camps, officially denying them protection from refoulement.³⁰ In some cases, it is said that the families were forcefully displaced and their children were left behind in Istanbul, causing acute vulnerabilities. The media portrayal of the Dom Syrians in Turkey is also often quite discriminatory and repressive. Mainstream media outlets typically portray Dom people as ‘Syrian Gypsies’ or ‘Syrian beggars’, arguing that begging is their way of life and emphasizing that they are different from the other Syrian communities.³¹ Even in reports with an allegedly rights-based approach, a distinction is being made between ‘good Syrian’ and ‘bad Syrian’ by saying that “no one wants to work with Syrians because of Syrian beggars”.³²

Accommodation

Dom refugees are unable to stay in official refugee camps due to discrimination, political polarisation and ethnic and religious divisions.³³ It is reported that they have been evicted from the Islahiye tent camp in Gaziantep by AFAD (the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority) based on complaints from other Syrian refugee groups.³⁴ It is also not in the best interest of Dom refugees to stay

in camps due to the strict regulations regarding camp entries and exit processes as well as the sense of isolation from the outside world. In contrast to popular understanding of the Dom communities as nomadic, the majority of the Dom people living in Turkey and Syria are sedentary.³⁵ Therefore, they usually tend to move into the urban areas. The vast majority of the Dom refugees are living in the Southeastern provinces of Antep, Kilis, Urfa and also in Mersin and Adana.³⁶ Smaller communities can also be found in metropolitan cities, including Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. In Istanbul, Dom refugees live in ghetto-like settlements in Sulukule, Balat, Fikirtepe, Cibali and Tarlabası.³⁷ Many live in informal camps, abandoned buildings, or substandard rental accommodations in the outskirts of cities, or in urban slums within the cities.³⁸ It is observed that the Syrian Dom refugees in Turkey tend to settle in neighborhoods with already existing Dom and Roma populations.³⁹

Employment

In January 2016, the Turkish government issued the 'Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners under Temporary Protection' in order to facilitate the access of Syrians to the job market under certain conditions. Yet, the informal market still remains more attractive both for Syrian refugees and employers.⁴⁰ It is estimated that around 750,000 – 950,000 Syrian refugees are working in the informal sector in highly exploitative conditions for lower wages and longer hours.⁴¹ For Dom refugees, the situation is even worse. Traditional economic activities of the Dom communities are folk dentistry, performing music, peddling, iron and tin smithing, sieve and basket making, rifle repairing, saddle and harness making, and hunting wild birds.⁴² However, these are not viable forms of income for the refugees in

Turkey.⁴³ This means a narrower field of employment for the Dom. Due to discrimination in the labor market, language barrier and low levels of education, many Dom refugees have difficulties in finding jobs or work in low skill occupations. Waste gathering, recycling, and seasonal agricultural labor are the most common jobs done by Dom refugees.⁴⁴ Dom women and children are engaged in selling small goods like pencils and tissues or collecting food on the streets. In the informal economy, commonly observed problems of all refugees are low wages, harsh working conditions and long working hours with no security.

Health

According to the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR) enacted in October 2014, which specifies the rights and status of Syrian refugees in Turkey, all registered refugees coming from Syria, residing inside or outside the Temporary Accommodation Centers (camps), have free access to primary and secondary health services in their province of residence.⁴⁵ However, the regulation requires refugees to go to health facilities only in the cities where they registered, which makes it difficult for a community that is frequently changing locations either voluntarily or forcefully. Therefore, they are unable to benefit from free health care services and they usually have to pay for their own expenses.⁴⁶ It becomes even more risky for women and babies as pregnancies and childbirth complications cannot be monitored and treated.⁴⁷ A common threat particularly for children is malnutrition. Moreover, informal housing conditions can also lead to difficulty in accessing clean water, which exacerbates the health risks posed by lack of sanitation and hygiene.



Education

According to the Temporary Protection Regulation, all Syrian refugee children can attend public schools in Turkey. However, gaps exist between policy and practice. According to the latest statistics, 370,000 children - 38% of all school-age children - are out of school.⁴⁸ Yet, this percentage is probably way too optimistic for the Dom population. Available studies show that an overwhelming majority of the Dom children are not enrolled to schools in Turkey. Some parents indicate that they do not want to send their children to school due to fear that their children will be discriminated against by their fellows.⁴⁹ In the absence of necessary incentives for education and lack of livelihood opportunities for families, many children are forced to work as child laborers.

Civil Society Organizations in Tarlaabaşı

Several different civil initiatives have been crucial in providing support for communities in Tarlaabaşı, and in fostering social solidarity. Among them the Migrant Solidarity Network and affiliated Migrant Solidarity Kitchen, as well as the Tarlaabaşı Community Center have played important roles. The Migrant Solidarity Network was started in 2010 and aimed to support the migrant struggle by organizing forums, film screenings, radio transmissions, and solidarity events. While the Migrant Solidarity Network is no longer active in Istanbul, its offshoot, the Migrant Solidarity Kitchen continue to work with migrant communities in Tarlaabaşı. Started in 2011, the Solidarity Kitchen works to provide services ranging from meals, to language and guitar lessons, to legal workshops for residents of the neighborhood.⁵⁰

The Tarlaabaşı Community Centre (TTM) is a right-based NGO that was opened in 2006, and since then has provided social, psychological, and educational support for over 15.000 disadvantaged children,

young people and women.⁵¹ Examples of programs and activities hosted by the center include; art and educational workshops for children, psychosocial support groups, adult literacy and women's health programs, and legal support.⁵² In 2015, the center began to work with the Syrian Dom community in the neighborhood. They organized Turkish language classes and activities such as arts and crafts. About 50 children have attended pre-school education classes including basic reading and writing skills given by a teacher and volunteers at the centre.⁵³ As the TTM has been serving this specific group for the last two years, assessing the needs of the Dom with priority given to children and developing sustainable solutions for the group were the primary goals of this project. However, it proved difficult to gather information about the Dom community through surveys, as they tend to conceal their ethnic identity due to fear of stigmatization, exclusion and discrimination.⁵⁴ Therefore, the scope of this project has been extended to the all refugees receiving assistance from Tarlabası Community Centre, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

Metodoloji

Findings in this report about the situation of refugees who receive support from Tarlabası Community Center (TTM) are based on interviews with the refugee families. TTM conducted field research in 2017 in which they organized face-to-face and semi-structured interviews with nine Syrian refugee women in their houses. Interview questions primarily concerned household structure, migration experience, employment, housing conditions, their societal and spatial relations, their well-being, values and their relations with civil society organizations with a specific focus on TTM. The main goal of the project is to assess the needs of refugees living and receiving assistance from TTM, with priority given to children, and providing certain services at the Centre within the framework of these findings.

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There is work of course. But we don't go for some of them. Daily wage is better. Because otherwise, maybe they won't pay us.

”

Main Findings

Demographics and Employment

Face-to-face interviews were held with nine Syrian refugee women in their houses. The average age of the women interviewed was 35 years old. While the average size of the households interviewed was seven, the average number of children per household was 6. On average, parents constituted 22 percent of the household population and children made up of 78 percent of the household population. Only one of the households accommodated more than one family, while the rest were reported as single-family households. As far as the languages spoken by the family members are concerned, seven families expressed that they spoke both Arabic and Kurdish and four families indicated that they can speak Turkish next to Kurdish and Arabic. All the families interviewed clearly stated that they do not speak Domari, and they expressed their religious affiliation as being Sunni Islam.

While six of the interviewees were illiterate, two of them expressed that they have attended primary school. Although almost all of the interviewees are housewives now, five of them indicated that they used to have temporary jobs. For example, three of them used to have a seasonal agriculture work back in Syria. One of the respondents currently sells dresses at flea market to support her family. Out of nine women interviewed, two reported a household income between 551-750 Turkish liras, two between 751-1.000 Turkish liras, and two between 1001-1500 Turkish liras. Only one family reported a household income more than 1501 liras. While in five of the families interviewed the income was stated to be generated by adults only, only one of the interviewees indicated that income generated by adults constitute not the full but the most of their household income. When interviewees were asked about their husband's or their childrens jobs, they

explained that their husbands and children generally preferred informal and temporary jobs such as construction work, waste collection or portering. Three interviewees stated that their husbands work at temporary, mostly daily, construction jobs because they thought that it was a more efficient and safe way to receive their daily wages. For instance, a respondent reported that her 15-year-old son used to work at construction for a weekly wage, but that he could not get it. Due to this level of informality and daily change in jobs, many Syrians in Tarlabası have to put up with exploitative and precarious work conditions.

Children and Education

In the nine households interviewed, there were reported to be a total of 51 children living in these households. While male children constituted the 60 percent of the child population in these households, female children 40 percent of the children living in these households. There were reported to be 16 children aged between 0 and 5, 27 children aged between 6 and 14, 5 children aged between 15 and 18, and only 3 children were reported to be older than 18. Among the 51 children in our research, 47 of the children were reported to have ID cards whereas four of these children were reported as not registered with the Turkish authorities and not having ID cards.

As far as the educational attainment of these children is concerned, we were informed by our interviewees that 21 of these children have attended school either in Syria or in Turkey. While only two children were reported as having attended school in Syria, 21 of these children were reported as not having had any schooling while they were in Syria. One of our interviewees informed that the fear of ongoing war in Syria was the main reason for her children not to attend school back in Syria.



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Other children dropped something in my boy's bag and put the blame on him. So the teacher hit his hand. But the teacher is very good.

”

“

Children of my siblings are going to school for five years and they've learnt nothing. They can't speak Turkish, so I didn't send them. Why would I? We live here, but it's like garbage dump. Nobody accepts us. We are scared of door sound, of everything.

”

Out of 29 schooling age children -aged between 6 and 17-, fourteen children were reported to have attended school in Turkey and twelve of them were reported to be currently continuing their education. Those children who are currently reported to be enrolled in a school in Turkey were all aged between 8 and 14, and all enrolled in a primary school in Turkey. The schooling rates were observed to be higher among the male children. Nine out of 12 children who are currently enrolled in school were observed to be males whereas there observed to be only four female students who are currently continuing with their education. Additionally, among those children who were enrolled in a school in Turkey, only eight of them were reported to be regularly attending to school. One of the interviewees stated that one of her children did not want to continue to her education after attending a school in Turkey because she could not learn the basic skills such as reading and writing as she does not speak Turkish, and therefore, she instead preferred to take care of her younger siblings and do household work. As far as the reasons for not attending school are concerned, expulsions from the school, necessity to have a job or helping housework were frequently cited as reasons for children not to attend school. While 3 children were stated to work at waste collection jobs, a 15-year-old boy is currently looking for a job. The interviews further revealed that the belief that children will not be able to benefit from schooling due to language barriers and not having a schooling facility near the residential area constitute two other common reasons for children not to attend education. One of our interviewees expressed that she chose not to not send her children to school because she thought that they would not learn anything at school as they do not speak Turkish. She further explained that her sister's children had gone to school in Turkey for five years, but that they could not learn even a letter. Another interviewee stated that she did not send her children to the school because it was far from her house as she had to stay at home for taking care of her younger children and thus she cannot take her elder children to the school. Our findings further suggest that those families completely agree

with the statement suggesting that if their children are educated, they can have better jobs in the future are more likely to enroll their children to schools when compared to their counterparts who do not agree with this statement. To put it differently, our findings points at a possible link between the parental attitudes towards education and the educational attainment behavior of the children at regard.

Accommodation – Housing Conditions

It has been observed that all the refugee families interviewed lived in rented accommodations. While four of them live in small flats, three families were stated to be living in informal living arrangements such as warehouses or coal bankers. Two of the interviewees reported that they were living in a two-bedroom apartment, and the rest of the interviewees described their houses as having only one room. While only two of our interviewees expressed that there is no kitchen in their houses, all interviewees mentioned having toilet facilities either inside (eight families) or outside (one family) their houses. Five of these houses are stated to have proper bathrooms whereas for the rest of the houses interviewees stated that they use toilets to take a shower. Due to the lack of enough number of rooms, four interviewees stated that children sleep with the adults, and only in three households, children are reported to have their own beds to sleep.

In terms of heating, seven households were reported to depend on electric stoves, while only in one of the households coal/wood burning stove is used for heating. When asked about household goods and facilities, we found out that all households interviewed had access to tap water and electricity. While they all had an oven in their houses, four did not have a washing machine and five did not have a refrigerator. As far as the communication tools are concerned, while seven families had a television, none of them had computers/laptops. Additionally, seven households lacked the internet facilities. Among



“

A single room. No kitchen. We sleep all together, on the floor, with the whole family. This place is a coal cellar. There is a toilet, but no separate bathroom. Toilets became bathrooms in Istanbul.

”

the nine interviewees having phones, only five of them had smart phones and they stated that they used their smart phones mostly for talking. The internet access through smartphones was found to be relatively less common as only two of our interviewees mentioned using their smart phones for the purposes of accessing to internet.

As far as the housing arrangements are concerned, six families reported to have changed their housing arrangements at least once in past two years and only two families indicated that they had been living in the same place for the past two years. Six families stated that they had difficulties in finding a new house due to high rental prices and unwillingness of home-owners to rent houses to Syrians. A respondent expressed that people did not want to rent their houses to Syrians because they think that “we are dirty people, and we would ruin their houses.” Another interviewee reported that Syrians were often blamed for things—regardless of whether or not it was their fault. To support her point, she further told the story of how they were blamed for the damage and forced to pay the repair charges for a broken mirror and dirty walls even though these damages were inflicted before they first moved in the house. She also recounted that the landlord had once even made them pay the utility bills for his own house.

Six families interviewed paid home rental prices ranging between 251 to 500 Turkish liras, two between 501 to 750 Turkish liras, and one family between 751 to 1000 Turkish liras. As they depend on informal and daily jobs, their income is mostly uncertain. According to the respondents, their households often had difficulties paying these rental prices. A respondent stated that they could only afford their rent by borrowing money from their relatives and friends.

Migration Experience

The pre-migratory conditions of the refugees in Syria are crucial in understanding the reflections of the migration experience on their current wealth and well-being. Eight people surveyed coming to Turkey from Aleppo/Syria, where they all had owned houses while living in Syria. Before migrating to Turkey, four of them were seasonal agriculture workers and three of them had jobs at construction work. One household worked in farming and animal husbandry. While four participants arrived Turkey in 2014, the rest arrived between 2010-2012. When looking migration routes, only two families stated that their first destination had been Istanbul. For the majority of the respondents, Istanbul was not the first choice of destination, where all except two households live in at least two cities before arriving to Istanbul. Urfa was reported as the most frequent first destination among the respondents, as it is a bordering city to Syria. Seven respondents surveyed had ID cards in Turkey, while one did not. There were only two families that had stayed in a refugee camp after arriving



Boy's leg is broken. A bomb hit it. The car is boy's. It's raining.

Tarlabası Community Center, Children's Perception of Violence Project.

“

Children weren't sleeping at all. They thought every little thing was a weapon. They were so scared. They hugged each other instantly. Turkey is OK though, children have no problems here. It is better here, we can tell our complaints. It wasn't like this back in Syria. Here it's very good. They say "We won't do military service for there (Syria), we'll do for here (Turkey)".

”

in Turkey. They stated that camps were adequate in terms of safety and privacy but not adequate for providing all basic needs, such as cleaning facilities/services.

Among reasons for migration, economic issues, security concerns and search for a better future for children were the most prominent ones. While six respondents stated security concerns as the main reasons of migration, three stated economic problems and five a better future for children. Other reasons for migration included political or family issues. During the interviews, it became clear that traumatic experiences before migration were fairly common among all the respondents and their children. Three respondents stated that their children were scared of planes flying overhead, even after coming to Turkey. Another respondent reported that she sometimes they woke up in the middle of a night. The negative impact of the civil war experience still endures in many of the respondents. Seven participants expressed the existence of conflict in the region they used to live and four participants replied positively to the question whether they lost any friends or acquaintances in a conflict in Syria and two respondents replied negatively. Three respondents avoided answering this question.

Societal and Spatial Relations – Istanbul & Tarlabası

Among those interviewed, five households had lived in Istanbul for three years, three households had been in Istanbul for a year, and one household had been for two years. As far as the motivations that led them to come to Istanbul are concerned, search for better job opportunities was often cited as a main reason. A few respondents also stated that better education for children, better living conditions and work environments, and having relatives in Istanbul were central in their decisions to come to Istanbul. It should be noted that none of the respondents surveyed thought that they would face less discrimination/racism in Istanbul.

Three households interviewed had lived in Tarlabası for three years, another three families for two years and the rest for a year. Only two households had lived in another municipality in Istanbul before moving in to Tarlabası. For the rest, their first destination after arriving in Istanbul was Tarlabası. They preferred districts such as Tarlabası due to lower rental prices and their invisibility within the overall population.

While seven people felt pretty safe in Tarlabası, two respondents said that they did not feel safe at all. When asked about what kind of issues they face in Tarlabası, three respondents reported the existence of drug deals, prostitution and instances of robbery. One respondent reported that her husband warned the drug dealers around their house since their children feared them. Other respondents stated that they did not feel comfortable about drug dealers living in the neighborhood. When it comes to the relations with other groups in Tarlabası, Syrian Kurds were listed as the prominent group that interviewees indicate having interactions with. Aside from Syrian Kurds, Turkish Kurds and Syrian Arabs were expressed as other prominent groups living in the area that they had connections with. All interviewees stated that they had no interaction with Doms.

When asked where they would prefer to go in case they moved out of Tarlabası, six respondents indicated that they would go back to Syria and others expressed their interest to go to another city in Turkey. Many reported having better living conditions in Syria. This has been particularly announced by a respondent who did not feel at ease living in Tarlabası: "They treat us like dogs here, we used to put our animals in houses similar to these but now we now have to live in one of them." Most of the interviewees reported that the decline in their socioeconomic status after their migration to Turkey.



“

What has pleased you, has made you happy the most during the time you've lived in Turkey?

Nothing. We've entered into these houses. We used to put our animals in these houses. Yet, God bless.

”

Well-Being

When the respondents were asked about their happiness, only one respondent answered that she feels very happy and four respondents reported not being happy. One of the respondents who expressed their unhappiness indicated that the isolation from the family members and uncertainty about the family's current condition was one of the main causes for unhappiness: "There is nothing here that makes us happy. Our relatives are away from us. I do not even know where my fathers and brothers are."

All interviewees were asked "how often do you meet with your friends or relatives?", to which four people responded as "every day", three people as "a few times in a week" and one as "once in every week". However, when asked "are there people around you with whom you can talk about personal issues?", six respondents answered as no, and one answered that there was only one person. Three women emphasized that there is no one around them to share their feelings and problems. Answers to open-ended questions also indicated that the refugee women had few social activities and that they barely leave their houses.

On the topic of earnings, while only one respondent said that they can easily make a living with their income; seven stated that they had difficulties making a living with their income. When comparing their level of welfare in Syria and in Turkey, five respondents expressed that their situation in Turkey is worse and three respondents stated much worse. Due to the lack of regular and decent income, five people have often been undernourished or did not have enough cash over the past year to pay their expenses; one family had struggled with homelessness over the past year. In terms of workplace exploitation:

two people stated they often have problems in receiving their payment, three people received only often sometimes do, and three people reported never being able to receive the payment for their work.

Regarding accessing to treatment or to medicine, while two respondents reported having difficulties of access, three people sometimes did receive treatment or obtain medicine, and three people never had access to them. Seven respondents stated that they have a good health condition, while one respondent reported being unhealthy. Moreover, during the fieldwork, it was observed that there were some sick children who were not receiving proper treatments for their disease.

Relations with Civil Society Organizations and State Institutions

The majority of the participants to our survey indicated that they received services from the local police for the issuing of their ID cards. Two respondents also stated that they had gotten information from a health center and the schools that their children were enrolled in about ID cards. Municipalities, Mukhtar, and the branches of the Directorate of General Migration Management (DGMM) were also reported to be reached out for more information about other public services. The participants of the survey mentioned receiving frequent information regarding health services for refugees under temporary protection in Turkey from health centers. The majority of the respondents found the services provided by police offices, health centers and schools adequate.

The majority of the participants to the survey indicated that they had applied for support from various civil society organizations such as

“

I went to the Police for to issue ID for the little one two or three times. But they send to Eminönü (Migration Office) each time. They don't give it over there either. I couldn't get it.

”

“

On which issues do you want
TTM's support?

**Children's
education. They
shouldn't get beaten**

”

Migrant Solidarity Network and Tarlabası Community Center (TTM). Eight respondents expressed that they have heard about Tarlabası Community Center from their children, relatives or the Migrant Solidarity Kitchen. Seven families' children have already received services from the Centre. The main services used were the toy library, and information regarding registering for schools and health services. Six respondents reported that education services were the most important one among the services that the TTM provides. Legal support and information about health services were stated as other relevant services. In addition to TTM, six interviewees have received services from Migrant Solidarity Kitchen.



Values

On the topic of children's access to education and its impact on their socialization in Turkey, six interviewees addressed that their daughters and sons could have better jobs if they received a good education, while one disagreed with this statement. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that their children could make friends from other groups at school and that teachers treated children from different backgrounds equally. While three respondents reported that compulsory education was too long, four respondents thought that school hours were too long. Six respondents also expressed that affording school supplies was often difficult.

The answers to gender-related questions demonstrated the participants to the survey to have high paternalistic values. On the question of access to labor force, eight respondents agreed with the statement that men had more right to have a job if there were limited job opportunities. Parallel results were obtained from other questions. Only one respondent agreed with the statement that having a job was one of the best ways for a woman to become independent whereas six respondents disagreed or completely disagreed with the statement. Seven women agreed with the statement that when women work, their children are negatively affected. They also completely agreed with the statement that while men have jobs, women should take care of children and household work. Still, the majority of the respondents either agreed or completely agreed with the statement that if women and men do the same work, they should have the equal wage and that decisions about home economics should be made by husband and wife together.

“

Do you have dreams for your children?

I want my son to learn how to read and write and to learn Quran, to read it from beginning to end. May God give health to other children.

”

“

I want children to study, to become doctors, to have an occupation. It's OK if girls don't study though. Because they'll get married and leave anyway. But it's good if they know how to read and write.

”

“

Landlords are cruel. The window is broken, they say get it fixed, get it painted. The house is not mine, why would I? It was like that when I moved in. They insult a lot. So we leave. We've changed lots of houses. They father everything on us. Somebody throws litter, they say "Syrians did it". They complain. So the landlords evict us.

”

Discrimination

On the topic of discrimination, the results of the survey illustrated discrepancies in terms of method that has been used. Although only three respondents reported being subjected to discrimination based on their nationality, the majority referenced experiences of discrimination whilst answering to open-ended questions. According to the respondents, the main area where they faced discrimination during their daily interactions with the native population was while seeking for residence. Three respondents indicated receiving verbal abuse such as being called as "dirty" and as one respondent reported this also reflected on their children's relations with the natives: "When my children makes a mistake, others immediately label us as dirty Syrians."

Recommendations

- * Education seminars can be held to regularly inform families about their rights to access to public services. In particular, refugees should have access to information regarding the process of issuing ID cards.
- * Student registration and attendance should be monitored by TTM. Additionally, school supplies, such as backpacks and notebooks, should be provided.
- * Social activities and playtimes for the children should be increased so that they will spend more time at the Centre and less on the streets.
- * TTM could host events for mothers, to present them with opportunities for socializing.
- * A project could be developed to regularly monitor the health of children who receive assistance from TTM.
- * Education seminars providing information for refugee women about rights to health services could be organized by the center.
- * Workshops and activities should be organized on gender equality, especially for children.
- * Social inclusion should be worked on.



**PARÇA DÜŞME
TEHLİKESİ**



**ARAÇ PARK ETMEK
TEHLİKELİ VE
YASAKTIR**

**İNŞAAT SIRASINDA
ÇEVREYE VERDİĞİMİZ
KİRLİLİKTEN DOLAYI**



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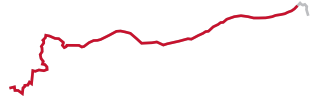
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2018, İstanbul