

# Syrian refugee women, girls, and people with disabilities in Turkey

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*05 July 2018*

## Question

*What is the available evidence on how refugee women, girls, and people with disabilities have been affected by the response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey?*

## Contents

1. Summary
2. Syrian refugees in Turkey
3. Women
4. Girls
5. People with disabilities
6. References

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## 1. Summary

Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees, almost half of whom are women and girls. This rapid review looks at available evidence on how Syrian refugee women, girls, and people with disabilities have been affected by the response to the refugee crisis by a variety of actors, including the host government, international actors, and host communities. Refugees in Turkey face a number of challenges, with female refugees and refugees with disabilities facing additional gender and disability specific barriers. Poverty is a major issue for refugees, with nearly 67% living below the poverty line.

While initially there were a number of research reports focusing specifically on the experiences of female refugees in Turkey (e.g. AFAD, 2014; MAZLUMDER, 2014, CTDC, 2015; Anderson, 2013), recently less research has focused specifically on them, although a recent needs assessment by UNWOMEN is forthcoming. Much of the available literature is grey literature from organisations working in Turkey, as well as a small number of journal articles. Very little evidence is available on the experiences of Syrian refugees with disabilities, which remains a large gap in the evidence. Much of the general literature on the response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey is both gender and especially disability blind, although the need to meet their needs is increasingly recognised by those responding to the crisis.

Key finding relating to Syrian women in Turkey include:

- **Health:** Women of reproductive age constitute more than 25% of the Syrian population. Factors contributing to poor reproductive health include language difficulties; lack of access to amenities for basic hygiene; lack of access to feminine hygiene products, washing water, soap, and bathing facilities; poverty; lack of awareness and access to reproductive health care; stigma, fear of mistreatment or discrimination; fear of reporting violence, and difficulties obtaining legal status; overloaded medical systems; and a lack of female doctors.
- **Shelter:** Many women are staying in inadequate housing which increases the risk of gender based violence. Others have been exploited by landlords in return for accommodation.
- **Female-headed households:** Almost a third of refugee households are headed by a women which makes the household more vulnerable to poverty and abuse as they are less able to find work and are perceived to lack a 'protector'. They have higher incidences of negative coping mechanisms such as reducing adult consumption so children can eat and child labour.
- **Livelihoods and employment:** Female employment is generally low and Syrian women often face discrimination and ill-treatment in the work place, and earn the lowest wages. Barriers to work include language; lack of childcare; lack of information and training opportunities; harassment; and traditional gender roles.
- Some efforts are being made by national and international NGOs and UN organisations to support women's employment.
- **Social protection:** Some of the needs of vulnerable female refugees are met by cash transfer programmes such as the Emergency Social Safety Net programme, which has helped to reduce poverty rates and the use of negative coping mechanisms.
- **Sex work:** Some women have turned to sex work as a result of economic pressures, while others are victims of human trafficking, including girls. They experience stigma, violence, poor access to services, and many are trapped in poverty.

- **Violence:** Syrian refugee women have reported facing a variety of violence, including domestic violence, harassment, and forced marriages, yet adequate prevention and support is lacking.
- **Polygamous and unregistered marriages:** Unofficial polygamous marriages with Turkish men are an issue for some Syrian women, and the women in them do not have the same rights as they would in a legal marriage. For some women they are a means of survival due to the money their families are offered. Unregistered marriages have also become part of the sex industry, with short term marriages used to legitimise sex.
- **Gender roles:** Women refugees have both been able to, but have also been forced to, take on new gender roles, which has been empowering for some but a burden for others.
- **Isolation:** Lack of Turkish language skills and concerns over women's safety contributes to the isolation of female refugees.
- **Support networks:** Some women have created support networks for the benefit of themselves and their communities.

Key findings relating to Syrian girls in Turkey include:

- **Education:** Rates of schooling are similar for Syrian boys and girls in primary school but girls are less likely to attend secondary school. The national Conditional Cash Transfer for Education offers higher benefits for girls to encourage their school attendance.
- **Out of school children:** About 40% of Syrian children are out of school as a result of poverty, and children being withdrawn from school for child labour and child marriage. Language is also an issue, as is lack of ID cards, not enough teachers, and bullying of refugee children.
- **Child labour:** Child labour is higher amongst Syrian refugees, with both boys and girls participating. They have experienced abuse and harassment from their employers.
- **Child marriage:** The prevalence of child marriage has increased, primarily as a result of poverty. Families are marrying their underage girls to (much) older men often in return for money and with the idea that the marriage will 'protect' their daughter. Such marriages cause physical and mental harm to the children and they are often exploited by the whole family. The official response to these marriages has often been inadequate.
- **Child protection:** Efforts are being made by humanitarian actors and the government to strengthen the protection of refugee children.

Key findings relating to Syrian's with disabilities in Turkey include:

- There is no reliable data on the number of refugees with disabilities in Turkey, although the available information suggests they are among the refugees who are struggling the most.
- **Education:** Many refugee children with disabilities are out of school, and the available educational opportunities for refugees with disabilities does not meet the diverse needs of children with different disabilities.
- **Shelter and transport:** Life outside of camps is challenging for refugees with disabilities as cheap housing and transport are often inaccessible.
- **Employment:** Refugees with disabilities have struggled to find work and experienced stigma.
- **Humanitarian assistance:** Some camp based assistance for people with disabilities was of a high standard and some organisations are providing for specific needs of refugees with disabilities, but humanitarian organisations generally have not consistently provided services for people with disabilities.
- **Disability type and gender** also impacts on the challenges faced by refugees with disabilities.

## 2. Syrian refugees in Turkey

As of June 2018 Turkey hosts 3,562,523 registered Syrian refugees<sup>1</sup>, most of whom have settled among host communities in towns and cities and approximately 7% of whom live in 21 temporary accommodation centres (camps) near the Syrian border (3RP, 2018, p. 4). Syrian refugees have ‘temporary protection’ which gives Syrian refugees in Turkey access to opportunities not awarded to other (non-European) refugees (freedom of movement, work permits, refugee protection, access to education and healthcare and social services) (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 40; ECRE, 2017, p. 108-150). A residency card or *kimlik* provides Syrian refugees with access to a set of services such as healthcare and temporary protection, although they have become harder to obtain (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 10). According to Article 3 of the Temporary Protection Regulation, “unaccompanied minors, persons with disability, elderly, pregnant women, single parents with accompanying children, victims of torture, sexual assault or other forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence” are to be categorised as “persons with special needs” (ECRE, 2017, p. 144). ‘Being identified and registered as a “person with special needs” entitles beneficiaries to additional safeguards and prioritised access to rights and services’ and the responsibility for them lies with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (ECRE, 2017, p. 144). However, Kivilcim (2016, p. 200) notes that the ‘law fails to create structures that will adequately mitigate or prevent abuses’ against such groups.

Refugees in Turkey face a number of challenges including, ‘lack of access to information; language barriers; obstacles to registration, which in turn hinder their access to health and education; a dearth of livelihoods opportunities; and occasional social tension between refugees and host communities’ (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 8; 3RP, 2018, p. 6). Poverty is prevalent among Syrian refugees living in Turkey, due to a lack of access to a regular income, and the high cost of living (FAO, 2017, p. 3; Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 10). Assessments in 2017 found that nearly 67% of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line and many are in shelters with insufficient water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and inadequate protection against poor weather (UNICEF, 2018b, p. 16; IOM, 2017). 18.4% of them were living below the extreme poverty line and couldn’t afford to meet their most basic food needs (3RP, 2018, p. 6). Many families have resorted to negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing the quality and quantity of food consumption, living in substandard housing, and reducing expenditure on health and education, which have an especially detrimental impact on the well-being of children, people with disabilities, the elderly and women (FAO, 2017, p. 3; 3RP, 2018, p. 6). Other negative coping mechanisms by Syrian refugees include child labour, early marriage and informal employment (3RP, 2018, p. 15).

Female refugees also face ‘gender-specific barriers to accessing education and the labour market as well as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including child marriage and domestic violence’ (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 8). Other examples of sexual and gender-based violence include sexual attacks, coercion, extortion by persons in authority (such as employers); sexual violence and exploitation in camps; and sex for survival/forced prostitution (Ördek, 2017, p. 31). Efforts under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for 2018-2019 and other actors recognise the importance of targeting and addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable and underserved Syrians under temporary protection and host communities (women, girls,

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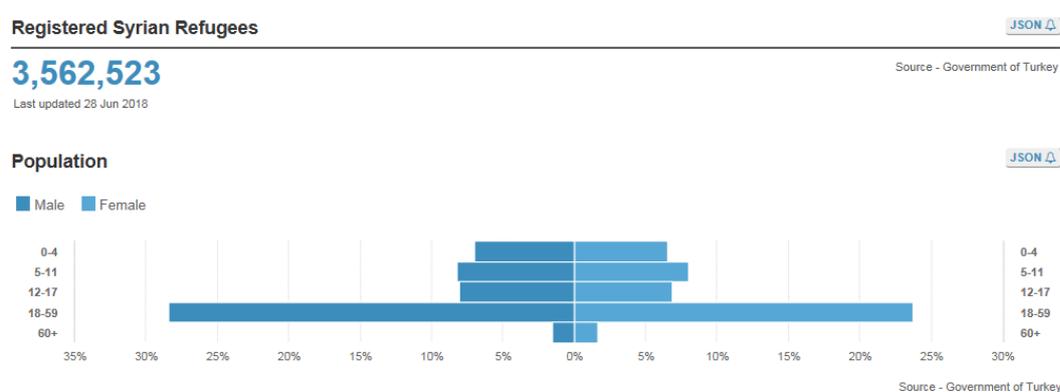
<sup>1</sup> [https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113#\\_ga=2.76162000.474137172.1530263086-925671888.1525935175](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113#_ga=2.76162000.474137172.1530263086-925671888.1525935175) Accessed 5.7.2018

adolescents and youth, people with disabilities and the elderly) in the various different sectors (3RP, 2018, p. 33, 43, 56, 68, 70, 79, 80; see also Salmorbekova, 2016, p. 10).

### 3. Women

In June 2018, 46.7% of registered Syrian refugees were female, over 1.6 million, compared to around 1.9 million male refugees. Figure 1 shows the percentage of female and male refugees in each age group. Women of reproductive age constitute more than 25% of the Syrian population (4% are pregnant<sup>2</sup>) (3RP, 2018, p. 55). A survey<sup>3</sup> by the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and Shelter sector carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that 24% of refugee households had pregnant or lactating women (IOM, 2017, p. 8-9).

Figure 1: Registered Syrian refugees by gender and age



Source: UNHCR [https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113#\\_ga=2.76162000.474137172.1530263086-925671888.1525935175](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/113#_ga=2.76162000.474137172.1530263086-925671888.1525935175) Accessed 2.7.2018

Key issues facing female refugees in Turkey include access to safe housing, legal protection, primary health care, sexual and reproductive health services and education (WRC, 2016, p. 28). High levels of SGBV have also been documented, with little in the way of prevention and response interventions (WRC, 2016, p. 28).

#### Registration and acceptance

Participants in a mixed methods study<sup>4</sup> looking at social cohesion noted that ‘that the Turkish government has made it a priority to support children and pregnant women in accessing their registration and identification papers to ensure they are able to access educational and health services’ (IOM, 2018, p. 10). Turkish focus group discussions involved some participants

<sup>2</sup> Syrian babies born in Turkey who are not registered or are stateless are especially vulnerable (Healy, 2015, p. 105).

<sup>3</sup> A total of 1,593 respondents interviewed in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Mardin and Hatay, selected using probability sampling.

<sup>4</sup> Involved key informant interviews (24), focus group discussions (276 participants), and quantitative surveys (252) of Syrian and Turkish youth (15-25) and adults in the Antakya district of Hatay Province, and Fatih and Sultanbeyli in Istanbul Province.

advocating 'for the women and children to be allowed to stay in Turkey, while the men should go back and "work for their countries"' (IOM, 2018, p. 10).

## **Health**

Syrian refugees in Turkey are entitled to the same health services as Turkish citizens, although this is not uniformly applied (Samari, 2017, p. 263; Saleh et al, 2018, p. 458). Specifically in relation to women's health, Samari (2017, p. 263) finds that 'there is very limited data on reproductive health issues among Syrian refugees in Turkey'. Some research indicated that a third of pregnant Syrian women were registered with complications and in need of reproductive health services, while morbidity among Syrian refugee infants appeared to be higher compared to Turkish infants (Samari, 2017, p. 263). Some refugee women blame these complications on the stress of displacement (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 21).

Factors that contribute to poor reproductive health for women living in camps included 'women's lack of access to amenities for basic hygiene including, lack of drinking water, access to feminine hygiene products, washing water, soap, and bathing facilities', while contributing factors for urban refugees include 'economic disparities, lack of services, and lack of access to reproductive health care' (Samari, 2017, p. 264). 'Social barriers include stigma, fear of mistreatment or discrimination, lack of awareness, fear of reporting violence, and difficulties obtaining legal status', while language, 'cost, overloaded public or private hospital systems, strained medical workforces, a lack of medical professionals and female physicians, and no care coordination' are other barriers which prevent Syrian women from accessing health services, although efforts are being made to overcome them (Samari, 2017, p. 267; 3RP, 2018, p. 54; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 30).

After three years of refugee flows, the Ministry of Health signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in July 2014 to coordinate delivery of women's health services, and between 2014 and 2015 they worked to establish reproductive health counselling centres for Syrian refugees, which included three reproductive health clinics or mobile teams (Samari, 2017, p. 263). Prior to this, a poorly structured approach to the provision of reproductive healthcare was noted and family planning mechanisms were not available (Asaf, 2017, p. 8). In 2015, UNFPA prioritised addressing sexual and gender based violence in the camps in Turkey, as it was escalating and there was an absence of psycho-social support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (Samari, 2017, p. 263; Asaf, 2017, p. 8). Samari (2017, p. 264) suggests that the delayed involvement of international organisations in Turkey is a factor in the lack of comprehensive assessment of women's reproductive health issues. Currently the issue is the need to plan for a handover of sexual and reproductive health services from international to local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or government services (3RP, 2018, p. 55).

## **Mental health**

Research<sup>5</sup> early in the displacement found high levels of stress-related sickness among female refugees in both camps and urban areas, including chronic headaches and stomach-aches and

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<sup>5</sup> The research in south eastern Turkey on the effects of displacement on Syrian female refugees used a multidisciplinary approach consisting of ethnographic and narrative-based analysis, which was supplemented

difficulty sleeping (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 21). Women also experienced varying degrees of anxiety, chronic worry, sadness, and anger outbursts (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 21). Survey data found that all informants reported 'feeling sad either "multiple times per week" or "everyday"' (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 21). This was attributed to the difficulty in meeting basic needs, as well as worries about the safety of family and friends, and uncertainty and lack of control about the future (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 22-23).

The women reported that their coping mechanisms included consistent engagement in rewarding social interaction and participation in enjoyable pastimes outside the home which increased their sense of personal agency (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 24-26).

## **WASH**

The survey by IOM (2017, p. 23) found that 65% of refugee women and girls did not have access to menstrual hygiene products. MAZLUMDER (2014, p. 29) also found that the conditions in shelters, including lack of clean, warm water, meant that women struggled with adequate self-care.

## **Nutrition**

Pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children are especially vulnerable to the poor dietary diversity Syrian refugees are consistently reported to be affected by (FAO, 2017, p. 3).

## **Shelter**

The survey by IOM (2017, p. 12) found that 65% of refugee families were staying in partially damaged houses, which increased the risk of gender based violence as a result of lack of privacy and inadequate lighting in walkways (see also CTDC, 2015, p. 11; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 26). A study<sup>6</sup> in 2014 notes that as a result of low employment rates and gender roles, female refugees spent most of their time in these unhealthy conditions, which also make childcare and housework harder for them (MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 27). Refugees living in camps also reported feeling unsafe (MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 34). Inadequate shelter has also caused women emotional distress and anxiety (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 23).

There are reports that some landlords are exploiting Syrian women and girls in return for accommodation or for letting them off rent (Healy, 2015, p. 161, 143; CTDC, 2015, p. 15).

## **Female headed households**

The survey by IOM (2017, p. 9) found that 32% of refugee households were headed by a women. The burden of finding paid work to support their often large families/households falls on them (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 204; CTDC, 2015, p. 9). This makes these households vulnerable as women are less able to work outside the home due to both practical and cultural restrictions

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with quantitative, survey-based data and semi-structured interviews. 30 Syrian women were interviewed in camps and urban areas, as well as 15 donor organisations.

<sup>6</sup> Qualitative research looking at the experiences of female refugees, involving 72 interviews with Syrian women in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Malatya, Batman, Hatay, Osmaniye, Van and Bursa.

(Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 23). In the first part of 2017, a deterioration in food consumption disproportionately affected female headed households (3RP, 2018, p. 30). For example, a report by WFP (2017, p. 8) looking at an in-camp cash transfer programme found that female headed households in camps have higher incidences of negative coping strategies (such as the reduction of adult consumption so children could eat, and sending children to work) as they have less opportunities than men to generate additional income through employment outside the camps. 'In Akçakale camp, for example, women are not allowed to leave the camp without a male guardian' (WFP, 2018, p. 10). Female headed households are also more vulnerable to abuse as the 'absence of a male 'guardian' from the household makes women seem as easy targets for harassment and exploitation, as they are perceived as lacking in a 'protector' (CTDC, 2015, p. 12).

Female headed households in Istanbul reported that in addition to NGO and local government support, Syrian and Turkish businessmen gave them money to help cover basic needs (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 19).

### **Livelihoods and employment**

Unemployment in general, especially female unemployment, is high in refugee hosting areas (FAO, 2017, p. 4). Language barriers, unsuitable skillsets and the lack of formal work permits are some of the main constraints for work in the formal sector, while refugees engaged in the informal sector face uncertainty of income continuity, and are at times subject to exploitative conditions<sup>7</sup> (FAO, 2017, p. 5).

Syrian women<sup>8</sup> face significant challenges in obtaining effective access to the labour market, as a result of lack of childcare, lack of information and training opportunities, harassment, and traditional gender roles, especially in southern Turkish regions, which mean that women's access to public spaces is limited compared to men and training opportunities mainly revolve around traditional vocations such as hairdressing or sewing (ECRE, 2017, p. 136; CTDC, 2015, p. 10). Refugee women often face discrimination and ill-treatment in the work place, and earn the lowest wages compared to Syrian men, Turkish women, and Turkish men (ECRE, 2017, p. 136; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 43). 'Syrian women are heavily involved in agriculture and food production, both as paid and unpaid labour, performing essential roles such as sowing, weeding, harvesting, and animal husbandry, while also spending long hours undertaking household chores and looking after children' (3RP, 2018, p. 30).

Research<sup>9</sup> looking at the lives and livelihoods of Syrian refugees in Istanbul found that refugees, including female refugees with cultural or political networks in Turkey, such as the Turkmen and the Kurdish, appeared to have the best livelihood outcomes (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 12-13). The research also found that Syrian women were working in a diverse range of employment, as well as not working, with the most common jobs for women reported to be work as secretaries, in textile workshops, or as teachers in Syrian schools (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 18). 'Interviews with

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<sup>7</sup> The working conditions of Syrian refugees have also depressed wages for Turkish agricultural workers, 50% of whom are women (FAO, 2018, p. 4-5).

<sup>8</sup> The pre-crisis labour in Syria was dominated by primarily by men (73% men were employed vs. 14% women) (3RP, 2018, p. 80).

<sup>9</sup> Qualitative study with 56 refugees, including 25 women.

women highlighted how much gender was a factor in livelihoods strategies and outcomes', with some women reporting that they did not work outside the home or did not work at all for cultural reasons and as a result of attitudes towards women working from within families or from neighbours in conservative areas (where rents were often cheaper) (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 18).

Women who worked reported harassment in the workplace and the expectation of 'favours' for employment (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 18, 44; Herwig, 2017, p. 183-184; Healy, 2015, p. 168-169; CTDC, 2015, p. 10, 12; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 33). Such harassment resulted in women quitting their jobs, while others stayed and did not report it for fear of losing their jobs (Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 18, 44; Herwig, 2017, p. 184). Research<sup>10</sup> indicates that lack of support for non-camp refugees makes them prone to exploitation as cheap labourers, with women becoming more vulnerable to sexual exploitation (CTDC, 2015, p. 2). Female Syrian refugees were subject to physical violence by the security forces when they begged on the streets, and those accused of begging were detained and forcibly transferred to camps, despite the camps being unsafe for women in particular (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 206-208).

Kivilcim (2016, p. 206) found that the government was not taking any measures to address the exploitation of Syrian women and children's labour. She also argues that the extended legal limbo in relation to employment means that Syrian women are 'forced by insecurity or their legal status to accept virtually any degree of exploitation in the flexible labour markets, since it is preferable to detention and deportation to the camps' (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 193, 208-209).

### **Support for livelihoods and employment**

The first women-only centre was set up by UNWOMEN and the national NGO ASAM in Gaziantep to support refugees and local women to build livelihoods and improve through basic skills and vocational and technical training courses (ILO, 2018, p. 8). By March 2018, 1,756 women and 790 girls, mostly Syrian refugees, had registered with the Centre to benefit from social consultations, cohesion activities, vocational trainings and Turkish language courses (UNWOMEN, 2018). 767 women had participated in the courses on hairdressing, skin care, computer courses, packaging and marketing (UNWOMEN, 2018).

The ILO and the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV) have helped to establish a new women's cooperative which is composed of Harran women and Syrian refugee women in Harran district of Sanliurfa (UNHCR, 2018, p. 12).

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO)'s Syrian Refugee Resilience Plan (SRRP) plans to target women, as well as other vulnerable groups, with the aim of enhancing the resilience of Syrian refugees and host communities who are living in rural areas and working in agriculture (FAO, 2017, p. 9). They are already working with partners to provide childcare, transportation, and other assistance to women to help them overcome restrictions they face accessing work (FAO, 2017, p. 14).

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<sup>10</sup> Mixed methods gender analysis of Syrian refugees in Turkey using an extensive literature review, social media analysis, and primary data, including in-depth interviews, ethnographic data and meetings.

## Higher education

University enrolments of Syrians have 'risen to just under 20,000, however this still represents an enrolment rate of less than 4% compared with pre-war enrolment rates of 20% in Syria' (3RP, 2018, p. 42). 'Women and persons with disabilities are specifically encouraged to apply for admission to both scholarship and higher education programmes' (3RP, 2018, p. 43). In 2018, 660 female students were receiving higher education scholarships (in comparison to 771 males) (Inter-agency Coordination Turkey, 2018, p. 2).

## Social protection

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme, launched across Turkey in November 2016, provides unrestricted, unconditional cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees, reaching over 1.2 million people by March 2018 (WFP Turkey, 2018, p. 3). Monitoring by the World Food Programme (WFP) Turkey (2018, p. 6) found that 43% of beneficiary households were headed by women, relative to 39 percent of non-beneficiary households. 'While the ESSN beneficiary population is relatively more vulnerable than non-beneficiaries, it is also important to note that the non-beneficiary population, in particular female headed households, also faces hardship' (WFP Turkey, 2018, p. 21). For example, female headed non-beneficiary households were found to have the worst food consumption of all surveyed households, with one in five households having unacceptable food consumption (WFP Turkey, 2018, p. 8). In general, the ESSN was found to have 'reduced extreme and moderate poverty rates among beneficiary households and resulted in improved outcomes for beneficiaries, including increases in acceptable food consumption, reduction in use of all coping strategies and reduced debt levels' (WFP Turkey, 2018, p. 21).

A study<sup>11</sup> looking at an e-voucher programme for vulnerable households being operated by the Danish Refugee Council for non-camp refugees in southern Turkey found minimal gender differences, with both men and women 'responsible for making e-voucher purchases and gender roles within households were not reported to have shifted as a result of the e-voucher assistance' (Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 7). They noted that the most vulnerable households were considered to be those in which many people, especially young children and the sick or people with disabilities, depend on few or no income earners, especially those headed by women (Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 7). In general, there appeared to be greater community acceptance of women's inclusion in cash transfer programmes (Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 26). There was some anecdotal evidence that women who were sexually harassed or assaulted at their workplace were able to stop working thanks to e-voucher assistance (Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 27).

## Sex work

Some Syrian refugee women, including those from the LGBTI community, have turned to sex work, due to economic pressures (Samari, 2017, p. 263; Ördek, 2017, p. 29, 32, 62). Others are victims of human trafficking (Ördek, 2017, p. 33; Healy, 2015, p. 143; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 38-

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<sup>11</sup> The research took an action research approach, with qualitative research (focus groups with 85 beneficiaries and 30 key informant interviews) complementing quantitative data (9,166 households).

41). A study<sup>12</sup> looking at Syrians under temporary protection and sex work found that entry into sex work differed, in some cases it was as a result of violence, for example they were forced into sex work by their husbands, in other cases they had escaped a child marriage and domestic violence, or they had been exploited during their flight to and in Turkey, while others had entered to cope with the economic problems they were facing (Ördek, 2017, p. 63; Healy, 2015, p. 143). Syrian refugee women, and particularly non-camp refugees, were found to become more prone to exploitation as a result of losing their social and community networks (CTDC, 2015, p. 10).

Syrian sex workers are stigmatised due to their nationality on one hand and their sex work on the other hand, by both other Syrians and Turkish nationals, which contributes to discriminatory practices, including in relation to access to services (Ördek, 2017, p. 87-89). The study also found a lack of awareness of sexual health and the available health services amongst the interviewed sex workers (Ördek, 2017, p. 66-69). Many Syrian sex workers experience sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence, including from their intermediaries, clients, law enforcement officers, and organised criminal groups (Ördek, 2017, p. 93-101, 107). In addition, there are many factors preventing them from accessing justice mechanisms (Ördek, 2017, p. 108). Many are also trapped in poverty (Ördek, 2017, p. 112-114).

## **Violence**

Syrian refugee women have reported facing a variety of violence, including domestic violence, harassment, and forced marriages (Herwig, 2017, p. 184; Healy, 2015, p. 116; CTDC, 2015, p. 2). On arrival in Turkey, women and girls have reported sexual proposals from men in Turkey, which make them feel unsafe and isolated (Healy, 2015, p. 116). Herwig (2017, p. 186) spoke with Syrian women who felt that 'Turkish men feel less restricted about their behaviour when they realise that a woman is Syrian'. 'Syrian women who wear the hijab do so differently than Turkish women, which makes them more easily recognisable, and thus an easier target for harassment' (Herwig, 2017, p. 186). Some women have responded by changing their hijab style to blend in (Herwig, 2017, p. 186). On the other hand, Syrian women in the social cohesion study noted that Turkish men are very respectful towards them, while a few Turkish women felt more uncomfortable in public due to the increased presence of Syrian men (IOM, 2018, p. 19).

The media has reported that Syrian women and girls have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, although these cases were not verified by the Turkish authorities (Healy, 2015, p. 143). The lack of opportunities for men has resulted in some taking out their frustrations on women and girls through violence and verbal abuse (CTDC, 2015, p. 2, 13).

Syrian women who are at risk of domestic violence can benefit from measures in Turkish law on Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence (ECRE, 2017, p. 146). However, the overall number and capacity of the women shelters in Turkey falls very short of the need, which will also affect refugee women, although 'stakeholders in Hatay, Adana and Mersin report no major problems with regard to access of Syrian women victims of domestic violence to [Centres for the Elimination and Monitoring of Violence]' (ECRE, 2017, p. 146). In other cases, refugee women and girls are reported to have faced a variety of difficulties accessing domestic violence services

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews were conducted in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, Mersin, Hatay, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır (9 provinces in total) with 26 Syrian sex workers. Discussions were also held with 47 representatives of public institutions, 13 healthcare providers, and 12 non-governmental organisations. Additional information was gathered through requests for information from relevant ministries.

(ECRE, 2017, p. 147). In addition, MAZLUMDER (2014, p. 32-33) noted that refugees were reluctant to talk about the abuse they suffered.

Kivilcim (2016, p. 193-194) argues that the 'Temporary Protection Regulation and the Law on Foreigners and International Protection that govern the legal status of refugees in Turkey inflict legal violence on Syrian female refugees', as it prevents their access to international refugee protection and 'enables violence against female refugees by leaving them exposed to various forms of abuse by different actors' through legal inaction.

### **Polygamous and unregistered marriages**

Unofficial polygamous marriages are an issue for some Syrian women (ECRE, 2017, p. 147; Herwig, 2017, p. 184, 187; Kivilcim, 2016, p. 201; Healy, 2015, p. 113). While exact figures are not known, women's organisations report that hundreds of Syrian women have been taken as second or third wives in towns on Turkey's border region (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 203; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 36-37). Polygamous marriage is criminalised under Turkish law but are legally recognised in Syria and 'women are not always aware of the differences between the two countries' legal framework and their rights therein', although some argue that many women are well aware of what they are getting into (ECRE, 2017, p. 147; Herwig, 2017, p. 188; Kivilcim, 2016, p. 202). As such marriages are not legal in Turkey the women in them do not have the rights in relation to custody and financial support they or their children would have in a legal marriage (Herwig, 2017, p. 188; Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017, p. 33; CTDC, 2015, p. 5, 14-15). However, some women see them as a strategy for survival as the possible husbands offer a lot of money and often will support the woman's family (Herwig, 2017, p. 188; Kivilcim, 2016, p. 201). Unregistered marriages have also become part of a sex industry, with some marriage contracts being created for short-term marriages, in order to legitimise sex (CTDC, 2015, p. 2, 15). Some of those involved in encouraging and facilitating such illegal marriages are public officials and state employees (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 203).

Kivilcim (2016, p. 203) notes that the government has done little to address the issue of the sexual abuse of Syrian women and girls, despite efforts to raise the issue in Turkey's National Assembly. She argues that the government's 'inaction in terms of preventing and sanctioning the trading of Syrian children and women as 'brides' makes possible and amplifies the domestic violence inflicted on Syrian female refugees as forced sex and house workers' (see also CTDC, 2015, p. 14).

### **LGBT refugees**

'LGBT refugees feel unsafe and vulnerable due to a climate of widespread discrimination, although they generally perceive Turkish host communities as more tolerant than Syrian communities' (ECRE, 2017, p. 149; CTDC, 2015, p. 3, 13, 16-17). They have also been targeted by hate crime and violence (ECRE, 2017, p. 149; Örddek, 2017, p. 99; CTDC, 2015, p. 17).

### **Gender roles**

The war and displacement was found to have profoundly impacted women's identity and destabilised family dynamics for many refugees (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 11). Women refugees have both been able to, but have also been forced to, take on new gender and social roles, such as having to provide financially for their families (Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017, p. 31). For some

women this has been empowering but for others it has been a burden and increased their risk of exploitation at work (Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017, p. 31; CTDC, 2015, p. 12-13). The study into social cohesion in Turkey found that young Syrian women appreciated their increased sense of responsibility and agency since they arrived in Turkey as their contribution to household expenses was now necessary (IOM, 2018, p. 14). A number of women interviewed by Bellamy et al (2017, p. 19) in Istanbul reported that they had more freedom there than in Syria or in the refugee camps where there was a lack of privacy and a lot of harassment. Syrian women involved in the Women's Committee of the Future also note that they are taking on new gender roles and participating in public life, which can be a challenge to Syrian culture (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 12). Their attendance at committee meeting often requires continuous negotiation and bargaining with their husbands (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 12).

### **Participation and isolation**

The research in 2015 by the Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration noted that isolation was a huge problem for Syrian refugee women and girls (CTDC, 2015, p. 12; see also MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 31). Research in 2013 also indicated that for many women, their main source of social interaction in Turkey was with other Syrian refugees, yet if they did not engage in activities outside the home it was difficult to build new social networks (Anderson et al, 2013, p. 16-17). Non-camp female Syrian refugees suffer from isolation due to feeling of insecurity and lack of safety, as well as not being able to speak the language (CTDC, 2015, p. 2, 11; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 34). Isolation can be imposed on them by their families as women are often perceived as carriers of the family's honour (CTDC, 2015, p. 2, 13). Some women were not allowed to go anywhere without a male family member to 'protect' them from harassment (CTDC, 2015, p. 9). As some Syrian women come from more conservative communities they noted that 'they have a hard time finding events in which they can participate as most events in Turkey are mixed, and many stated they were not accustomed to attending such events' (IOM, 2018, p. 19). Harassment by the host community also restricts Syrian women's participation in public (CTDC, 2015, p. 12).

### **Support networks**

Some support and social networks for Syrian refugee women exist, mainly in refugee camps as it was easier for women to connect with other refugees (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 8; 16; Anderson et al, 2013, p. 16). However, the first urban network was setup in 2015 in Gaziantep, when Syrian refugee women established the Women's Committee of the Future, with ongoing support from the national NGO Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) and capacity building support from UNHCR (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 7). They have engaged in activities to empower refugee women, increase Syrian refugees' access to services and enhance their protection (including in relation to child marriage and domestic violence) through advocacy, rights education and community-based campaigns (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 7, 9). Members feel that the network has had a positive impact on their lives, and those of their families and communities (UNHCR & ASAM, 2017, p. 11).

### **Feedback on humanitarian assistance and accountability**

IOM (2017, p. 25) found that refugees preferred to use social media and suggestion boxes to provide feedback on humanitarian assistance. It is reported that many Food Security and Agriculture Sector partners in Turkey have 'established two-way communication and feedback

mechanisms which are tailored to the needs of women, girls, men, and boys and people in marginalised situations, such as the elderly or people with disabilities', although further details are not provided (3RP, 2018, p. 34).

## 4. Girls

There are over 1.6 million registered Syrian refugee children in Turkey, with 778,819 girls under 18, and 234,892 girls under 5, in March 2018 (UNICEF, 2018, p. 1-2). 'After years of displacement, refugee children and families in Turkey remain extremely vulnerable, particularly in the areas of social protection, education and child protection' (UNICEF, 2018b, p. 16). 'Many vulnerable families struggling to meet their basic needs are increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as engaging in child labour and child marriage, instead of sending their children to school' (UNICEF, 2018b, p. 16).

### Education

There are more than 1.1 million registered Syrian refugees of school-age (5 to 17 years old) in Turkey (Carlier, 2018, p. 7). Figures from March 2018 find that there are 299,326 girls and 304,603 boys enrolled in formal education (UNICEF, 2018, p. 6). In primary schools, the rate of schooling was similar for Syrian boys and girls, but in secondary school, less girls are attending (Coşkun et al, 2017, p. 22). Research<sup>13</sup> by Coşkun et al (2017, p. 22, 31) suggests that the reluctance of parents to send their daughters to secondary school is due to cultural reasons as they do not find the environmental conditions safe enough to allow their daughters outside. Coşkun et al (2017, p. 64) observed that Turkish speaking levels of male students were higher than those of female students, which may be related to the fact that compared to female students, male students have more interactions outside the school

In June 2017, with the support of international donors, the national Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) was extended to refugees, with the aim of promoting attendance, reducing drop-out, and encouraging enrolment, although there are reports that the payments have been difficult to access and not enough to encourage parents to reintegrate their children into schools (Carlier, 2018, p. 7; WFP Turkey, 2018, p. 14). In March 2018, 165,975 refugee girls and 164,650 refugee boys were benefiting from the conditional cash transfer for education (UNICEF, 2018, p. 6). The benefits paid are slightly higher for girls than for boys<sup>14</sup> to encourage their school attendance (Kiremitçi, 2018, p. 6; 3RP, 2018, p. 43).

Carlier (2017, p. 7) notes that it took the Turkish government a while to realise the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis and the need to integrate Syrian children into the public education system. It took until the beginning of the 2016/17 school year for more refugee children

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<sup>13</sup> The study looked at the current situation of education for Syrians in Turkey, with a mix of qualitative research methods (focus groups and in-depth interviews) and observation. Data was gathered in İstanbul, Hatay, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Ankara, from NGOs, students, teachers, administrators, parents, out of school children, and members of public institutions. 47 interviews and 29 focus group interviews were conducted at 24 schools in 5 provinces. A total of 317 people were interviewed during the study.

<sup>14</sup> Primary school boy (\$9/mo); primary school girl (\$11/mo); high school boy (\$13/mo); high school girl (\$16/mo) (Kiremitçi, 2018, p. 6).

to be in school than out of school despite the Temporary Protection Regulation, which granted free access to education for Syrian refugee children (Carlier, 2018, p. 7).

### **Out of school children**

About 40% of Syrian school-aged children and adolescents are out of school (3RP, 2018, p. 42). One of the main barriers to education identified by education experts is poverty, with nearly 67% of Syrian refugees living below the poverty line (Carlier, 2018, p. 7). Syrian refugee children are often unable to afford transportation to schools<sup>15</sup> and they often drop out of school to supplement their family's income by working, with boys over 12 at particular risk of engaging in child labour, although girls are engaged in it too (Carlier, 2018, p. 7; Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 17; Healy, 2015, p. 109; CTDC, 2015, p. 3, 10). For example, a study by WFP Turkey (2018, p. 12) looking at the ESSN found that in crises one household coping strategy was withdrawing children from school, while in more serious emergencies household coping strategies included sending children to work. The ESSN has seen a reduction in the use of these coping strategies, although they still occur (WFP Turkey, 2018, p. 11-12).

Some girls left school because they married early, and interviews carried out by Coşkun et al (2017, p. 31) suggest that some of them regard marriage as an attractive option to start a new life for themselves, as inclusion and progress in the Turkish education system is hard for them.

Other barriers to education include language, as Turkish is new to most Syrian children; no officially endorsed Accelerated Learning Programme to help children catch-up on lost schooling; a backlog in waiting for the Turkish issued ID cards needed for school registration; a lack of school buildings and teachers in high density refugee hosting areas; and bullying of refugee children (Carlier, 2018, p. 8; ECRE, 2017, p. 138).

### **Child labour**

More Syrian children are involved in child labour in comparison to Turkish children, working mainly in the textile sector, restaurants, and agriculture (ECRE, 2017, p. 136). Syrian children were reported to find it easier to get odd jobs than for adult members of the family to find a job (Healy, 2015, p. 108). Children were reported to face abuse, bullying, and harassment by employers (CTDC, 2015, p. 3, 11). Young boys tend to be more visible due to the types of informal economic activities they engage in, with girls more likely to take part in domestic and agricultural activities along with other family members (CTDC, 2015, p. 10). There are reports of Syrian refugee girls as young as eight working (CTDC, 2015, p. 10).

### **Child marriage**

It appears that displacement has increased the prevalence of child marriage<sup>16</sup>, although the minimum legal age for marriage in Turkey is 17 (3RP, 2018, p. 6; Ördek, 2017, p. 102; Kivilcim, 2016, p. 201-202). In 2014, 14% of Syrian girls in Turkey aged 15-18 years were married (Healy, 2015, p. 113). Harmful cultural and traditional practices, coupled with lack of livelihood and self-

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<sup>15</sup> Until recently Syrian refugee children in rural areas were able to access free transportation to schools (Carlier, 2018, p. 7).

<sup>16</sup> The exact number of child marriages with Syrian refugees in Turkey is unknown (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 203)

reliance opportunities, mean families see early marriage as the only way to secure a future for themselves and their children, with some families feeling marriage can protect their daughters (3RP, 2018, p. 6; Bellamy et al, 2017, p. 18; Ördek, 2017, p. 103). The economic challenges they face mean families who wouldn't normally have considered child marriage are using it as a way to reduce household expenditure (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 202-203).

Many young Syrian girls are married off to much older men, with a significant part of these marriages characterised by the money given to the family of the Syrian girl in return for the marriage (Ördek, 2017, p. 102-103; Khattab & Myrntinen, 2017, p. 33; Kivilcim, 2016, p. 202; CTDC, 2015, p. 3). The men may already be married (Ördek, 2017, p. 102; CTDC, 2015, p. 3). There are reports that girls as young as 12 have been married (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 202). These marriages cause physical and mental harm to the children, and some of them end up taking up sex work later on in their lives (Ördek, 2017, p. 102-103, 106; CTDC, 2015 p. 3). These girls are often exploited by the whole family they are married into and their own families may not protect or accept them when such abuse occurs (Ördek, 2017, p. 103; CTDC, 2015, p. 3). As child marriage is not legal these marriages are not official (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 202). Many such marriages are reported to not last long (Healy, 2015, p. 160; CDTC, 2015, p. 14).

'According to NGO reports, the intermediaries for the 'marketing' of Syrian women and very young girls are easily found around the camps as well as on social media' (Kivilcim, 2016, p. 201; Healy, 2015, p. 160; CDTC, 2015, p. 14). In 2014, a figure of around 2,000-10,000TL (US\$750-3,750) was charged by marriage brokers (commission and bride price) for arranging marriages with Syrian refugee women and girls, usually depending on their age (Healy, 2015, p. 166; MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 34-35).

Public authorities such as health care institutions often do not discharge their legal obligation to inform the police of child marriage cases when treating child brides and mothers (ECRE, 2017, p. 147). Even if they do inform the authorities, the police may refrain from investigating the cases or handle them in inappropriate ways (ECRE, 2017, p. 147; Ördek, 2017, p. 105).

### **Commercial sexual exploitation**

Almost all the stakeholders interviewed by Ördek (2017, p. 106) stated that Syrian girls were becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation, although these cases are not being reported to the police (MAZLUMDER, 2014, p. 42).

### **Child protection**

UNICEF has worked closely with the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) to finalise minimum standards to strengthen the protection of refugee children (UNICEF, 2018, p. 3). The Protection Sector is prioritising the 'expansion of safe spaces for children, women and youth and the provision of child protection services' (3RP, 2018, p. 14). In March 2018, 9,297 girls and 8,659 boys were accessing UNICEF supported protection services in camps and host communities (UNICEF, 2018, p. 6). Disaggregated data was not available for protection services more generally.

## Mental health

A study<sup>17</sup> looking at the mental health of Syrian refugee children in Turkish camps (Oppedal et al, 2018, p. 51) found that girls 13 years or older reported significantly more depression than boys, while there was no significant gender difference among younger children.

## Empowerment programmes

In March 2018, 7,902 Syrian and Turkish adolescent girls and 5,705 boys were engaged in UNICEF supported empowerment programmes (UNICEF, 2018, p. 6). Disaggregated data was not available for adolescent and youth empowerment programmes more generally.

## 5. People with disabilities

'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (UNCRPD, 2006). There is no reliable data on refugees with disabilities in Turkey and there is no standard way to record to disabilities, although global estimates suggest that 15% of the population are people with disabilities and a 2014 survey of Syrian refugees living in camps in Jordan and Lebanon found that 22% had an impairment (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 21; Calvot, 2014, p. 6). The recent survey by the WASH and Shelter sector found that 12.4% of refugee households had a household member with a disability, while 31% had a household member living with chronic illness (IOM, 2017, p. 8-9). 13% of households involved in DRC's e-voucher programme reported a member with chronic illness or disability (Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 14). Between 2013 and 2016, International Medical Corps registered more than 4000 people with disabilities, including persons with injuries caused by war that led to disabilities (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 21). In 2014, Nizip 2 camp had 123 registered refugees with disabilities, which would equate to a disability prevalence of 1.29%, although conditions like schizophrenia and epilepsy were being counted separately (Crock et al, 2015, p. 28). Many disabilities were due to conflict related injuries (Crock et al, 2015, p. 39).

Major depression and PTSD continue to be issues for Syrian refugees and 21% of households involved in DRC's e-voucher programme reported at least one adult with symptoms of post-traumatic stress, and 17% reported at least one child with the symptoms (3RP, 2018, p. 55; Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 14; Crock et al, 2015, p. 38).

Not much detailed evidence is available about the experiences of Syrian refugees with disabilities in Turkey. Some research<sup>18</sup> looking at the experiences of refugees with disabilities in Turkey found that they faced challenges against virtually every human rights indicator (Crock et al, 2015, p. 9). Bellamy et al's (2017, p. 16) research also found that refugees who were struggling the most included refugees with disabilities. Refugees with disabilities have also been found to be more likely to become victims of abuse (Crock et al, 2015, p. 41).

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<sup>17</sup> Based on data collected from 285 children in a refugee camp in Eastern Turkey in November 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Fieldwork took place in Istanbul, Ankara, Gaziantep and Hatay in August and September 2014 and involved interviews and focus groups

## **Education**

The education of Syrian children with disabilities is a major issue and many children with disabilities are out of school (Coşkun, 2017, p. 15; Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 14). Children with physical disabilities have more opportunities to be integrated into the Turkish special education system, but there are less opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities and visual impairments (Coşkun, 2017, p. 15; Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 14). Some education for Syrian children with disabilities exists in certain camps, where children with various different disabilities are taught together, although Coşkun (2017, p. 69-70) observed that not all needs were being met and teachers lacked the relevant skills.

## **Camp based assistance**

Crock et al (2015, p. 10) visited Nizip 2 camp and found that the 'care and assistance given to persons with disabilities in this camp were extraordinary' and it was the 'only location where children with disabilities reported or were reported as attending school. Refugees with limited mobility are prioritised for allocation of a container with a self-contained bathroom, rather than them having to use a tent shelter (Crock et al, 2015, p. 34). Wheelchairs and other mobility aids were being provided (Crock et al, 2015, p. 33). Camp managers complained that there was a tendency amongst some refugees to sell the equipment distributed to refugees with disability for their personal use (Crock et al, 2015, p. 10, 33).

## **Life outside camps: shelter and transport**

Life outside camps was more challenging for refugees with disabilities (Crock et al, 2015, p. 29). People with disabilities were found to be more invisible in urban communities, and leaders sometimes denied their existence despite the research team visiting people with disabilities (Crock et al, 2015, p. 10). Cheaper housing is often located on higher levels of buildings or other less accessible locations, making it harder for people with physical disabilities to remain mobile (Crock et al, 2015, p. 33).

Transport is often inaccessible and refugees with disabilities face discrimination when trying to take it (Crock et al, 2015, p. 34). Despite some medical centres providing physiotherapy, many refugees with disabilities are unable to benefit from their services because transportation costs are prohibitive or there is no one who can help them travel to the centres (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 11). One organisation which was offering transportation to treatment centres did not conduct outreach in Arabic, which meant Syrians with disabilities were unaware of it (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 13).

## **Employment**

Refugees with disabilities who used to work in Syria have struggled to find work or have faced stigma related to their disability from customers or employers (Crock et al, 2015, p. 52).

## **WASH**

The survey by IOM (2017, p. 23) found that 83% of refugees who need elderly dignity products (such as incontinence pads) did not have access to them.

## **Nutrition**

Households involved in DRC's e-voucher programme with one or more chronically ill or disabled members reported 'greater difficulty meeting food needs, but neither they nor households with one or more injured members had shelter outcomes that varied from the general assessed population' (Jacobsen & Armstrong, 2016, p. 14).

## **Assistance for specific needs**

Refugees with disabilities can access individual-based protection assistance through the Special Needs Fund, with cases identified through the Turkish Red Crescent Community Centers providing protection and case management services (TRC, 2018, p. 15). A total of 346 people have benefitted (TRC, 2018, p. 15).

IOM's support for vulnerable households and individuals through Emergency Case Management has provided refugees with disabilities with assistive devices (Salmorbekova, 2016, p. 14, 16). The target group is individuals or families with specific, emergency, and complex needs that are not met by other organisations (Salmorbekova, 2016, p. 2).

## **Limited humanitarian assistance**

Some humanitarian organisations were found to only be providing one off services for people with disabilities due to lack of funding and internal policies focusing on helping the largest number of beneficiaries (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 12).

While service providers agreed that financial support is necessary for people with disabilities, they were found to be unable to provide this support either due to organisational policies against direct cash support or because of limited funding (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 13).

## **People with different types of disabilities**

People with intellectual disabilities and their families face a lot of challenges in coping in their new environment due to the limited availability of specialised services and lack of advice and support (Crock et al, 2015, p. 35). Research<sup>19</sup> also found that as the centres which accept people with mental and intellectual disabilities only operated in Turkish, their ability to support Syrians' with mental and intellectual disabilities was severely limited (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 6).

Syrian refugees who are deaf or hard of hearing have limited communication options as they are confronted with a completely different written language and Sign language (Croack et al, 2015, p. 32). This creates a strong reliance on family members to communicate on their behalf which can undermine their participation and can also create protection risks (Crock et al, 2015, p. 32). While the government provides some support with the cost of hearing aids, the remaining cost is still prohibitively expensive (Crock et al, 2015, p. 32).

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<sup>19</sup> Disabled Peoples Organisations in Turkey conducted a rapid needs assessment in August-September 2016 by conducting community-based research on the needs and access to services of displaced people with disabilities, interviewing 50 refugee families with people with disabilities and 8 key informants.

## Gender

Curtis and Geagan (2016, p. 6) found cases of 'underage girls with disabilities who were denied participation in services and activities for refugees on the basis of gender or because they lacked a male companion's permission'.

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## Acknowledgements

We thank the following experts who voluntarily provided suggestions for relevant literature or other advice to the author to support the preparation of this report. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of any of the experts consulted.

- The Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration (CTDC)
- Benedetta Balmaverde, IFRC
- Iris Bjorg Kristjansdottir and Alia El-Yassir, UNWOMEN
- Lana Khattab, independent consultant
- Yelda Şahin Akıllı, Foundation for Women's Solidarity (FWS)

## Suggested citation

Rohwerder, B. (2018). *Syrian refugee women, girls, and people with disabilities in Turkey*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

## About this report

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*K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).*

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